



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:	Clydebuilt Puppets
Venue:	MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling
Title of Event:	The Call of the Loon Bird
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Performance
Date of Visit:	13th September 2008
Overall Rating:	Good
<i>(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.)</i>	
I thought that this was an engaging and moving production, which appeared to appeal to both the children and their carers. The relatively complex story was conveyed with great clarity and with expert puppetry skills.	
Name: _____	Date: 13_/_09_/_08_____
Specialist Advisor	x Scottish Arts Council Officer
<i>Please circle the relevant title</i>	

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	I thought that this production combined technically impressive puppetry with eloquent storytelling to create an engaging and rewarding theatre experience. Although a relatively complex story, younger children in the audience appeared to be as engaged with the performance as the older children and adults. As with other Clydebuilt shows that I have seen, the puppetry was technically excellent - that was matched, in this production, by the storytelling.
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.	Excellent	The production complemented the Macrobert's full and diverse autumn/ winter programme, which comprised a variety of events including dance, comedy, and theatre.
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	The flyer advertised the event as “quality puppet theatre for everyone” – this, I felt, accurately summarised the production.
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	Performer/ puppeteer/ musician Stephen Smart sympathetically and clearly narrated the story, creating each of the various characters with great sensitivity. Using excellent techniques of manipulation, Smart truly brought the rod and shadow puppets to life. Smart managed to successfully balance the challenging roles of being both narrator and puppeteer – creating a centred performance for the former and effectively foregrounding the puppets for the latter.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	N/a	

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
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Excellent	Accredited as a 'Native American Story'. <i>The Call of the Loon Bird</i> combined expansive and challenging themes (including spirituality, faith, hardship and perseverance) in a relatively complex narrative that was clearly told in a way that appeared to engage both young children and their carers. Although the meaningful story had many life affirming moments, it also sensitivity explored aspects of suffering without ever being patronising or 'worthy'.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Good	Facilitator: Jo Turbitt Good use was made of the set and the performance was also paced well so that it never became overly static. The combination of shadow and stick puppets was well balanced and a clear audience focus was maintained throughout. As mentioned above, the manipulation of the puppets was expertly and precisely executed at all times. However, I did feel that the opening of the production was a little slow and it felt like there were 3 'beginnings' before the actual story began. (This was partly the result of what I thought was a badly timed – although politely delivered - request by Front of House staff for mobile phones to be switched off).
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Good	Music: Margaret Smith and J Simon van der Walt. The production featured a combination of both live and recorded music. The music helped to create the sense of an expansive and magical landscape and mood. Smart's live flute playing also effectively drew the audience into the atmosphere of the piece from the beginning.
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	Design: Stephen Smart. The professionally constructed set recreated a representation of a North American Indian settlement and included two Teepees and a raised central area where most of the focus of the action occurred. The shadow puppets were projected onto a curtain at the back. The character-full puppets had excellent movement and were full of animation. The warm tones of the set were accentuated by the soft and subtle lighting. The set appeared to be easily adaptable for touring.
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	The production was presented professionally from a technical point of view. I did think that the music levels were sometimes a little too high.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>		<p>There were approximately 25 children and ten adults in the audience with the majority of children in the 5 – 8 age range. Both adults and children appeared to be completely engaged by the performance throughout. There was appreciative applause at the end.</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>	N/a	
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>	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 lively Saturday morning family-friendly MacRobert Arts Centre seemed to be an appropriate venue for the event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There were free production flyers/ programmes available in the foyer of the MacRobert. The A4 single-sided glossy coloured flyers/ programmes provided basic info about the performance.
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 production was advertised on both the MacRobert and Clydebuilt Puppet's websites and in the MacRobert's season programme. All contained the same, basic info about the production (e.g. production credits, story synopsis, venue and time info, etc.).
Ease of booking and payment	I booked and paid for the ticket by phone through the MacRobert box office and had no problem picking the ticket up before the performance began.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The venue, in the University of Stirling's campus, is relatively easy to find and there is ample parking. The venue can be reached by public bus.
External signage and signposting	No problem.
Internal directional signage	No problem.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	There are electric doors and a ramp to the venue.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance began at 11am and lasted for approximately 1 hour. This seemed an appropriate length and timing for the targeted audience.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Box office and front of house staff were all friendly and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The SAC were acknowledged on all publicity material that I was aware of.

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.