



## 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.**

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	<b>Wee Stories</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Aberdeen Arts Centre (Children's' Theatre space)</b>
<b>Title of Event:</b>	<b>One Giant Leap</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b>	<b>Performance</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> June 2009 (10.30am performance)</b>
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>Very good</b>

This was a well conceived, thought provoking production that entertainingly engaged the young audience in the difficult and at times abstract concept of space.

*(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.)*

Name: Nick Fearne Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009

Specialist Advisor

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	<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of ideas</li> <li>if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>The concept of space (and time) is one that many adults find difficult to comprehend and visualise. To create a piece of theatre on this theme for children is challenging. The piece succeeds because its style is very direct. An actor (Iain Johnstone) talks and demonstrates to the audience. Although there are facts and figures (quite a lot of them) these never over burden the listener nor does the production cross the line of becoming a lecture. A few years ago I saw, <i>One Small Step</i>, the forerunner of this show, and I did feel that the pupil audience found it to be more like a lecture/lesson than a piece of theatre. Much of the original production remains e.g. the effective use of a toilet roll to convey the idea of distance to the sun, but what has been added is a more philosophical dimension and the historical and religious context in which the ideas are set.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation?</li> <li>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>Wee Stories has a well earned reputation for highly visual, inventive, accessible storytelling theatre and although this production tackles 'a weighty subject' the Wee Stories style and approach makes this production (which I suspect is one of the most challenging to date) work.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material?</li> <li>How well did it communicate the artistic themes?</li> <li>How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission?</li> </ul> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for definition</p>	Very Good	<p>The programme states '<i>Our goal is to produce theatre that is accessible to the broadest possible audience, creating exciting, rewarding and stimulating theatrical events for everyone.</i>' Although this production was for schools (primary) I believe secondary and adult audiences would find it equally thought provoking and entertaining.</p> <p>There is a downloadable Education Pack (33 pages) on the Wee Stories web site</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments.</li> <li>How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience?</li> <li>In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop?</li> </ul>	Good	<p>Both performers (Iain Johnston and David Trouton) are highly experienced performers with Wee stories and other companies. Iain (who is also a co-director of the company) had the main 'acting' role – in effect it was a one man show with musical accompaniment and some interaction with musician, David Trouton. There is possibly an opportunity to develop the onstage relationship between Iain and David. As stated above there was the potential for the production to become a lecture. However Iain's relaxed style and humour coupled</p>

