



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

Scottish Arts Council

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: Teatro di Piazza O' occasione. (TPO) at the MacRobert Stirling

Venue: MacRobert, Stirling

Title of Event: The Kurdish Garden.

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 29/06/07

Overall Rating: .Excellent

This was a beautiful piece of interactive dance theatre. Using magical hand painted animation continuously projected onto a unique touch sensor floor and an atmospheric soundscape, the overall effect was both a meditation and a magic carpet ride. The two dancers seamlessly wove sparse narratives into a rich tapestry in which the enthralled (age 4+) audience themselves became part of the choreography. Though at times a dark and difficult piece, in counterpoint to this was a constant lightness of touch shown by the performers, which ensured that the young audience were kept at their ease. A rich and highly imaginative piece of work for children; an artistic vision fully realised.

Name: **Stewart Ennis**

Date :**30/07/2007**

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please tick the

relevant title

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;	5 Exc	The fusion of design, music and performance was near flawless. The inclusion of very young audience (4+) members into the choreographed heart of the piece could have resulted in chaos but was in fact pitched perfectly and quite inspired. The mesmerizing images and music created a strong meditative atmosphere. There was a strong creative imagination at work here and the outcome was beautifully realised.
All	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.	5 Exc	This was one of two shows by Italian children's theatre TPO. (the other being The Italian Garden for the slightly older age group of 8+) and part of the "cheering garden" trilogy. It should be mentioned that the MacRobert is the only venue in Scotland showing TPO's work. The MacRobert's programme suggests a commitment to housing quality children's performance.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.	5. Exc	The show is described on the TPO flyer and other promotional material, as a " <i>participatory, theatrical experience from the children's cheering garden series</i> " and that about sums it up. It truly was <i>participatory</i> ; the participation of the children adding, rather than detracting from the polished professionalism of the piece.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.	5. Exc	Performers, Anna Balducci and Erika Faccini. (Uncredited as there is no TPO company programme) are trained dancers. They displayed great physical skill and gentle charm throughout, leading the young audience in and out of the performance space; occasionally interacting with them and at other times leaving them to interact with the animated floor space. And all of this was achieved without a word spoken by performer or child. Very impressive
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	5. Exc	The choreography was excellent, though who should be credited for this is unclear as there was no TPO company programme. Particularly impressive was the beautiful way in which the dancers interacted with the young audience members, incorporating them into the piece, fluidly without it resulting in chaos, loss of momentum or loss of any professional polish. Again Choreographer uncredited due to lack of TPO programme) (See notes on "Information" below)

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.	4. Good	This could not be said to be a text based performance. The script consisted of a number fleeting, fragmented poetic “garden” themed narratives, that washed over the audience encouraging us to ruminate upon such things as the meaning of colour. Generally accompanied by similarly atmospheric music, the recorded script was there to support the piece rather than define it. This it did extremely well, playing its part in holding the audiences attention, despite the inclusion of -at times- dark and difficult material and an absence of clear linear narrative.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	N/A	<p>Although Davide Venturini is credited as artistic director, the work on stage could only really be describe in terms of its choreography .</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to a lack of TPO company programme it was difficult to identify the creative team. The MacRobert technical manager later sent me the names of the dancers and I did get some info from TPO website but I am still unaware of the role that individuals played in the creative process.</p> <p>(See Notes on “Information” Below).</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	5. Exc	Spartaco Coresi was composer though again, uncredited due to lack of TPO programme. The recorded music and poetic recorded narrative was hypnotic, continuously supporting performers and images and offering interpretative clues. Relying on a mix of synth electronic, and percussion, the music had an appropriate eastern flavour. The music and recorded narration was not afraid to explore potentially difficult and dark atmospheres, which other shows for this age group may have avoided. But again, always in counterpoint to this was the performers lightness of touch
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. Exc	The importance of the unique interactive touch sensitive design cannot be overstated here. The set “ <i>a virtual painted landscape</i> ” consisted mainly of hand painted images, projected onto the floor giving the impression of an ever changing magic carpet. These were created by Kurdish artist Rebwar Saed and were quite exquisite. These images, and sensitive to performer (and audience) touch were absolutely fundamental to the success of the is show. Other minimalist design ideas included the use of two painted box masks which were used to great effect. The company provided the cushioned seating bank which surrounded projection floor and framed the piece nicely.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p>	<p>5. Exc</p>	<p>Technical presentation was superb. The touch sensitive floor mat, the lighting cues, sound cues all worked smoothly and without a noticeable hitch throughout. This was also true of the fluid and quite inspired interaction between performer and audience</p>
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p>	<p>XXX</p>	<p>The audience of young children and adults were enthralled throughout. It is perhaps not an easy task to completely hold the attention of an audience of children between the ages of 4 and 8, but this was superbly achieved</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>N/A</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	Very Good.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Competent. MacRobert programme itself was full of useful information but the company itself had no programme with no way of identifying the performers, director/choreographer, etc Fortunately the MacRobert production manager sent me info by email, including the company website. However , the role that individuals played in the creative process is still unclear. Other displays were effective.
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.	Good. Lots of pre publicity in form of press reports, leaflets etc
Ease of booking and payment	Good.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Good.
External signage and signposting	Good.
Internal directional signage	Good.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Good.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good. At 50min, this was the perfect time for the age group.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar	Very Good.

Criteria	Comment
and/or catering)	
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ¹	N/A TPO are not an SAC funded company.

¹ 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.