



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: La Cubana/ Edinburgh International Festival

Title of Event: Nuts Coconuts

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

Performance

Date of Visit: 24 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.)

Excellent:

Nuts Coconuts was great entertainment and highly enjoyable but was also a very complex piece of theatre, playing with theatrical conceptions and our understanding of these. Exceptional performances by the full cast and a gloriously, visual production.

Name: Anita Clark

Date: 12 September 2005

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:

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, taking account of the following:

1.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	5	Nuts Coconuts is highly imaginative piece of theatre. Playing with the traditions of musical hall and variety but routed in deep respect and understanding of these forms. Highly entertaining, at points quite disconcerting but never without respect for the audience.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	5	The concept of the work is based on the communication between performers and the audience, and their ability to play around with our interpretation and understanding. It was an ensemble piece and all performers engaged effectively with the audience.

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	4	This was a 'concept' piece, rather than one driven by the writing. However, the script was warm, extremely funny and convincingly colloquial with many local references.
2.2	Direction	5	The production was well directed throughout the venue, with ease of movement from the stage and into the auditorium. The audience participation elements of the production happened naturally and were opportunities enthusiastically grasped by the audience.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	5	The standard of acting was extremely high with most actors playing a number of different roles extremely convincingly. I found myself studying the programme of the way home, cross referencing who had been playing which roles.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	5	The premise of the show was the Musical Hall and variety so the use of music was integral to the work. This was all pulled off professionally and with great style.

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	5	Similarly the use of movement and choreography was essential to the numbers – although primarily actors rather than dancers, the movement was carried out with style and the choreography was ideally suited for the production
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	5	This is a highly visual show which the extravagant costumes and design playing a vital part in the overall production values.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	5	The production had high quality technical standards that were well executed.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	5	The venue was approximately 80% capacity and the audiences' reaction was fantastic. Despite this being mid-way through the run and a number of reviews giving away the concept of the work, a great number in the audience were unaware of what was happening. So although there was some confusion towards the beginning, the audience went with it, allowed the show to unfold and reacted positively and enthusiastically to the production.

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	The starkness of the Out of the Blue Drill Hall worked well as the venue for this production. Although somewhat out of the city centre, it was easy to find and accessible by bus.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	A free programme was provided which added to the humour of the work.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	The production featured in the EIF brochure and extensively in advertising for the Festival. It had also received great interest by the press with a number of preview pieces and reviews throughout the run.

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.

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

3.4	Ease of booking and payment	I booked through EIF's website which was straight forward and easy to use. The tickets were sent out to me within the week.
3.5	External signage and signposting	The venue was easily visible and clearly signposted from the street.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	The venue had level entry and seating which provided easy access for people with physical disabilities.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The performance started at 7.30 (or was it 6.30?) and lasted approximately 90 minutes without an interval which was appropriate.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Front of house staff were fantastic, communicated effectively with the audience and played a key role in pulling off the unexpected within this performance.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Scottish Arts Council is acknowledged on EIF's brochure and website but there was no acknowledgement on the Nuts Coconuts' programme which is disappointing.

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.