



**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:** The X Factor  
**Venue:** Freemasons Hall, Edinburgh  
**Title of Event:** Other voices –Other rooms  
**Type of Event:** dance performance  
**Date of Visit:** 27 February 2008  
**Overall Rating:** 2- poor

*(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.)*

This was a promenade dance performance that moved around the Freemasons Hall using different rooms and spaces. Although an imaginative concept, the building tended to overpower the dance and there was not enough interesting choreography. In the 55 minute performance about 20 minutes was spent moving from space to space which was disappointing.

Name: Sheridan Nicol

Date: 28/02/2008

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.	2	Although this was an interesting concept, it failed to deliver a cohesive dance performance. From a 55 minute show there was one ensemble section of approx. 3 minutes in the lower hall and then double work/lift section was repeated in the next hallway area. The production didn't make full use of large spaces which added to the fragmentation and lack of flow in performance.  I did not consider this to be up to the standards of previous X-Factor work I have seen.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.  If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	-	N/A
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.  Education events – see <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	2	The live performance did not up to description in the publicity or photos in press
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	3	The cast included Alan Greig (Director/ choreographer) and two dancers (Errol White & Davina Given) who are well known and respected performers on the Contemporary dance scene. The production also integrated two performers with special needs/learning disabilities – Alan Faulds and Craig Simpson. Actor, Grant Smeaton played the role of host and guide.  Overall the dancers were not stretched and some of the movement vocabulary felt stifled, particularly in the group work sections.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	2	The choreographic content of the work was similar to past work. It was repetitive, predictable and I felt there was a pedantic use of dancers and space. Overall the building/ site overpowered the work and there were too few performers to have impact in the space. In the 55 minute performance about 20 minutes was spent moving from space to space which was disappointing.

<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
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	3	Grant Smeaton's camp pithy little ditties stole the show for me.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	2	The direction lacked focus or cohesive background.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	2	<p>There was a commissioned score by Tom Murray and included a live clarinet player at certain stages in the voyage. The atmospheric sound throughout was rather unbalanced.</p> <p>The singing of NOBODY'S CHILD was the musical highlight for me.</p>
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.	5	Clever costume design and strong visual ideas such as the confetti drop. The use of torches dropped onto narrator's flowing train were a technical highlight of the show.
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>	3	Over all there was some good lighting effects, however at points this was a bit too muted to see body shapes.
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>		<p>30 people</p> <p>I felt that there was a muted audience reaction to the production.</p> <p>The venue was beautiful- I found myself admiring the architectural and craft detail of the spaces rather than the performance at points.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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	Good
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Limited although free programmes were distributed.
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.	Poor - the number advertised in the Sunday Herald was not the box office.
Ease of booking and payment	Very poor– the worst box- office set up I've come across: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had to call 3 different numbers to get tickets</li> <li>• Dance Base could not help me on 2 occasions and had to call me back when the correct person was in the office.</li> <li>• I arrived just as the show started due to traffic congestion – I still don't have tickets as opening scene was in foyer and never returned there.</li> </ul>
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Excellent
External signage and signposting	Excellent
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Poor – performance took you up and down spiral stairs- no lifts or ramps were visible.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	6.30 & 8pm Performance time of 55mins.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Ushers were efficient
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Yes, on programme.

<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.

**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.