



Scottish Arts Council

## 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 Cholmondeleys and The Featherstonehaughs

**Venue:** The MacRobert, University of Stirling

**Title of Event:** Yippeee!

**Type of Event:** dance performance

**Date of Visit:** 5 June 2007

**Overall Rating:** Good

This performance by The Cholmondeleys and The Featherstonehaughs at the MacRobert was the companies' only date in Scotland on this tour. This demonstrates the venues continuing commitment to a diverse and high quality dance programming from leading dance companies producing work which is appropriate to the scale of the MacRobert stage. Although there were weaknesses in the production, my overall rating reflects the programming vision at the MacRobert for including this show and company in their season.

**Name:** Anita Clark

**Date:** 22/06/2007

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.	4	The Cholmondeleys and The Featherstonehaughs have a strong reputation for their imaginative dance theatre productions. <i>Yippee!</i> Is an ambitious work incorporating dance, live music and elaborate costuming. The work explored ideas of dance chorus lines, taking inspiration from the flamboyant dance sequences in Busby Berkely's films.
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	The MacRobert has a strong reputation for dance and the Spring/ Summer 2007 programme has been very rich with performances by a number of companies who are not performing else where in Scotland. This reflects the venues' commitment to seeking out work by leading companies creating work of suitable scale.
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	3	The publicity promised: <i>'A Kaleidoscopic chorus line-graph of complex geometric production numbers. An elaborate Busby Berkeley-esque cornucopia of terpsichorean diversions that can only elicit a response such as: Yippee!'</i>  While the themes and ideas behind the work were clear in the production, I don't think it succeeded in building up the anticipation and excitement in the audience that was hoped for.
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 dancers were all technically assured and confident in the work. The choreographic challenges in the work were confined to the staging and patterns rather than the complexity of movement vocabulary. Given this focus, there were moments when the unison sections needed to be tighter and the spacing cleaner.  The performers, dressed in grey unitards with masks and make up, were presented as androgynous beings or clones, and were not given the space to engage with the audience on a personal level.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	3	<i>Yippee!</i> involved 12 dancers and 3 musicians in a full-length evening work. Although an enticing idea, the dynamic and structure of the work did not sustain for the duration of the performance. There was an over reliance on repetition and limited choreographic exploration.

<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.

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
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.	3	The overall direction of the work relied too heavily on the costuming and weird interludes, such as a dancer dressed as a baboon, to create the fantasy. At over an hour and half in length, without an interval, the work would have benefited from editing.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	4	An integral part of the production was the live music by Steve Blake, performed by the Yum Yum band who were on stage, behind the dancers. The live music added to the experience and energy created, although again the lack of dynamic variation became wearying.
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.	4	Design was a strong element of the production with costumes and lighting vital to the overall visual impact of the performance. There were many changes and adaptations to costuming throughout the performance; with designs by Simon Vincenzi, the costumes provided the fantasy and extravagance but at times up-staged the choreography.
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 presentation of the production was to a good level and was executed effectively.
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>	3	There were approx 80-100 people in the audience which given the capacity of the MacRobert auditorium is relatively small. My impression is of a mixed response to the performance.

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.	-	None to my knowledge.
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	MacRobert is a great venue for dance with large stage space and good sightlines throughout the auditorium.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A programme was available which included an interview with Lea Anderson, the choreographer on her ideas an inspiration in making the piece.
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 included in the MacRobert season programme and I had also received a mailing about the show with a flyer for the tour.
Ease of booking and payment	I bought a ticket on the door; unfortunately the box office was unable to take credit card as there was a problem with the machine.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The MacRobert is based within the University of Stirling's campus, not far from the motorway and with on site parking. There are buses which go to the venue from the city centre but it does take considerable planning to reach the MacRobert by public transport if travelling from outwith the area.
External signage and signposting	Once you enter Stirling University campus there is signs directing you to the MacRobert and there is prominent signage outside the building.
Internal directional signage	There is clear and visible signage within the venue.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	There is access provision for wheelchair users into the venue and auditorium.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance was at 8pm and lasted approximately 100 minutes without an interval.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The café staff seemed stressed coping with serving even though less than half the tables were taken. I was not allowed to place an order at the bar d
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Scottish Arts Council is credited in the MacRobert season brochure but I couldn't find any acknowledgement on the website.

<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.