



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: 7:84 at The Tron

Title of Event: Borderland

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 06/10/2005

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 This was accessible and entertaining theatre. However, it did not fully explore or expand on the deeper themes and issues, whether personal or political, which meant that it was difficult to engage with either emotionally or intellectually.

Name: Jaine Lumsden

Date: 11/10/2005

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:

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, taking account of the following:

1.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	Competent	<p>7:84 states that it wants to make high quality theatre that entertains and politically energises audiences. The political situation in Ireland remains topical. However, the production did not manage to fully contextualise the situation that the two characters were living in. The piece did not seem to be fully connected to the Irish situation, yet was too specific to Ireland to be a more universal.</p> <p>The idea of looking at the political situation through the effect of it on two contrasting brothers, mixed with various sub plots, some humorous, some very personal, had dramatic potential. There was a lack of overall coherence to the piece that meant that the various strands never quite meshed together. This resulted in a production that was accessible and entertaining, but did not fully explore or expand on any of the deeper themes.</p>
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Competent	The story was clearly communicated.

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	<p>By Andrew Doyle. The most engaging dimension of the script was the portrayal of the relationship between the two brothers. It reflected the situation well where family ties lock two different people together and the ensuing frustration and conflicting emotions.</p> <p>The political element of the story focussed more on the impact of involvement in Republican politics and the struggles of the brothers than on the actual issues of the troubles themselves.</p> <p>Doyle's experience as a comedian and sketch writer was apparent in his use of (often genuinely funny) one-liners. However, these were slightly over-used and were at times a little distracting.</p> <p>The script was reminiscent in some ways of Martin McDonagh's <i>The Lonesome West</i> (two brothers in</p>

			Ireland, humour, violence.) However, where McDonagh's play genuinely explores a twisted dependent relationship and uses black humour sparingly to great effect, Doyle's script remains at a far lighter level that never quite gets to the psychological core.
2.2	Direction	Competent	<p>By Lorenzo Mele. This was fairly static, perhaps inevitably given the setting of the piece and the decision to represent action outside the two different houses with video. The establishment of the relationship between the brothers was directed in a quite simple and naturalistic way, concentrating entirely on the dialogue, which worked well.</p> <p>However, as the production progressed there was little dynamism in it and too little variation of pace or changes of mood, especially considering the length of the play.</p> <p>The physical characterisation of Ciaran lacked subtlety, though this was perhaps compounded by the way the part was written.</p> <p>I assume that the way the video was used was a directorial decision? The video footage (see below) seemed entirely fitting to the play. However, it was used as a mixture of background and explanation of narrative, as opposed to a truly integrated element of the production.</p>
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Competent	<p>Richard Orr as Sean was convincing in his portrayal of a man with a very romantic view of the IRA, its current activities and history. His personal crisis at the end of the play was less convincing. Michael Condrón as Ciaran had in some ways a more difficult part to play, as his character veers from a hypochondriac with no interest in politics to something that verges dangerously close to a caricature. His performance was obviously committed, though it was difficult to fully believe in the change of the power dynamics between the brothers at the end of the play.</p> <p>Gareth Morrison as the mass murderer did exactly what he was required to for the piece.</p>
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Competent	Pre-recorded which worked well in the context of the production but did not play a significant part overall.

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.

2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	NM/A	See under direction
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	<p>Set designed by Becky Minto. This has the necessary versatility to portray two separate spaces in each act. The “trees” with bullet casings (or that’s what they looked like to me) were simple but effective.</p> <p>Video by Fifty-Nine Ltd. The video itself seemed appropriate for what it was required to do (see under direction) and the style of projection at the start was effective. The effect of the threatening projection at the end was somewhat diminished as it was partially blocked by one of the actors. (See under direction)</p> <p>Lighting design by Dave Shea. Apart from when the video was being projected, this worked well with the set. However, the necessary changes to the lighting to enable the video to be seen were unsubtle.</p>
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Competent	Professionally presented with no obvious problems
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction		c. 70% capacity? Laughter during the performance – some at the one-liners, some when there was bad language. Reasonable reaction

3. 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.

3.	Criteria	Comments
3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Appropriate
3.2	Information/interpretive material at venue ³	Display banner, flyers, free programme which was reasonably informative

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

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

3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Listings, venues brochures, flyers
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Fine
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fine
3.6	Internal directional signage	Fine
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Fine
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	This was quite long (2 1/5 hours) and overran slightly. Not sure how this effected attendance at the post show discussion as I had to leave immediately after the show or I would have missed my train
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Friendly and efficient (as usual.)
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Acknowledged

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.