



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DANCE

Artist/Company: Edinburgh International Festival

Venue: Playhouse

Title of Event: *Ma* – Akram Khan Dance Company

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, informal showing, work-in-progress, etc)
performance

Date of Visit: 22/08/04

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).

3 – Competent. The quality of the production was good, but the choreography felt disjointed, and the stage too large at times for the company. Akram Khan had a different energy quality to his company, who suffered in comparison. The musical score was upbeat and lively, fully engaging the audience.

Name: Susan Hay Date: 30/08/04

Specialist Advisor Scottish Arts Council Officer ✓

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

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Vision and imagination	3	Akram Khan is a highly successful artist, blending kathak and contemporary dance. However, this piece seemed disjointed and the stage at times too large for the company.
Clarity of communication	4	The dancers were technically good, but compared to Akram Khan himself, had a totally different energy quality, and lacked his vibrancy. The musicians interacted well with the performers.
Quality of production – production's success in relation to stated aims i.e., in the programme or other printed material)	4	The fusion of kathak was not obvious to an untrained eye. The overall look of the piece was good quality.

2. Strengths and Weakness

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

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	3	Nine dancers and the three musicians were used. The work seemed very segmental, with no real connection between the sections. At times, it seemed choreographically basic. Unless specifically trained in kathak dance, the fusion, would have been missed. It just looked like a lot of whirling arms. During the piece, Akram said 'I'm going to tell you a story'. However, this was not told until much later, which is a shame as it did elucidate the starting point of the piece. Humour was used within the piece, which the audience responded to.
Performers - technical standard, performance skills, and ability to communicate	4	Akram Khan stood out as an exceptional performer. The energy of the rest of the company was significantly different to his, making them look less able, while this was not the case. Technically all the dancers and musicians looked well trained.
Sound – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	4	Live music with musicians on stage, which added to the enjoyment of the piece.
Design – costume, set, lighting	3	The design had a simple contemporary feel with white sand bags suspended from the ceiling to delineate the stage. Lighting was painful, with blackouts followed by intense lighting, which meant that you were effectively blinded for a few minutes and could not see what was being performed.

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Technical standards – technical presentation of the production (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc)	4	There seemed to be no technical hitches.
Audience – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	4	Seemed almost a full house. The audience generally seemed appreciative of the show.

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.

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Suitability of the venue for the event	5	The Playhouse is a large venue, with a large stage suitable for dance productions.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ¹	4	Posters were on the front of the venue and the name of the show on the title board
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²	5	I was aware of the Festival programme from the brochure I received by direct mail, which was informative and easy to read. Leaflets were available throughout the city in most venues. The website was easy to use.
Ease of booking and payment	5	Booking was made by telephone. Staff was informed and pleasant. I made further bookings on the internet which was very quick and user friendly.
Location of venue	5	Well situated at the top of Leith Walk, easy walking distance from Princes Street
External signage and signposting	5	Large external signage makes the venue easy to spot.
Internal directional signage	4	Internal signage clear.
Access and provision for disabled people	3	Not obvious. Steps leading into the foyer and to all levels. Did not see a lift. I'm not sure what provision is made for people with visual or hearing impairments.
Timing of the event	4	8pm is a good time, as it allows for time to eat without rushing before the show.
Customer service -	4	Friendly and helpful front of house staff.

¹ These include programmes, displays etc., assessing the range, quality and clarity

² Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the 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

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)		
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ³	4	The Scottish Arts Council is acknowledged on the Festival's website and in the brochure.

³ 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.