



### 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.

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	<b>macrobert</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	macrobert
<b>Title of Event:</b>	<b>The Littlest Christmas Tree</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b>	<b>Performance</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>8 December 2007</b>
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<p>A beautiful, atmospheric and highly entertaining Xmas show for the under 5's. The show provided fun and meaning in equal measure delivered by 2 accomplished performers who have a natural ability to present work to young people. Skillful, imaginative and insightful direction. Design elements played a strong role in providing meaning and enjoyment.</p>	
Name: Angela Hogg	Date: 9 May 2008
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.	Excellent	<p>This show provided a good theatrical alternative to the Xmas pantomime (although the macrobert's pantomime was also excellent).</p> <p>The ideas driving this piece were extremely imaginative, relevant to the young target audience and delivered to Director Andy Manley's known high artistic standard in creating work for young audiences.</p> <p>It provided a lovely celebration of Xmas, presented the joy of giving and receiving, and importantly, it reminded the young audiences of the value of the simple pleasures in life.</p> <p>The expression of ideas through symbolism, physical elements and particular use of limited text, enabled the children to use their imaginations in their engagement with the story.</p> <p>The storyline and effective development of characters also provided a good opportunity for the young audience to empathise with others.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	Excellent	macrobert commissioned artist Andy Manley to create the piece. Andy has an excellent track record in creating theatre for the very young.
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	Excellent	<p>Publicity material describes this show as <i>An enchanting tale for under 5's and their families.... a fun-filled tale .... and festive treat.</i></p> <p>This accurately reflects the experience for audiences. The show very clearly communicated the theme and provided an entertaining, enchanting event which the audience responded well to.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	Excellent	<p>The two excellent performers (Itxaso Moreno and Rosalind Sydney) are well suited to presenting work for young audiences.</p> <p>They were very comfortable in their roles and connected really well to each other (and the audience) which was vital in ensuring that the</p>

<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.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>theme of human connection came across.</p> <p>They successfully portrayed endearing, hapless, off the wall characters intent on doing a good job despite the dilemmas they were faced with.</p> <p>Good physical movement and facial expression appropriate to the theme and plot. A simplistic, symbolic approach which enabled the audience to engage easily with the dynamics of the relationship and situation being portrayed.</p> <p>Very funny and well executed tantrums!</p>
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/A	
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Excellent	<p>A clever, entertaining and educational script with a play on words which the children seemed to enjoy. Words, in general, were very carefully chosen and used sparingly to great effect.</p> <p>I loved the idea of different sounds allocated to the trees and houses etc eg louder/deeper for a big tree, ceillidh sound of the castle as it lights up or baby laughter as one of the houses lights up.</p> <p>This encouraged the audience to think laterally while enjoying a stimulating experience.</p> <p>The theme of recognising difference and being human came through very strongly through a simple, accessible, symbolic approach.</p> <p>While the approach was simplistic the piece was actually quite sophisticated. For example it illustrated how we can manipulate each other through emotional blackmail to get our own way.</p> <p>It was very clear that the very young audience members (as well as the adults) recognised this behaviour and the way it was portrayed allowed them to comfortably acknowledge it with great humour.</p> <p>The piece also engaged the audience in the joy of giving and receiving particularly through the final dilemma portrayed.</p> <p>The overall result was a celebration of being human (light and dark) which offered a realistic and optimistic experience for the very young.</p>
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	<p>Devised and Directed by Andy Manley. Assistant Director Matt Addicott.</p> <p>A very clever and highly aesthetic collaboration of text, characterisation, puppets/objects, design,</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>music and physical/symbolic storytelling.</p> <p>An intrinsic understanding of how children play and interact enabled this piece to resonate strongly with the target under 5's.</p> <p>For example the use of little trolleys to carry things around provided the language and context for children to relate strongly to the action.</p> <p>As outlined above the portrayal of human relationships provided a strong connection point to the audience (young and old).</p> <p>A relaxed pace and inventive use of space also retained the audience's attention throughout.</p>
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	<p>Composer Danny Krass.</p> <p>A range of musical influences were used to depict mood or circumstances. Sometimes gentle and sometimes quite funky (which the children loved).</p> <p>High action moments were depicted in an entertaining (tongue in cheek) manner through the use of familiar 70's/80's style TV action series music (was it the Sweeney or The A Team?) which the adult audience members enjoyed.</p> <p>Sound effects appropriately enhanced the experience of a forest setting in advance of show.</p>
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.	Excellent	<p>Designer Claire Halleran Lighting Designer/Stage Manager David Shea</p> <p>Beautiful design supported the action and fitted the style and theme of the piece extremely well (down to the fine detail eg glasses with Xmas trees on the side).</p> <p>A multi-level, multi- purpose and aesthetically beautiful set and props which enhanced the experience of the piece for audiences.</p> <p>Magical highlights included the big clock shape which appeared on the floor, the stars which surrounded the audience, the snow falling and the bubbles floating into the audience.</p> <p>The lighting was very atmospheric. A key moment was the finale when the house lights went right down to reveal the little houses etc all lit up, leaving the audience with a happy, uplifting moment and reminding them of the special warmth Xmas time can bring.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p><b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b></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>	Good	Supported the action well.
All	<p><b>Audience</b></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>		<p>A full house and very appreciative audience of babies, toddlers, slightly older children and adults.</p> <p>The children were totally engaged and really connected with the characters and the storyline.</p> <p>They laughed a lot (as did the adults).</p> <p>Very suitable for the target under 5's and extremely enjoyable for adults.</p>
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?*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Suitability of the venue for the event	Commissioned for the macrobert and very suitable for the Playhouse
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Leaflets and Programme depicted the show appropriately.
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.	Well publicised through emails, website, leaflets.
Ease of booking and payment	Guest ticket.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Good regular public transport.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	Fine.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Accessible. There were disabled children in the audience.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Time slot and length of show appropriate.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Acknowledged.

<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.

### **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.