



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company:	Wee Stories	
Venue:	Stockbridge Primary School, Hamilton Place, Edinburgh	
Title of Event:	Once Upon a Time...Machine	
Type of Event:	School Performance	
Date of Visit:	Tuesday 16th June 2009; 1:30pm	
Overall Rating:	Excellent	
<p>This Wee Stories project is a small scale, low-tech storytelling experience for primary school children in their classrooms. The performances are held for individual school classes from P1 to P6 in Edinburgh and the Lothian's and are free of charge. Wee Stories succeeds in dramatising history in a way that makes it exciting, accessible and engaging for participating children as well as their teachers.</p>		
Name:	Magdalena Schamberger <i>Specialist Advisor</i>	Date: 4 th July 2009

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named above. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or an officer of the Scottish Arts Council, as indicated on the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work and to the management of the venue, if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to future applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its funded organisations.

Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:

- Very poor**- standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- Poor** - not well conceived and executed
- Satisfactory**
- Good** - well conceived and executed
- Very Good** – well conceived and executed to a very good standard
- Excellent** – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally high standard

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Vision and imagination of work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of ideas • if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Excellent	<p><i>Once Upon a time... Machine</i> successfully strikes a balance between being a charming and interactive storytelling experience while at the same time passing on factual information and making historical events relevant for a young audience.</p> <p>Wee Stories idea is simple but effective and allows for a lot of flexibility in regards to the needs of the school: theatrical device of setting the co-ordinates of an imaginary time machine to a particular point of interest in time and history, enables the performer to respond to the Curriculum needs of teachers as well as the interest of the attending children. The story co-ordinates of this particular history experience for P4 were set to “A story of Anywhen”; other starting points include Vikings; Romans; Mary, Queen of Scots et al.</p> <p>In comparison to ‘<i>Arthur, the Story of a King</i>’, the only other Wee Stories show I have attended in the past - this is a small scale, low-tech, intimate storytelling experience rather than a big production. Nevertheless the approach, quality of content, interaction and particularly the level of engagement achieved are as of high standard as ‘<i>Arthur</i>’.</p>
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? • If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Excellent	<p>Wee Stories succeeds in their goal to produce theatre that is accessible to the broadest possible audience, creating exciting, rewarding and stimulating theatrical events for everyone. With this project they produce dramatic and inspiring storytelling for all children under 12.</p>
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? • How well did it communicate the artistic themes? • How did the event originate e.g. from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Excellent	<p><i>Once Upon a time... Machine</i> is a storytelling project, which seems to fulfil its goal to respond to Curriculum needs and points of interest of teachers as well as the attending children. The ‘co-ordinates’ of Andy Cannon’s time machine can be flexibly set in advance of the performance in terms of choice of starting point and content of the evolving story. The story co-ordinates of this history experience for P4 were set to “A story of Anywhen”.</p> <p>AC is a clever and experienced storyteller and makes his story relevant by setting the scene in a museum and developing it from ‘now’ to ‘then’. Some of the text/story set-up appears pre-imagined and written, while many of the twists and turns happen as the story unfolds with simple yet effective props as well as the help and input of the children. The children’s knowledge is tested and</p>

¹ Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>their imagination encouraged to run free. AC is a One-man band of storyteller, director and writer. He succeeds in drawing his audience in by making history a fun interactive game. The project encourages participation of the children to make choices about the development of the story and its outcome as well as getting involved and acting out parts of the story using a few simple props. AC plays with perspective and the concept of space and time and even touches on some moral concepts (what is a lie?) without ever losing the fun and entertainment value of the experience. The experience that a story can happen at any time in any space and we all can have an influence on what is happening is a powerful and encouraging one. The project definitely succeeds in engaging the children as well as interesting them in the story subject. Learning seems to happen as a by-product of enjoying this interactive history experience.</p>
All	Performers/tutors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. • How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? • In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Excellent	<p>Andy Cannon as performer showed a high level of skill. He struck the right balance of setting the scene but allowing input from children without losing control over his audience. He responded well to the challenges and interruptions of this P4 classroom, incorporating them into his story whilst holding their attention at all times. He very casually and simply managed to create magical and surprising moments. AC was definitely key to the success of this storytelling experience.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work original? • How was the space used? • How many dancers were there and how were they used? • How long was the piece? 	N/A	
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 	Very Good	<p>It appeared that all of the text/story was original. Some of the text seemed pre-written as well as some of the story-nuggets pre conceived. All of them were entirely suitable to strike a balance between creating the respect for the performer and story whilst encouraging input by the participating audience.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 	N/A	
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 	N/A	
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (e.g. lighting and sound) 	N/A	

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	cues, etc).		
All	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production targeted at a particular audience? • Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? • Were you/engaged/inspired? • Did the audience/participants appear to be engaged/inspired? • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event e.g. workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led e.g. one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art produced by the participants? • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did participants’ views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? 	Excellent	<p>The project was very suitable for its target audience of P1 to P6 school children. All 24 children in this P4 class room, their teacher and teaching assistant were engaged at all times and seemed inspired by the experience. Their participation was enthusiastic and they responded very warmly to the experience. My own attention was held throughout and I was looking forward to the twists and turns AC and the children would come up with.</p> <p>The whole experience lasted approximately one hour: of which there was about 25 min set up of the story and its parameters, 25 minutes of participation and story development and 10 minutes of Q&A.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?		

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Location and suitability of the venue for the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? Are the spaces clean? What were the sight lines like? How big was it? 	Entirely Suitable and very easy to find.
Information/ interpretive material at venue— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	N/A due to the nature of school performance for invited audience.
Publicity/ pre-publicity – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? What publicity materials are produced? Is it easy to understand? Where can you get the information? Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	Wee Stories website I am not aware of leaflets or posters produced for this event due to the nature of this event. In any case, I did not see any at the school. The Scottish Arts Council logo is clearly visible on the Wee Stories website.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A. My visit was arranged and announced to the school by Wee Stories staff.
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	Very suitable, fitting in with timetable.
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance clearly marked? Is there clear internal directional signage? Is there Braille signage or 	N/A

² In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

Criteria	Comment																
signage for audio loops?																	
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="571 226 820 293"></th> <th data-bbox="825 226 916 293">Yes/ No</th> <th data-bbox="920 226 1161 293"></th> <th data-bbox="1166 226 1257 293">Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 300 820 394">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="825 300 916 394">N/A</td> <td data-bbox="920 300 1161 394">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1166 300 1257 394">N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 400 820 472">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="825 400 916 472">N/A</td> <td data-bbox="920 400 1161 472">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1166 400 1257 472">N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 479 820 748">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="825 479 916 748">N/A</td> <td data-bbox="920 479 1161 748">Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1166 479 1257 748">N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	N/A	Audio description of performances	N/A	Captioning	N/A	Lift/ramp	N/A	Accessible toilets	N/A	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	N/A
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<p>Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	N/A																

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max 500 words. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.