



Scottish Arts Council

### ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DANCE

**Artist/Company:** Pennsylvania Ballet and Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of Moscow Radio / Edinburgh International Festival

**Venue:** Edinburgh Festival Theatre

**Title of Event:** *Swan Lake*

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

Performance

**Date of Visit:** Tuesday 16 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).

Good

This was a strong, visually stunning production of *Swan Lake* from Pennsylvania Ballet with superb orchestral accompaniment from the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of Moscow Radio. Christopher Wheeldon's choreography was imaginative and well crafted. However, the performances lacked the emotional engagement that can make *Swan Lake* a compelling ballet.

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	4	Christopher Wheeldon is an exceptionally talented and creative choreographer who brings integrity and an emotional intelligence to his work. He has developed a relationship with the Edinburgh International Festival with his work for New York City Ballet and San Francisco Ballet having previously featured. It was therefore fitting for his first full-length classic to be featured in this year's Festival. This loyalty to artists and commitment to seeing their work develop is a real strength in the EIF's approach to programming.
Clarity of communication	4	Swan Lake is the most well-known classical ballet. Wheeldon's approach was to revisit the synopsis and find a new setting for the ballet inspired by Degas paintings of ballerina's in the studio and backstage. This was well thought through and gave the work strong visual impact. The plot and the relationships between the characters was not easy to follow without having read the synopsis in the programme, but this would not have impacted on one's enjoyment of the spectacle and visual splendour of the production.
Quality of production – production's success in relation to stated aims i.e., in the programme or other printed material)	4	There were high production values in this performance of <i>Swan Lake</i> . In my opinion Wheeldon succeeded in his desire to create a production that ' <i>would connect with audiences who had not seen the ballet before</i> ' but at the same time not offend those who know and love the traditional settings.

## 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	4	The choreography is a re-imagining of <i>Swan Lake</i> , rather than a radical new version. Wheeldon shows respect for the Ivanov-Petipa choreography for the white scenes and a deep understanding of the popularity of the ballet. Throughout the work, there is humanity in the characterisation and an immense musicality throughout.
Performers - technical standard, performance skills, and ability to communicate	3	The dancers from Pennsylvania Ballet were technically proficient and in the corps de ballet sections were exceptionally well rehearsed displaying a high level of discipline. However, there was a lack of emotional depth and connection between the dancers in the leading roles of Prince Siegfried and Odette/Odile, leaving me unconvinced about the uncompromising, destructive power their relationship demands.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating</b>
Sound – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	5	Tchaikovsky's music for Swan Lake is so well known and the Wheeldon's choreographic interpretation empathised with the rich score. The Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra of Moscow Radio was excellent.
Design – costume, set, lighting	5	Inspired by Degas' paintings of dancers, this production brings to life those familiar images. The set and costume design capture these images and provide a lush setting for the ballet.
Technical standards – technical presentation of the production (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc)	5	The technical presentation was of a high quality.
Audience – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	5	The production was a sell out and received an exceptionally enthusiastic response from the audience.

### 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.*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comment and key reasons for rating</b>
Suitability of the venue for the event	5	The wide stage and auditorium with excellent site-lines is ideal for dance, particularly a large-scale classical production such as this
Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>1</sup>	3	A programme was available at £3. This was a booklet format and contained a synopsis which would be essential in following the work and two informative, background pieces. However the programme is predominantly festival credits and advertising.
Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>2</sup>	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 Edinburgh Festival Theatre is central and easily accessible by public transport.
External signage and signposting	5	The EFT is prominent and has excellent external signage.

<sup>1</sup> These include programmes, displays etc., assessing the range, quality and clarity

<sup>2</sup> 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

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comment and key reasons for rating</b>
Internal directional signage	5	Internal signage is clear and easy to follow.
Access and provision for disabled people	4	EFT is well equipped to meet the needs of those with disabilities and mobility problems.
Timing of the event	4	The performance started at 7.30pm and lasted for approximately 2 hours 45minutes 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 <sup>3</sup>	4	Scottish Arts Council was credited on marketing material and the programme, in the EIF season brochure and website.

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<sup>3</sup> 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.