



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:	XFactor Dance Company
Venue:	Gilmorehill
Title of Event :	Query
Type of Event:	Performance
Date of Visit:	21 st February 2009
Overall Rating:	3
Name: Ashley Smith Hammond	Date: 05 March 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 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.	3	Query was an interesting piece which offered some standout moments but overall demonstrated an uneven execution. Its size and scope were in line with previous XFactor performances which have tended to be a co production with six to eight dancers. The work explored themes of gender and sexuality, in keeping with previous work by Alan Greig. The dancers were skilled but individual performances seemed to be gathered from different shows.
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.	3	Query was an artist led collaboration with a New York based choreographer, Gerald Casel. Both Greig and Casel shared the stage with the five dancers drawn from both Scotland and Greig's NYC company. The two choreographers generated material from dancers' improvisations.
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	The programme described inspiration from Gore Vidal's character Myra/Myron whose struggle for gender distinction provides a point of departure for the show's visual, costume and choreographic ideas. Insofar as an exploration of such issues was the aim of this performance the piece achieved its goal. Markers of gender and sexuality were very present throughout the piece and were built into both the movement language and the visual aspect.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	4	All the dancers seemed very strong and able. Some were more charismatic than others, and consequently stood out in the loose staging over the others. Company seemed to be more of a loose conglomeration and didn't tend to demonstrate much cohesion.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	3	There appeared to be a lot of improvisation and improvisation-derived choreography. As a result the performance felt a bit like attending a workshop rather than a polished, fully fleshed out performance. There was little sense of a coherent vision or a choreographer's signature movement language. The work featured mostly solos and duets occurring sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction with each other in different areas of the stage. This didn't always work because for every time that the dancers seemed to be in dialog there was another moment when the dancers were 'speaking' (choreographically) but not to each other and not on the same topic.

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	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	2	There was little scripting. Most of the spoken component – this was primarily in the ‘gameshow’ section – appeared to be improvised. A bit more scripting might have been advised, however, as there was general confusion during this section. At one point, Alan clearly lost the thread of where he was while they were performing. While talking to the audience he made it clear that he didn’t know where he was in the script and during an interview with one of the dancers, the dancer tried to cue him. The group pulled it back together and got the show back on track after this glitch.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	3	The performance showcased several good ideas but the directors might have been more selective with the rest of the material, or worked with it more to try to knit the piece together a bit more. There were few surprises in the movement language, though the execution was solid. Dancers seemed in some cases to have been given free reign and would have been improved by the support of additional direction.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	3	The score consisted of some popular, some classical mixed into an ambient digital sonic arts soundscape. This was generally effective and the scoring/mixing was competently done.
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.	3	The costume design included suspenders and shiny patent pleather stockings for all dancers, male and female. These were mixed with shorts, leotards, one kilt and miscellaneous pieces of gender coded clothing items – a slip, suit trousers, an oxford broadcloth shirt, high heeled boots etc. – which were pulled out of the dressing up box tucked away at the back of the stage. The messages about gendering and gender confusion were communicated through this quite clearly. There was a whiff of the Rocky Horror about it (the suspenders more than likely) which made it come across perhaps more camp than it was intended to be. Though the performance intended to challenge gender roles one can’t help noticing that it was the female dancer who ended up stripping and topless at the end and the male dancer who added more layers of clothes – a pattern of nudity in visual art with has a centuries old pedigree.
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 side of the performance was solidly carried out. The lights looked good. They were suitably moody and low. The music and sound worked well. There were some clear technical challenges, a live feed wireless microphone and a live feed coming from a hand held video camera which was projected above the stage at various intervals. But, these technical challenges were carried off without a hitch.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			The use of the live camera feed made for an atheistically more interesting piece. Gerald's camerawork worked really well at highlighting intimate and communicative details in real time. It was used to good effect during Alan's solo as well as during the 'gameshow' section.
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 flier carried a warning that the show was for audiences 14+ because of sexuality/gender issues. The performance was appropriate for the venue generally, as it is a multipurpose space but not one particularly noted for programming only challenging or explicit work. The warning may have been even more necessary at some of the other performance venues. The audience of approximately 40-50 at Gilmorehill didn't seem to be particularly troubled by the material and appeared to know what they were signing up for. Audience seemed to enjoy itself and there were several laughs at the right moments.
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>		NA
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>		NA

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	Suitable. Intimate space. Black box layout meant that all 'backstage' action took place in full view of the audience.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programmes and fliers provided at the theatre door
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 website provided pre-performance information and a promotional leaflet was available at performance venues.
Ease of booking and payment	No online booking but able to book over the phone. On my first attempt I couldn't reach anyone and had to leave a message but I was able to get one to one service when I called a second time several weeks later.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Venue is easy to find. it is a short walk from public transportation.
External signage and signposting	Minimal
Internal directional signage	Signs for toilets, to theatre space, to bar, etc.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Accessible toilets and elevator.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Started a bit late and ran a bit longer than I was told it would by the booking agent.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very friendly attendant at the ticket collection desk and theatre door.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Present on fliers, programme and website.

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.