



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: benchtours at The Brunton

Title of Event: Peer Gynt

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 27/05/2004

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.)

Good This is a complex and in some senses difficult play which demands a suspension of disbelief and concentration from the audience. benchtours treated this in a very apt way, creating a watchable and engaging production.

Name: Jaine Lumsden

Date: 20/07/04

Advisor
relevant title

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please tick the

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	Excellent	A very strong vision was apparent throughout every aspect of the play which was presented in a physical, highly visual and colourful way. The physicality/choreography, live music and all the design elements were well integrated.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	The fantastical storyline was clearly communicated although the complexity of the ideas did require the audience to concentrate.

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	Good	A new version by John Harvey. This had lots of changes in mood and pace and at times used language to beautiful effect.
2.2	Direction	Excellent	By Pete Clerke who demonstrated good and imaginative use of the set, concentrating on a highly visual presentation while using other elements of the production to heighten the overall effect. The large cast were well controlled and used to good effect in the movement sequences and especially in the depiction of the trolls. The piece started slowly but picked up its pace considerably within the first act. There were well-handled changes of mood and emotion, which ensured that the audience maintained its interest. The relationship between Peer Gynt and his mother was sensitively handled – showing a mixture of exasperation yet perverse pride on her behalf, and of obvious deep mutual love.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Good	Peter Grimes in the central role was strong and compelling and utterly convincing in the character's complexity. The rest of the professional cast played multiple parts on the whole with conviction and technical skill. An especial mention must be made of Tim Licata's excellent and highly entertaining role as the troll princess. The non-professionals performed well in the movement/choreographed parts but were less

			<p>strong in any speaking role. (This aspect obviously would vary from venue to venue as different community groups/students were used.)</p> <p>While this was a commendable and on the whole well-delivered part of a professional production, inevitably the professional actors' performances were of an obviously different standard. It was unclear to some audience members that the cast included non-professionals, which might reflect adversely on their perception of the company's standards.</p>
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Excellent	Live commissioned music which worked very well within the context of the piece..
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	Excellent	<p>Extremely good use of stage and set. The choreographed group pieces – portraying different emotions and moods was one of the best uses of a mixed professional/non-professional cast I've seen. The troll scenes especially were delightful and suitably surreal for the play. The physicality of the whole production was one of its main strengths</p>
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Excellent	<p>A well designed and suitably quirky set by Karen Tennent. The use of ladders on wheels was imaginative. The lighting design worked well with the set, enhancing the perspex. Costume design was of a good general standard, especially considering the multiple parts some actors were playing and the challenges this poses for a designer. Trolls!</p>
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Competent	A few lighting q/focus problems, but these did not materially effect the performance. As this was the first performance I would imagine that these would be rectified in the course of further performance.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	Production seemed appropriate to the audience, which was of a mixed age range. C. ¾ full? Good reaction.

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

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	Suitable
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Posters with a very colourful and striking image. Unsure where programmes were available (which is unusual for the Brunton front of house set-up.)
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Flyers, listings.
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?	Fine – this is a long play, but the finish time was still early enough for public transport.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Exceptionally friendly and helpful box office, front of house and bar staff.

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

3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	On publicity, website.
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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.