

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

**Organisation/Venue:** Arches Theatre Company / The Arches, Glasgow.

**Title of Event:** NOT I by Samuel Beckett (part of three short plays in one evening)

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, work in progress, opens rehearsal etc)  
PERFORMANCE

**Date of Visit:** Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

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: Beckett's vision and imagination is truly brought to life with this dark, shadowy, claustrophobic, audacious and disorientating short play employing only the performer's yellow-lit mouth as she speaks, as if for the first time. This is an intense performance verging on the hallucagenic where the performer's stream of consciousness appears to break down creating a bizarre sense out of nonsense encouraging the audience to read between the lines and use their own imaginations.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	/	

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Clarity, in the normal sense of the word, is not something that Beckett strives for. Instead, as already stated, he likes to leave gaps for the audience to fill in. The solo performer (Pauline Goldsmith) portrays a startling sense of being imprisoned in her own head and a fraught sense of claustrophobia. She creates a persona that is both frightening and disorientating yet makes an absurdist sense.
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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Beckett - brilliant - no other comment required.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	/	

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: This is a spellbinding production of one of Beckett's most audacious short plays. The rhythm and language is superb.
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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: A spellbinding performance by Pauline Goldsmith relying entirely upon her voice and mouth. It managed to reach the heart of this infamous short play with great intensity and, rather than being overwhelming, drew the audience into her frightened energy, frustrations and stream of consciousness. The performer caught the dread and terror brilliantly.
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: No music. But sound was used - pre-recorded sound of clock ticking fast, and a very brief superb rumbling soundscape resembling a needle stuck in a groove combined with static interference.
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: Only movement was the mouth.
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 only thing visible on a dark stage was the mouth - situated higher up than a person would normally be, giving the impression that it was floating. This was lit with a yellow light making it appear to almost be a negative. Simple and effective.
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The only technical requirement was the yellow light.
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: <b>There were no stated aims in the programme. However this was a blistering, disorientating and mesmerising performance verging on the hallucinatory in tune with Beckett's bared down, at times poetic and always rich, darkly claustrophobic vision of humanity.</b>
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	/	

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

The audience was mixed in terms of age - from 18 to 60yrs approx. As this performance was part of the Beckett Festival I can only assume it was appropriate. Anyway, Beckett is relevant to anyone interested in exploring the darker side of the human condition.

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

60 people (approx 60% capacity). Reaction to the tripple bill was very positive. Beckett can be quite exhausting with its myriad of possible interpretations and reactions and its delving into the darker side of life. This audience (judging from listening to after-show conversations) found it fascinating.

## **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 - it was great to see Beckett performed in a small theatre where every detail could be clearly seen and heard.

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

- range, quantity and clarity. - press displays showing previews (no reviews at time of assessment) raised issues relating to Beckett. The free programme mainly replicated information already in the Arches brochure with the addition of short CV's of performers. It would have been interesting to read some Director's Notes.

### **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.  
Publicity - included in the Arches brochure and replicated on the website. Website was up-to-date and clear but provided nothing not already included in the brochure - wanted website to be more imaginative but it is a useful tool.

### **2.4 Accessibility of the venue**

- ease of payment - paid in person at box-office - no problems.
- location - cannot get more central than the Arches.

- external signposting - reasonably well lit.
- internal directional signing - no signs in foyer for theatre, some public asked where the theatre was.
- access and provision for disabled people - ground floor left - wheelchair access.
- timing of event - 8pm.

2.5 Customer service

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

**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. SAC logo prominent on website, brochure and programme.

**Name: Mark Waddell. Advisor.**

**Date: 29.09.03.**

Advisor \* Scottish Arts Council Officer

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*