

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**  
**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:** 7/84 @ Cumbernauld Theatre

**Title of Event:** **REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL**

**Type of Event:** PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

**Date of Visit:** 03/04/04

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named below. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or a Council Officer, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work, to the management of the venue if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report may be made available to Scottish Arts Council Officers, Council and Committee members, and specialist advisors as appropriate. It will 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 Council to report on the overall performance of its Core 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:**

**Very Poor** –standard falls well below what is acceptable

**Poor**- not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation

**Competent**– routine rather than especially interesting

**Good** –well conceived and executed.

**Excellent** –conceived and executed to a high standard.

**1. Artistic Assessment**

Please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the event

**1.1 Vision and Imagination.**

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> “We follow three characters who would have all considered themselves to be socialist at one time, but now have arguments about what the term actually means.”  The above implies rather a dry evening. The opposite was true. The play was essentially an attempt to create a political farce or situation comedy in the style of Dario Fo. Or at least that is the nearest reference point I can think of.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> The show was very clearly and robustly presented.  The style of the piece meant that the audience were clearly “present” and played to.  The positive reaction to the performances was testament to the energy and commitment of the actors.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

You are also asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with specific reference to the following:

**1.3 Script** (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions).

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The writer, Martin McCardie, had done an excellent job with limited resources. Inspired by the Mark Steel's novel, the play was structured as a political farce or situation comedy. I would have relished a couple more of the offstage characters (eg Michael's Tory fiancée) to have come onstage.  There were two rounds of applause to particular one liners – and the script was littered with jokes that were enthusiastically appreciated
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Given the limited number of characters and the dense verbal nature of the piece, the director, Stuart Davids, had done a very good job.  He did not fidget with the actors – always a temptation – and the phrasing of the interval and end were sound.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.5 Standard of performers- where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: It was a great pleasure to be entertained by three such excellent actors as Frank Gallagher, Maureen Carr and Neil McKinven.  They all gave wonderfully full and robust performances but without teetering over into caricature.  There were, inevitably, some moments when they were caught having to hold onto a moment a little too long but that was usually due to the limitations of the cast size.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

**1.6 Use of music** – in particular please comment on the quality and appropriateness of any original music composed for the production. Please indicate whether the music was performed live or recorded, in whole or in part, and what effect this had on the quality of the production.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The soundtrack by John Scott was a selection of popular music from the last 25 years.  Ian Dury, Paul Weller and the Clash all featured.  A running gag about the upstairs neighbour's dire musical choice worked well, once established.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: N/A
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent		

**1.8 Design** – including set, costume and lighting design. Please take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue, and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The design by Moley Campbell was the interior of Bobby's tower block flat. The window was a flat digital media screen that showed documentary footage and a nightscape.  Given the absurdist nature of the piece – the design was not overly naturalistic and at the service of the performers.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.9 Technical Standards** – please comment on whether the production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The lighting, sound and digital media were of a GOOD standard. The video editing by Diane Jardine was very GOOD and a great way of taking us through the historical context of the show.  The standard of construction of the set fell well below professional standards. The main door was not secure to the floor and so wobbled every time it was opened. This then moved the flexible material used to cover the flattage. It was distracting and shoddy.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.10 Overall production** – was the production successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material, and stated aims and objectives)

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: “Reasons to be Cheerful aims to be entertaining, accessible and politicising.” Lorenzo Mele. A/D 7;84  (1) Accessible – yes – it was great to sit with a full house that listened intently. (2) Entertaining - the actors made it a great evening out. (3) Politicising. It was political – but whether politicising – is debateable.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

Entirely.

**1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.**

The auditorium was theoretically full and a wide age range was represented. Some seats to the side were empty but I assume that this was due to sightlines.

The audience responded enthusiastically to the show – there were rounds of applause during the performance. The response at the interval was good and there were two curtain calls at the end.

It was a pleasure to see a good turnout. When I had last seen 7;84 (A Little Rain 2000) at the same venue I was one of an audience of 14 .

## 2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

### 2.1 Was the venue suitable for the event?

Very much so.

### 2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)

- range, quantity and clarity.

*There was an EXCELLENT programme – for which a donation was asked for.  
There was a Freepost card regarding the future of the company.*

### 2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc)

- range, content and when and where available. Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Please also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised. Comment on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information.

*The poster was very good and I had seen it and flyers at other venues.*

### 2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment  
GOOD
- location  
GOOD
- external signposting  
EXCELLENT
- internal directional signing  
GOOD
- access and provision for disabled people  
GOOD
- timing of event  
GOOD

2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering).

Very helpful.

**3. Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding** (if applicable)

Following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

*“The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display and exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, and computer programmes etc. “*

Please comment on whether the above conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

The SAC were prominently acknowledged on all material and on the comprehensive 7/84 web site.

**Name: Jon Pope**

**Date: 21/04/04**

**Advisor**  **Scottish Arts Council Officer**   
(Please tick above as appropriate)