



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: 7:84 at Lossiemouth High School (NEAT promotion)

Title of Event: Private Agenda

Type of Event: Performance & post-show discussion

Date of Visit: 15 September 2004

Overall Rating (Please rate the production 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.)

Competent – a well-acted and technically good piece. The main weakness lay in the script, which was a series of verbatim testimonies from people working in the public sector, and directly affected by PFIs. The result was a rather one-sided polemic rather than a piece of theatre – a pity because I think there was a potentially important play in there waiting to get out.

Name: Nick Fearnle

Date: 16/09/2004

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 below. 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 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, taking account of the following:

1.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	Competent	The company should be applauded for going back to their roots and addressing a political issue, an issue that potentially impacts on us all but is certainly not understood. However the production lacked imagination in the way it presented the arguments and issues. I didn't feel the audience was involved/engaged in a drama.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	It was very clear what the company was saying, what the issues were and the stance they had taken. The intricacies of PFI, facts figures etc were clearly conveyed albeit as a one-sided lecture.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with reference to the following:

2.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
2.1	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions	Competent	There was no credit in the programme for the script, although Peter Arnott was thanked. Since the testimonies were taken from nurses, teachers etc there was a genuine feel to the raw material. However I feel the production suffered from not having a writer that could have taken the material and turned it into an engaging drama that still raised the same issues but engaged and involved the audience in coming to their own conclusions
2.2	Direction	Good	The space was well used and the flow of different characters giving their testimonies to the audience was smoothly done. There were moments when I felt the script could have developed away from 'research material (eg Policeman and Skye Bridge protester) but Lorenzo Mele seemed to pull back from that temptation.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	Good	The cast (Tom Freeman, Keith Macpherson, Laura Smales, Anita Vettesse) played a range of characters between them and were convincing throughout. It was also obvious (through the post-show discussion) that they were clearly involved with the political issues being addressed.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Competent	The music was recorded and I only noticed the pre-show soundtrack, which I liked but didn't know what it was. There may have been some incidental music during the piece but I really wasn't that aware of it.
2.5	Use of Movement/Choreography	Competent	No choreography but movement/flow of characters on and off stage was well realised. Most speeches were directly to the audience and static.
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	Cast changed character quickly and effectively by simple change of coat, jacket etc. The set (Francis Gallop) consisted of three curved block sections around the acting space. The upstage central section being taller than the others and incorporating a screen that played video sequences and showed captions and quotes. Stage left and right were X-ray screens on to which the cast attached different photos/photocopies (translucent) of locations etc. The set was very fitting sterile/institutional grey/green. A lot of props that were not used but were dressing – water bottles, shelves with cleaning materials etc. Good lighting design.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	Use of video screen for film captions, quotes etc well used and very professionally operated.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	Approx 50+ mainly adult but a number of secondary school pupils (incl a party from another school). Well received. Many adults (but few pupils) stayed for post-show discussion. Unfortunately there was no 'guest' politician and so much of the discussion was the audience agreeing with what the play was saying. However one audience member did say that he felt the audience was only being given one side of the story ie PFI is bad, and that it would have been good to hear the other side.

3. Management of Event

¹ 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 parts, and what effect this has on the quality of the production.

² Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

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.

3.	Criteria	Comments
3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Good. 7:84 visited previously with 'Reasons to be cheerful'. They like the venue and have established a good relationship with Lossiemouth High School (their venue).
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good display of 7:84 material – including free badges.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	A NEAT promotion but with the school hosting it and taking on much of the publicity which was good and included a prominent press release in The Northern Scot
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Good
3.5	External signage and signposting	Lossiemouth High School is sign-posted in street
3.6	Internal directional signage	None necessary – it's clear where you are when you enter the building
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Yes
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	7.30 pm start. 75 mins of play followed by 15 min break and post-show discussion. Timings were appropriate.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Front of House duties carried out by an army of pupils. Very friendly and efficient and 'involved' in the visit. Refreshments served by pupils.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	On posters and flyers and website

³ These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

⁴ Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the range, content, and when and where available. Be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised, commenting on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information

⁵ The 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, 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, computer programmes etc.”
Please comment on whether these conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.