



Scottish **Arts** Council

## 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:** Starcatchers and the Byre Theatre

**Venue:** Macrobert, Stirling

**Title of Event:** Little light

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 23 December 2008

**Overall Rating:** Excellent

Little Light was a thoughtfully conceived and beautifully executed piece of early years theatre. There was great attention to detail in every aspect of the multi-sensory storytelling which combined visual imagery, light, music, object manipulation, movement, touch and smell to create a magically atmospheric world. Using very little spoken word the storytelling was always coherent and the very young, mostly pre-verbal, audience stayed engaged from start to finish.

Name: **Laura Tyrrell**

Date: 9 January 2009

Specialist Advisor  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	Created by Andy Manley and Vanessa Rigg Little Light is a thoughtfully conceived and beautifully executed piece of theatre for an early years audience. Appropriately light on spoken word the emphasis is placed on non verbal communication – visual imagery, light, music, object manipulation, movement, touch and smell are all key elements as the drama unfolds through Little Light's sensory exploration of the world.
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	Little Light is one of 3 shows produced by Starcatchers since 2006 specifically for children aged 0 to 3 years old. This show was originally created in as part of the Starcatchers project at North Edinburgh Arts Centre in 2007. Little Light was further developed by Starcatchers in partnership with the Byre Theatre and re-toured to venues across Scotland. Macrobert programmed Little Light as their Christmas show for young audiences which worked extremely well.
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	Good	Starcatchers described the show as a “highly interactive and visual performance which has been specially created for children aged 0-3 and their parents or carers” and the show met this description 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	Performers Lois Creasy and Itaxso Moreno handled every aspect of the performance – singing in harmony, choreographed movement, object manipulation, audience interaction – beautifully. Their perfectly measured performances were gentle and graceful and they succeeded in bringing their audience into the story and world they had created.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Excellent	No choreographer is credited. There were no dance sequences as such but it appeared that the movement of the performers had been carefully considered: nothing was superfluous; everything made sense within the context of the show.

<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
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	Excellent	The show was devised by Andy Manley and Vanessa Rigg and fittingly has very little text. A simple refrain is used throughout – “Little Light high, Little Light low, Little Light fast, Little Light slow” – which is important as repetition is vital for early years learning and development.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Excellent	Directed by Vanessa Rigg. The director successfully brought together a group of individual artists and harnessed their creativity to create a very successful show. Her vision for the overall atmosphere of the show was very clear and the attention to detail in every aspect of the multi-sensory storytelling was delightful – the flowers did actually smell. While Little Light was not a piece of narrative theatre, the storytelling was always coherent.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	Excellent	Musical Director, Stephen Deazley. The whole show was infused with Stephen Deazley’s wonderful score. The melodies and lyrics of the songs were simple, memorable and playful and successfully helped to create a variety of different moods.
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	Design Brian Hartley. Lighting Designer, Stephen Sinclair. The costume and set design were effectively simple using basic geometric shapes and a variety of props to great effect – the weird and wonderful “fishy” musical instruments, the massive balloon filled with helium and Little Light itself created a magical but recognisable world. This was all enhanced by Stephen Sinclair’s lighting.
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	The show is set in a small, intimate area “enclosed” by light and the audience were invited to sit on floor cushions which effectively brought them right in to Little Light’s world. The intimacy this created worked perfectly. Light is a very important element in the show and sometimes the levels were not quite right – Little Light was sometimes “dimmed out”.
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>		The very young, mostly pre-verbal, audience was captivated by the show and stayed engaged from start to finish. The sequences when the performers interacted with the audience were handled in a thoughtful way which made sense in the context of the narrative.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		
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	<p>The audience was invited onto the stage after the show to explore the set and props with the performers.</p> <p>Starcatchers offered a workshop programme for nursery or childcare practitioners and parents to support performances of Little Light but I did not observe any of these.</p>
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	I didn't observe any of the learning events.

## 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 – the show took place in Macrobert's Workhouse space which was appropriate for the show.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The Macrobert produced a "gatefold" flier with information on all 3 of its Christmas shows, including Little Light. Starcatchers and the Byre produced a programme for the show.
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.	Information in the Macrobert's season brochure and website.
Ease of booking and payment	Fine
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Macrobert is situated on the Stirling University campus which is served by public transport. While it is easy to get to with a car, parking on campus is always an issue.
External signage and signposting	Poor. Someone unfamiliar with Stirling University campus would find it difficult to find the Macrobert as external signage is not obvious.
Internal directional signage	Fine
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Full disabled access throughout from automated front doors to ramps for people with mobility difficulties and disabled toilets.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The show lasted 30 minutes which was appropriate for the target audience.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Fine
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	SAC acknowledged on the programme and on Macrobert's season brochure and website.

<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

**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.