

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: Jonathan Lunn Dance Company

Venue: macrobert Stirling

Title of Event : Reading Room

Type of Event: Dance Performance

Date of Visit: 22 May 2008

Overall Rating: Good

An ambitious and inspired project with a strong artistic team (including the late writer and filmmaker Anthony Minghella who the piece was dedicated to). Jonathan Lunn collaborated with writers, musicians, dancers, actors and six youth dance groups from various parts of the country. The starting point for the full-length performance piece was to consider the connections, disconnections, pacts, secrets and lies, which are all part of human actions.

Miranda Richardson threaded the narrative together. Alas for me, there was almost too much text, too much to concentrate on combined with the dance, Definitely a work I would like to see for second viewing.

Name: Patricia Eckersley

Specialist Advisor

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.	Good	The piece had a feel of a gradual and progressive layering of ideas and emotion.
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	The performance was conceived following a period of research at the Jerwood Space, London for the choreographer Jonathan Lunn who invited the writer Anthony Minghella to write a short piece. This evolved into the full-length work now staged.
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	Good	Working with such a diverse creative team, must have been hugely stimulating but logistically demanding given the range of youth groups involved. A credit to the company in making the whole project work so well.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Excellent	A refreshing and talented group of dancers with a certain “whizz factor” in skill and agility. Miranda Richardson narrated the text divided into four sections (each piece by a different writer including the work of Samuel Beckett).
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Excellent	Sharp, precise movements with five technically powerful dancers and beautifully choreographed. I was looking for a clearer connection between the choreography and the spoken text, which was not apparent. The concentration required to really listen to the writing I found difficult; there was so much happening on stage with the dancers.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Lunn was able to draw together an impressive array of readers included Dexter Fletcher, Alan Rickman, Juliet Stevenson and Miranda Richardson. I would like to see the piece performed again with another narrator to experience if there is any difference in the overall performance.

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
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	The composer Gary Yershon produced a high quality musical score. Excellent music.
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.	Good	Simple costumes and stage design. The screens moved around the stage, sometimes transparent with the dancers performing behind them and sometimes in a box shape.
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>	Good	Good quality production with one of the best youth dance performances I have seen for ages. A credit to the young people involved and the team working with them from macrobert and Wallace High School.
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>		Just under half full. Good response from the audience.
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.	Good	As above, the youth dance group.
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)?	Good	A valuable educational experience for all the youth groups taking part.

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	Good quality venue.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Free programme provided.
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 pre-publicity available from macrobert.
Ease of booking and payment	Bought ticket on the night.
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
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC acknowledged.

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.