<sup>1</sup> 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
			with his excitement and enthusiasm for the subject matter, successfully engaged the audience. Iain had to deliver an awful lot of facts, figures, history etc but at no time did it feel that he was simply reeling this information off.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the work original?</li> <li>• How was the space used?</li> <li>• How many dancers were there and how were they used?</li> <li>• How long was the piece?</li> </ul>	N/a	
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new work</li> <li>• second productions</li> <li>• classics where the original has been substantially changed</li> </ul>	Very Good	As stated above 'One Giant Leap' is a development (over several years) of 'One Small Step'. The show is now longer (80 mins) and I feel has developed the dramatic content by focussing on the role of key historical figures – Aristarchus, Bruno, Galileo and their treatment at the hands of society, in particular the church. Bruno is represented on stage by a puppet and, even though it was obviously a puppet, there were gasps from the audience when he (Bruno) appeared with his mouth gagged and later when burned at the stake.
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the work well interpreted?</li> <li>• Was it well cast?</li> <li>• Was it well presented?</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>No one person is credited with Direction – the show was created by Iain Johnstone, David Trouton and Andy Cannon. The set up for the show is that Iain has to help his son with his school project on space – starting with questions like how far is the moon from the earth, which leads to demonstrations of scale/size using globes, tennis balls and toilet rolls. Although there a lot of big numbers quoted I don't feel this bogs down the production or the audience – it's not necessary to remember the figures (although lots of number obsessed pupils – boys? – will) but they simply reinforce the scale of the topic being explored, and where necessary the enormity of these numbers is visually demonstrated as above.</p> <p>The set/design was well used with chalkings, images and archive film footage projected on the black board, and stars lighting up in the shape of The Plough.</p> <p>Watching the archive film footage (Apollo launches, first moon landing etc) it struck me that in the sixties and early seventies space exploration was new and wondrous and a feature of that time. Since 1972 there have been no moon landings and apart from the odd shuttle launch and disaster space is not really on the radar of young people today – unless through sci-fi films and computer games. It would be interesting to know how many of the young audience had ever seen any of that footage before – the launch of an Apollo rocket, which literally shakes the room and your body, is truly an awesome experience. Apparently 2009 is the year of astronomy --does anybody know that?</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Dance, Theatre	<b>Use of music</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the music/ sound used enhance the production?</li> <li>Is it live or recorded?</li> </ul>	Very Good	David Trouton played music to accompany the piece – the music created atmosphere and a sense of time/place eg Greek style. There was also use of recorded music/songs to accompany archive film footage – ranging from Hendrix to Sinatra.
Dance, Theatre	<b>Design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were the costumes, set and lighting?</li> <li>How did it work in the venue?</li> <li>Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>The set was a study complete with bookshelves, desk, laptop, desk lamp, blackboard etc. As described above the blackboard was used for visual effects and could also be slid open to reveal maps and Bruno burning at the stake. Lighting was used effectively eg a spot representing the sun shining down onto desk globe. I felt the phases of the moon prop, complete with false hand, was a little disappointing. The use of video – the talking head reading out the church's charges against Bruno and the 747 flight to the sun Air Hostess were technically well executed although I felt the latter didn't really add to the production although it did raise a few laughs with the sleight of hand/video sick bad and the inevitable (miss) pronunciation of Uranus.</p> <p>Costume was simply black t-shirt and jeans – all that was necessary.</p>
All	<b>Quality of Public Engagement</b> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience?</li> <li>Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants?</li> <li>Were you/ engaged/inspired?</li> <li>Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired?</li> <li>What was their response?</li> <li>Approximately how many people were there?</li> <li>Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled?</li> <li>Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many?</li> <li>What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</li> <li>Were these targeted at specific age groups?</li> </ul> <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred?</li> <li>What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix?</li> <li>Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning &amp;</li> </ul>	Very Good	<p>Aimed at upper primary school</p> <p>The audience for this production was P5/6 – probably a bit younger than company guidelines but totally appropriate. I was engaged (and taken back 40 years to remembering impact of space travel when I was young), the audience appeared to be engaged and inspired. Full house of approx 40 culturally mixed pupils and teachers</p> <p>Not as far as I am aware</p> <p>Downloadable Education Pack fro Wee Stories website</p> <p>Upper primary</p> <p>N/a</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What learning/skills development took place?</li> <li>• What was the quality of the art produced by the participants?</li> <li>• Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project?</li> <li>• How were participants recruited?</li> <li>• Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project?</li> </ul> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</p>		

## 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
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it easy to find?</li> <li>• Is it on a main transport route?</li> <li>• Are the spaces clean?</li> <li>• What were the sight lines like?</li> <li>• How big was it?</li> </ul>	<p>Although an Aberdeen Arts Centre event the smaller Children's' theatre was used – a more suitable, intimate space. Although small, holding perhaps 40 (P5/6 from a local school) the space worked well for this production. Seats were on flat floor but performance area raised so all had good sight lines. The venue is easy to find. Aberdeen well served by train/bus.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event?</li> <li>• Is there information on the venue's website?</li> </ul>	<p>There is no information on venue website, presumably because the production is not open to the public</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in?</li> <li>• What publicity materials are produced?</li> <li>• Is it easy to understand?</li> <li>• Where can you get the information?</li> <li>• Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>?</li> </ul> <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>This was a show for school parties so no public publicity. Free programme with informative fold out time line. SAC credited on programme and company website.</p>

<sup>2</sup> 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
Ease of booking and payment	Organised by company/venue
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?</li> <li>• Was the length appropriate?</li> </ul>	Two shows a day (10.30am and 1.15pm) to fit in with school day. 80 minute show straight through – the length could have been a bit much for this age group but the performance was such that it held the audience – no fidgeting or toilet trips
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the entrance clearly marked?</li> <li>• Is there clear internal directional signage?</li> <li>• Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops?</li> </ul>	Entrance on main street. Audience led to performance space
Access and provision for disabled people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event</li> </ul> Please add in any additional comments below the table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue?</li> </ul>	There is disabled access and toilets at Aberdeen Arts Centre. However this production was staged in the smaller Children's Theatre. As I entered through a side door I was unable to ascertain if there was provision for disabled people in this part of the building.  BSL interpretation  Audio description of performances  Captioning  Lift/ramp  Accessible toilets  Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English
Customer service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)</li> <li>• If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?</li> </ul>	Good  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.