



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: Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh

Title of Event: *Query* directed by Alan Greig and Gerald Casel

Type of Event: performance

Date of Visit: 22 January 2009

Overall Rating: Competent

Overall Rating (*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.*)

Query brought together two companies, one from Scotland and one from New York to create this piece. Dancers were highly skilled. While Query was more cohesive as a work, than X Factor usually presents, there seemed to be too many ideas squeezed into 45 minutes, so that it became confusing, with a lot of activity happening in the wings while duets were taking place.

Name: Susan Hay

Date: 2/2/09

Scottish Arts Council Officer

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	This work was developed collaboratively with the dancers and directed by Alan Greig, Artistic Director of X Factor, and Gerald Cassel, Artistic Director of Gerald Cassel Dance from New York. The piece set out to explore the two personalities (male/female) within a transgender person. Alan frequently uses sexuality as themes for his work.
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 ¹ below for guidance	3	Within the programme Alan notes 'we hope Query leaves you with lasting images and many questions'. This was achieved in part, with a very strong opening image, but thereafter, not many that have stayed with me. In some ways the overall piece did not feel very different to Allan's previous works, although this work was created jointly with Gerald Casel, notably Alan being a stand up personality in the middle of the piece.
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	<i>Query</i> used seven professional dancers (three from UK and four from Gerald's company). It was clear that they were all well trained and fused together to make a cohesive group.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	3	The opening section of <i>Query</i> was strong with a clear image of a male struggling with the female personality. However, this imagery was not fully developed within the piece. While the piece flowed more as a whole, it did not fully engage. At times there was a lot of activity happening around the stage – duet, solo work at the side, which made it difficult to concentrate on what to focus on, and consequently to work out what was happening. I found the section with the 'stand up' introducing people for some sort of show very confusing. This section also used a handheld

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
			<p>camcorder which projected close up images of the dancers onto a white sheet on the back of the stage. I found this projection quite frustrating, as it was not sharply focussed onto the white space, so you only saw part of the image. Also towards the end of the section, a dancer moved the fabric to get a costume from the hanger underneath, which further interrupted the projection. From discussion with one of the directors afterwards, it transpired that a central screen above the dancers was proposed, but the space did not have this facility, which would have made it easier for the audience to see.</p> <p>There were some interesting movement sections within the dance, with one group section just before the end of the piece.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	n/a	Limited – it seemed to be some sort of contestant show, but it was not clear what. Some other text was used in the work, but I didn't catch what it was.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	3	While Query seemed to be more cohesive as a work, there were too many ideas squeezed into 45 minutes, so that it became confusing, with a lot of activity happening in the wings while duets were taking place.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	3	Recorded music was used throughout the piece, which complimented the movements.
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	<p>Costumes were very sexual, highlighting the focus of the work.</p> <p>The wings were used as performance space, so lighting was quite general. A clothing rack and clothes formed the set.</p>
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	<p>See above for comment on projection.</p> <p>Technically, the show ran well.</p>
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate</p>		There was a mixed reaction from the audience. There were about 110 people in the audience, with a mixture of age groups.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>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>		
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>		<p>X Factor undertakes a great deal of education work related to its performances In the lead up to the performance there was workshops in the East Lothian area.</p>
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>		<p>n/a</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
Suitability of the venue for the event	The Brunton Theatre is fully accessible for disabled users.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There were posters outside the venue. Free programmes were handed out and there were flyers within the reception area.
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.	Information was available on the website. Flyers were also produced and circulated. The company is also advertised as part of the Brunton's programme.
Ease of booking and payment	I bought a ticket on the night of the show with no difficulty.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Brunton Theatre is in the centre of Musselburgh, which has public transport links. It is easier to get to by car.
External signage and signposting	Good external signage.
Internal directional signage	Limited signage
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The main entrance to the theatre is by a staircase, but there is a lift to take a wheelchair up to the space.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance was 45 minutes long, which felt long enough. Start time 7.30pm.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly staff.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Yes on all printed materials and on the company's 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.