



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DANCE

Artist/Company: Scottish Ballet / Edinburgh International Festival

Venue: Playhouse Theatre, Edinburgh

Title of Event: *Balanchine Programme*

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

Performance

Date of Visit: Friday 26 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:

An up-lifting and joyous performance displaying the incredible journey that Scottish Ballet has gone through in the past three years under the direction of Ashley Page. This was a significant milestone in Scottish Ballet's life, as the company made a much anticipated return to the Edinburgh International Festival.

Name: Anita Clark Date: 28 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	4	<i>Scottish Ballet Dances Balanchine</i> marked the company's first performances at the Edinburgh International Festival in 20 years. The programme enabled the company to show the world what has been achieved since its re-launch and its remarkable transformation, in some of the most demanding work in the classical ballet repertoire.
Clarity of communication	5	Balanchine's choreography is uncluttered, physically complex and has uncompromising musicality. Scottish Ballet showed depth of understanding of the work and delighted in sharing this with the audience.
Quality of production – production's success in relation to stated aims i.e., in the programme or other printed material)	5	This was a production of the highest quality – fabulous ballet company, gorgeous and rich orchestra in a programme of the most innovative artistic creators of the twentieth century – George Balanchine and Igor Stravinsky.

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	5	George Balanchine is one of the greatest choreographers and his work is to be found in the rep of the most prominent ballet companies throughout the world. This was a programme of three of his choreographies- <i>Apollo</i> , <i>Episodes</i> and <i>Rubies</i> – coming from different stages of his life and choreographic journey.
Performers - technical standard, performance skills, and ability to communicate	5	Scottish Ballet was on absolute top form for this performance, performing the incredibly technical demands of Balanchine's choreography with accomplished vivacity and elegance. Although it was very much a full company success, the performance of Eric Cavallari in the iconic role of Apollo, was for me, a particular highlight.
Sound – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	5	Scottish Chamber Orchestra played under the direction of conductor Nicholas Kok. The sound was excellent, particularly in <i>Episodes</i> and it was a fabulous to have the SCO and Scottish Ballet collaborating for this production.

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Design – costume, set, lighting	5	Balanchine’s work is always bared down in terms of design with simple practice clothes and minimal set to enable the choreography to speak for itself. Pristine design was consistent throughout with sparkling be-jewelled costumes in <i>Rubies</i> providing some added sparkle.
Technical standards – technical presentation of the production (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc)	5	The technical presentation was professional and of a high quality.
Audience – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	5	There was a good sized audience for this performance (approx. 75-80% capacity) and the company were given an exceptionally enthusiastic response for each piece and at the end of the evening.

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	4	The Playhouse is a vast, cold venue but Scottish Ballet succeeded in filling the stage and the auditorium with their energy and vitality.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ¹	3	A programme was available at £3. This was a booklet format and contained information on the three pieces and the choreographer, but is predominantly festival credits and advertising.
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²	4	Pre-publicity included the festival brochure, imaginative “stand-up” cards promoting the three classical dance companies at the festival, extensive advertising 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.
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.

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
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 7.30pm and lasted for approximately 2 hours 20mins with two intervals.
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.