



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DANCE

Artist/Company: La Compagnie FV / Edinburgh International Festival

Venue: Playhouse Theatre, Edinburgh

Title of Event: *Contrecoup*

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

Performance

Date of Visit: Saturday 20 August 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 a dark, multi-layered production that was concerned more with its own processes than with engaging the audience. The complexities of the work became frustrating and lacked clarity of direction.

Name: Anita Clark Date: 19 September 2005

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle 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

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Vision and imagination	3	<p>Contrecoup, presented by La Compagnie FV is based on William Faulkner's <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> the story of Thomas Sutpen, a plantation owner in the American Deep South. The production layered scenography, spoken word, sound and images produced live on stage with the choreography in a complex production that lacked clarity of vision. The work began caught up in the different elements and complexities of the plot rather than enabling an exploration of the 'repercussions' of the title.</p> <p>Overall, contemporary dance had a lower profile at this year's Festival than in recent years, with this and Sasha Waltz & Guests being the only contemporary dance work within the EIF's dance programme.</p>
Clarity of communication	2	<p>The production was complex and often confusing. The spoken soundtrack taken from the William Faulkner's novel, presents four perspectives on the story. The text was in French with translation provided via two screens mounted in boxes at each side of the stage. Trying to follow the translation and the movement on stage became confusing. Unless one was familiar with the novel, it would be extremely challenging to follow the impetus for the action on stage.</p>
Quality of production – production's success in relation to stated aims i.e., in the programme or other printed material)	3	<p>In the programme, Francois Verrat refers to utilising a process of juxtaposing relative impressions, as seen by different people when devising ContreCoup. The work certainly presented different, disconnected perspectives but this was unsatisfying as it there seemed to be little correlation between the different elements of the work and between the performers.</p>

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	<p>The stage was dominated by a large, cylindrical structure which provided the strongest scene in the piece with the opening when a female dancer ran across the top of the structure before launching herself into the air. The work involved eight performers but there was limited interaction between the performers and their relationships were unclear.</p>

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Performers - technical standard, performance skills, and ability to communicate	3	All performers were strong and capable but were not fully engaged or physically challenged by the choreography throughout the work.
Sound – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	3	The sound-track involved original composition and the use of spoken text.
Design – costume, set, lighting	4	The moving, cylindrical structure dominated the space, seemingly representing the circular continuum of the characters story. It was striking and used effectively at certain points, but also took up so much space that it prevented a breadth of movement, when it was not being fully used. The 'live drawing' produced as part of the performances added little to the production.
Technical standards – technical presentation of the production (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc)	4	The screens used for the translation seemed small for the size of the auditorium and, from where I was sitting; I was straining to read them. The technical production standards of lighting and sound were well executed.
Audience – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	2	There was a small audience (approx. 30% capacity) and within the massive auditorium of Playhouse it felt very empty. The audience's reaction to the work was not particularly enthusiastic.

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	3	The large stage at the Playhouse was needed for the set, however the auditorium is far too large for the small audience that this production attracted.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ¹	3	A programme was available at £2.50. This was a booklet format and although contained some information on the production and the choreographer, it was predominantly festival credits and advertising.
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²	4	Pre-publicity included the festival brochure, post-cards about the specific performance and excellent preview press coverage.
Ease of booking and payment	5	I booked tickets over the website which was straight forwards and easy to use. The tickets were posted out to me.

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
Location of venue	4	The Playhouse is central and easily accessible by public transport.
External signage and signposting	4	The Playhouse is prominent and has good external signage.
Internal directional signage	3	Internal signage is not particularly clear but front of house staff were extremely helpful in assisting people to find seats.
Access and provision for disabled people	3	Although the Playhouse is an old, traditional theatre there is disabled access and spaces for wheel-chair users are provided.
Timing of the event	4	The performance started at 8pm and lasted for approximately 1 hour 15mins without an interval.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	4	Front of house and bar staff were friendly, helpful and efficient.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ³	4	Scottish Arts Council was credited on marketing material and the programme, in the EIF season brochure and website.

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.