

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: 7:84 Theatre Company
Title of Event: Reasons to be Cheerful
Type of Event: Performance
Date of Visit: 3rd April 2004

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.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: An adaptation of a novel, this three-hander told the story of a reunion of old friends and explored their life histories and attitudes since their socialist youth. This theme felt rather predictable and the "celebration of anti Thatcher sentiment a touch routine. The new labour MSP and the new labourite comedian also felt a bit conventional. The exploration of two of the friends having "sold out their socialist ideals were unsurprising and unchallenging.
Very Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Competent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1.2 Clarity of Communication.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: For the most part the performances were clear but there were some lapses of audibility-particularly from Frank Gallacher. The storyline was well communicated and comprehensible.
Very Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Competent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The script was adequate to the task. I found some of the humour a little lame and unoriginal. The plot as such was also on the formulaic side. It was good to see live drama that challenged the prevailing political orthodoxy but a greater imaginative impulse would have been welcome.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	X	
Good		
Excellent		

1.4 Direction

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The movement of the piece was rather repetitive, with too-frequent pouring of, and drinking of, drinks. The comic timing was not particularly good and better pacing could have got more out of the repartee to comic effect. The Director (Stuart Davids) used video and stills images to illustrate past and present political situations which underlined the subject matter of the production. This technique is becoming over-used and while there is nothing wrong with it, it is not very imaginative.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	X	
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: All of the actors acquitted themselves well, but without any huge sense of commitment to and belief in their characters. The result was a rather flat feeling to the production.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	X	
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: Appropriate use of period recorded music.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	X	
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: An interesting wrap-round set with non naturalistic graffiti spray painted on it. This was not meant to be naturalistic but did create a suitable feel for the production. The use of the video projection to represent the view from the flat window worked reasonably well. Costumes were appropriate, although I thought suit worn by the actor Neil McInven was not quite sharp enough.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	X	
Excellent		

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

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Technically well presented
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	X	
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: This was a potentially interesting theme, but sadly the treatment was rather routine and flabby. The performers did not appear energised and there was not a high level of belief in the material. I thought that the direction did not succeed in making the most of the comic material and the overall approach was fairly conventional.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	X	
Good		
Excellent		

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

Yes- the audience was attentive and engaged. There was a warm response at the end.

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

A full house (restricted view only available). Warm response

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?**

Yes

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

- range, quantity and clarity.

Good

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.

A strong publicity image that work well on the print.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment - *Good*
- location - *Good*
- external signposting - *Fair*
- internal directional signing - *Good*
- access and provision for disabled people – *As far as I am aware, Good*
- timing of event – *A full night's experience for the audience*

2.5 Customer service

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

Good

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.

Appropriate

Name: David Taylor

Date: April 2004

Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

X

(Please tick above as appropriate)