



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: macrobert

Venue: macrobert

Title of Event: Mother Goose

Type of Event: performance - pantomime

Date of Visit: December 18 2008

Overall Rating

EXCELLENT Fun and laughter from start to finish, the pantomime benefited greatly from the multi-talented Johnny McKnight as star, writer and director. Well directed and performed by a hard working cast with excellent use of the young chorus, it was greatly appreciated by the audience all of whom were engaged and amused from the outset. Mother Goose is hard to pull off – a slight story and reliance on the dame makes for a challenge but any doubts were lost in an evening of pure panto joy.

Name: SYLVIA DOW Date: 30 / 12 / 08

Specialist Advisor Scottish Arts Council Officer *Please tick 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	Not a big glossy 'King's' type panto, the macrobert made the most of its space, its cast, the design and the script to produce a really enjoyable night out for the audience. There were innovations in all the above to accommodate the scale of the panto and the venue but there was no compromise in production values or ambition given space and budget.
All	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	A macrobert in-house production, and as such an example of the macrobert's ever growing confidence in production.
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	There were no 'stated aims' – but a clear desire to entertain and amuse and this it did in full measure.
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	The star of the production, Johnny McKnight , who also wrote and directed Mother Goose, is a panto dame of great ability and presence who deserves to be rated alongside the panto greats – and I'm sure will be one day. He has the acting talents, humour, energy and ability to engage with people, which mark a top panto dame, and he can dance and sing too – he is very very good. The remainder of the cast however were all given plenty of opportunity to shine and everyone seemed up to the challenge – a good, mainly young, hard working cast. The young 'chorus' were excellent too and a testament to the various youth activities run by the macrobert.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	good	The choreography (by Karen Martin) was lively and well rehearsed based mainly on street dance and hip hop. The younger cast members were given choreography which was attainable, while challenging enough, which allowed them to look both professional and accomplished. The pantomime lead, Johnny McKnight, is an accomplished dancer and made the most of the technically difficult moves he was given.

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	The script by Johnny McKnight who also took the starring role and directed, was very good indeed. While strongly attached to panto tradition it also subverted and inverted the genre in many ways and struck just the right balance between fun for the children, ripe vulgarity, and sly jokes – particularly about other venues and panto stars - for the adults. Although it had its share of fart jokes and the like it was never ‘blue’ and was genuinely suitable for all ages. And most important of all it was really very funny in a very Scottish traditional panto way. My only problem with the script is that Mother Goose was the chosen subject – it’s the slightest story in the panto canon, no matter how the script embroiders it, but the writer made as good a script as possible out of it.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	excellent	Tightly directed (by Johnny McKnight) with a huge amount of energy required and delivered by the cast. I was impressed too by the direction of the younger cast who make up the chorus who I assume were culled from the macrobert’s many youth groups – 30 of them in two alternate casts. Not for a moment did I ever view them as young amateurs - they were spot-on, beautifully directed and rehearsed and professional throughout.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	good	All good – atmospheric and fun by turns and the use of pop songs etc well placed and appropriate.
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	Macrobert is a medium sized venue and stage, and designer Kenny Miller made a composite set using designed panels and easily moveable pieces which made transitions easy and unnoticeable.
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>	excellent	Technical presentation was at a high standard – smooth set changes, good lighting design and delivery and no problems that I could discern. All as you would expect from a professional theatre and crew.
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</p>		The house was around 50%. The production was as noted elsewhere ideally suited for all ages and all ages were represented in the audience. Audience participation and engagement was 100% and the dame’s ability to improvise and interact with audience members (and remember their names throughout) was impressive. The audience laughed a lot and I didn’t

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	visitors/ participants at the time of visit Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		hear or see any disaffection during the interval or afterwards – lots of smiling faces.
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.		N/A
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	Entirely suitable – a professional venue well managed, staffed and looked after.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Programmes, posters, everything you'd expect to inform about the pantomime.
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.	Excellent website – attractive and easy to negotiate. Not living in the direct area I wasn't aware personally of the macrobert's pre-publicity initiatives but the website gives all the information one would need.
Ease of booking and payment	Easy – well-informed and friendly staff.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The macrobert is located on the campus of the University of Stirling – easy to get to by major rail and road routes.
External signage and signposting	From the campus entrance up to the theatre – all well signposted.
Internal directional signage	Excellent
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The university itself has a strong access policy and the macrobert has applied this stringently. Particular mention should be made of the child and family friendly access.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	All appropriate – and started on time - 2 and a half hours including interval.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Friendly, efficient and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	All as it should be from posters to website to programmes.

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.