



Scottish **Arts** Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company:	X-Factor Dance Company
Venue:	Zoo - Southside
Title of Event:	Morceaux Choisis & Ragnarok
Type of Event:	Dance Performance
Date of Visit:	18 Aug 07
Overall Rating:	Good

This was a well programmed double bill with two contrasting pieces that were performed proficiently. Both dances promised much but didn't fully realise their potential choreographically. In comparison to other pieces seen at this years Fringe Festival the performance lacked a little dynamism and conviction in delivery.

Name: Lee Fisher Date: 7/9/2007
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 at the end of 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 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:

- 1 - **Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- 2 - **Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
- 3 - **Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
- 4 - **Good** – well conceived and executed
- 5 - **Excellent** – conceived and executed to a 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 - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	4	<p>The 1st piece <i>Morceaux Choisis</i> contained visually interesting moments and some well executed imaginative ideas. In particular some memorable, tightly constructed shadow play.</p> <p>The second piece <i>Ragnarok</i> left less of a lasting impression. A more sedate piece, it was less flashy and relied more on some clever crafting by the choreographer.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	4	<p>The 1st piece <i>Morceaux Choisis</i> was a new work (using some existing material) commissioned by X-Factor. The dancers and director of the company choreographed the 2nd piece. It was the first time these works had been performed in Edinburgh.</p> <p>The two very different pieces, one quite exotic and the other more low-key and intimate, worked well together and made a complementary double bill.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹ below for guidance</p>	3	<p>There was no information in the programme notes through which to gauge the artistic themes of the pieces. However, the mission of the company is clear "... create emotional and highly visual dance..." and this programme with its diverse numbers went some way towards fulfilling this.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	4	<p>In relation to the choreographic demands placed on them the technical standard of the performers was good. The 6 dancers performed well in each piece. They are mature dancers and this was reflected in their professionalism and performance skills. However, some of the dancers might have had more directness in their communication with the audience.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	3	<p>Both pieces were crafted and staged proficiently. However in them both it was felt that some of their stronger moments might have been developed further in order to fulfil their maximum potential. The choreography in the second piece, despite having some beautiful moments of tenderness and intimacy, at times seemed spatially disparate and therefore lacked a certain congruence.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		N/A

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
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	3	Both of the pieces were well rehearsed, presented and competently performed. However, the dancers might have been directed to perform with more attack and dynamism. This could have provided a more direct affect on and connection with the audience.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	4	The music was well selected and edited together. All of it was all recorded and as would be expected, it was appropriate and complementary to the choreography.
Dance, Theatre	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	4	Costume and set design was simple but effective and complementary to the production and choreography. The costumes for <i>Ragnarok</i> were very well designed, with clean lines, flattering cut and intense colour.
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	4	The technical quality of the production was fine although it might have benefited from more nuances in lighting design. However, this is most likely a reflection on the venue and its resources. The general stage management was good. Lighting cues, haze effects and musical cues all proficient. The sound system was of a good quality and volume and clarity levels were good.
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		The auditorium was comfortably three quarters full. The audience reaction was positive but not overly enthusiastic. The production seemed appropriate to the audience and they seemed to leave quietly satisfied.
All	Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.		N/A
All	Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?		N/A

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
Suitability of the venue for the event	Both pieces might have benefited from a stage with greater depth but worked reasonably well in the space and atmosphere that the venue provided.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Photocopied programme gave the minimum amount of detail; casting, credits and just a small amount of background information on the company.
Publicity/ pre-publicity – leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	Website is clear and accessible giving useful and interesting background information regarding the company, activities and artists. Posters very professional with striking imagery. These although present were not prominent at the venue, however, with so many performances scheduled there during the Fringe Festival this is understandable.
Ease of booking and payment	I struggled for some time to book on line through the Fringe box office. I called the hotline and was notified that the website was having problems. Therefore I booked over the telephone. Tickets followed shortly by post.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Location of venue quite central and on easy transport route.
External signage and signposting	Not well signposted but not difficult to find either.
Internal directional signage	Internal signage is makeshift but this is not a formal venue so that might be expected. Otherwise it was adequate.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	I noticed an external entrance for people with disabilities. Access to the main stage auditorium could be problematic for those with mobility difficulties with so many stairs
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	This was a 50 minute performance (with no interval) that started at 17.00, this felt right and seemed appropriate in length for the audience.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The staff members at Zoo Southside were efficient and friendly.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC were clearly acknowledged in the programme and on the posters.

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.

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.