



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, winter guests and Steinunn Ketilsdottir

Venue: Dance Base

Title of Event : Dance Base Presents Triple Bill

Type of Event: performance

Date of Visit: 15 August 2008

Overall Rating: 4 - GOOD

A triple bill with three pieces of dance exploring sensitive subject matter - relationships, death and terminal illness. The works all have text as an integral part of the performance and have a strong narrative running through them. They work well as a triple bill; highly visual and engaging.

Name: Lesley Smith Date: 19 August 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.	4	Three complementary duets centred on the emotions using movement, music, text and lighting. Strong narratives. <i>Unspoken</i> - X Factor. A re-working of this compelling and atmospheric piece about a drowned man originally produced in 2000. Beautifully performed duet with a comic interlude. 3 <i>Crazy in Love with Mr Perfect</i> – Steinunn Ketilsdottir. Explores the pursuit of love and has some strong choreographic sequences. 4 <i>In Time and It Will Snow</i> – winter guests. Poignant duet with fluid and delicate choreography about terminal illness. Winner of choreographic competition Kuopio Dance Festival (Finland 2007).
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.	5	This triple bill of duets was presented as part of Dance Base's Fringe programme. The programme presents a range of international companies. Themes run through the overall programme which enable pieces to be grouped together. This programme of three duets focuses on the emotions. They complement each other in their use of movement, music, text and lighting.
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 ¹ below for guidance	4	Overall the event communicated the theme very well. It was stated in the Dance Base brochure that the theme was connected to the heart and this was communicated through the three pieces. 4 X Factor - There was no information in the programme notes to gauge against stated aims. However I had seen his piece before and the title " <i>Unspoken</i> " is communicated well through the choreography, use of music, text and atmospheric lighting. 4 Steinunn Ketilsdottir- programme notes offer information on the theme about obsession and confession. This was communicated well through the choreography. 4 Winter guests – No programme notes on the piece. However there is information on the work of the company which includes their use of text as part of performance.

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
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>	<p>5</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>	<p>X Factor – A beautifully presented duet. Alan Greig is joined by Peter Kyle. Two strong and technically proficient performers present to a high standard.</p> <p>Steinunn Ketilsdottir – Two strong performers with energetic choreography.</p> <p>Winter Guests - Delicate, thought provoking and moving choreography presented by strong technically precise performers.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	<p>5</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>	<p>The pieces offered an exciting mix of movement, music, text and lighting to create pieces with strong narratives.</p> <p>X Factor - a re-working of the original (2000) piece. Fluid choreography, well presented by experienced dancers. They made full use of the space. The comic interlude was good and added a reality to the dreamlike quality of the previous sequences.</p> <p>Steinunn Ketilsdottir – Strong choreography overall. However the choreography was weaker towards the end of the piece but this did not detract from the overall enjoyment.</p> <p>Winter Guests - Strong use of text integrated into the choreography which added much to the atmosphere and theme. Very delicate and poignant. Connected with audience.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	-	N/A
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	4	All three pieces were well rehearsed. They were competently presented and performed. The dancers were experienced and technically proficient performers.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	4	The companies used a soundscore comprised of recorded music and text. This added greatly to the presentation. X Factor’s soundscore was composed by Quee McArthur and Winter Guests’ by Sigur Ros.
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.	<p>4</p> <p>3</p>	<p>X Factor - lighting design created by Hans Peter Janssen with costumes by Eve Lambert. The design was very effective and created moments of a haunting almost dreamlike atmosphere in comparison to the reality of the scene with the psychic.</p> <p>Steinunn Ketilsdottir – the design was competent and appropriate for the scale of the venue.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
		4	Winter Guests – lighting design was created by Sigve Saelensminde and added greatly to the overall theme.
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 performance went smoothly. There were no technical problems. Two intervals enabled the set up of each piece. The programme ran on time.
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 audience response was positive. There were members of the dance community in the audience. The auditorium was about 50% full. I took a guest with me to the performance who thought the whole evening was enjoyable and accessible.
All	<p>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.</p>	4	There was an exhibition of photographs showing a decade of X Factor's work and choreographic influences from 1998 – 2008.
All	<p>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)?</p>		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	Very suitable. Dance Base is well equipped to present dance performances.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Dance Base had free programmes with comprehensive information about the companies. There were also display boards with posters and press cuttings.
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.	The performance was publicised in the Fringe brochure and Dance Base brochure and also on the Dance Base website.
Ease of booking and payment	I bought my tickets at Dance Base. I was able to reserve them by phone and collect them on the evening.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Located in the Grassmarket. Easy to find. Parking was no problem in the evening despite Fringe crowds.
External signage and signposting	Good external signage.
Internal directional signage	Good internal signage.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Performance space is upstairs. There was a lift. Access into auditorium is flat – no steps.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The length of the programme was good – not too short or long. Two intervals. Appropriate timings.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Excellent.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Scottish Arts Council logo on programme and on Dance Base brochure.

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.