



## 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:** Out of the Dark Theatre Company (administered by Tricky Hat Productions)

**Venue:** Macrobert, Stirling

**Title of Event:** What If...

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc) *performance*

**Date of Visit:** 25/10/07

**Overall Rating:** Excellent

*(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.)*

‘What If...’ was a simply staged, humorous and effecting exploration of life’s ‘what if...’ moments. The performance was the result of a project working with adults aged over 50, who had experienced mental health problems. The performance met its artistic and, apparently, social aims.

Name: Rebecca Robinson

Date: 25/10/07

Specialist Advisor    x

Scottish Arts Council Officer

*Please circle 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; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	Excellent	'What If...' was a very simply staged and engaging short performance, which explored 5 character's musings over what might have been if life had taken a different path. The playful and moving performance – a series of interweaving stories and vignettes – was confidently and professionally produced. I found it refreshing to hear the voices of a 'labelled' group (i.e. adults age 50+ who have experienced mental health problems) not often, to my knowledge, represented on stage.
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.	Good	This performance complemented the full and diverse autumn/ winter programme at the Macrobert. 'Out of the Dark Theatre Company's' 'What If....' was a devised production - the result of a 6/7-month project working with people aged 50+ who have experienced mental health problems.
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	Excellent	I felt the company well met their artistic aim of exploring and encapsulating life's 'what if...' moments into "a few words, a burst of laughter, the occasional sigh, or something unrecognisable" (artfull website). It also appeared, from both the results of the production and the comments on the artfull website, that the company had succeeded in its aim of "using the arts as a tool to make users of its service less anxious in their everyday lives, while enabling them to become more vocal and expressive with their emotions" (artfull website).
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Good	All of the performers - Beth Beveridge, Tom Crichton, Margaret Lynch, Mary Nisbet and Kevin Low (?) - combined vulnerability, strength and humour into their professionally delivered performances. The performers were supportive of each other and generous towards the audience and brought a stillness and authenticity to the stage.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/a	

<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	<b>Script</b> – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Good	The text (written by Fiona Miller and Kevin Low from a devised process with the company) comprised a mix of both live and recorded storytelling and occasional dialogue. The text appeared to work on the strengths of each of the performers – giving each performer different moments to shine independently and as part of the group.
Theatre, Dance	<b>Direction</b> - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	Director – Fiona Miller. The direction was both subtle and strong and it appeared that Miller had created a safe and supportive environment in which the company were able to creatively explore, in a very personal way, the themes of the piece.
Dance, Theatre	<b>Use of music</b> – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	Good	Music by David Paul Jones. The recorded music sensitively responded to each of the various aspects of the performance and performers.
Dance, Theatre	<b>Design</b> – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.	Good	The set (not attributed) comprised a washing line and 5 chairs. As the piece progressed the washing line was gradually filled with tea towels on which were printed images (by Kevin Low) that had some resonance with each of the stories told. The lighting complemented the set and both were simple but effective and appropriate for the touring schedule.
All	<b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b>  Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).  Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang  Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.	Good	The production was presented professionally from a technical point of view.
All	<b>Audience</b>  Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction  Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors’ books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit  Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		There were approximately 15 audience members covering a fairly broad demographic. The audience appeared to be engaged with the production throughout, responded to the humour and were appreciative at the end.

<b>Artform</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
All	<p><b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	N/a	
All	<p><b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – 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	The Macrobert seemed a very suitable venue for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	I couldn't see any posters or leaflets on display in the foyer. The audience were given a black and white double-sided A3 programme/ poster that contained biographies of the professional theatre practitioners involved and a cast list.
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 advertised in the Macrobert's season brochure and on their website. The production was also featured (though without performance dates) on the artfull website ( <a href="http://www.artfull.org.uk/?page_id=21">www.artfull.org.uk/?page_id=21</a> ) - which showed a short video with the co-writers and director speaking about the process of developing the production.
Ease of booking and payment	No problem
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Macrobert is within the campus of Stirling University - just beyond the village of Bridge of Allan. Local buses visit the campus and Stirling railway station is approximately 10 minutes drive away.
External signage and signposting	No problem
Internal directional signage	No problem
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The main entrance has electric doors and there is a ramp to the upper level.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance took place at 2pm on a Thursday afternoon and lasted for ½ an hour. I felt that the 2pm weekday slot seemed a rather inconvenient time. The running time seemed quite short and I think the audience would have happily watched a longer version of the production.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Box office, front of house and catering staff were all friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	The SAC were acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

<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,

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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.