



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Stella Quines Theatre Company/ Edinburgh International Festival

Venue: Royal Lyceum Theatre

Title of Event: Three Thousand Troubled Threads

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

Performance

Date of Visit: 31 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.)

Poor

Name: Anita Clark

Date: 28 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 | 4 | This was an imaginative commission with the vision to give a voice to a community who have little visibility within Scotland. It was a brave decision to give such a high profile opportunity to a writer who had not written for the stage before, but it is essential for the creative force of Edinburgh International Festival to be able to take such risks. A strong and experienced team, led by Stellar Quines were put in place around the writer. |
| 1.2 | Clarity of Communication | 2 | The production did not engage the audience and was weak in its ability to communicate beyond the superficial. There were just too many threads to the story in this production that one did not get the depth needed in the main characters to truly empathise with their situation. |

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 | 2 | <p>The script was the weakest element of the production. The dialogue was stilted and unrealistic so failed in providing depth to the characterisation. Principally, it was just too long and desperately in need of editing.</p> <p>Although this was the Chiew Siah Tei's first theatre production, I would have hoped that the involvement of the highly experienced Nicola McCartney as Dramaturg would have prevented some of this. I suspect that the rehearsal period simply did not allow sufficient time for the script to be worked through and the production rehearsed.</p> |
| 2.2 | Direction | 3 | <p>The direction was a stronger element, with the production being visually striking at point. Overall, however, the direction was too busy with layers of unnecessary detail. The video footage of Byres Road in the First Act, for example, did not add much to the overall interpretation of the work.</p> <p>As with the script, the direction needed to be stripped of the superfluous to the essential.</p> |

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| 2.3 | Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments | 4 | The actors were of a good standard and enthusiastically gave strong performances. Pik-Sen Lim as the mother was particularly compelling. |
| 2.4 | Use of Music ¹ | 3 | Original music was especially composed for the production by Kim Ho Ip along with additional use of existing music. The original music was atmospheric but not particularly memorable. All music was a recorded soundtrack. |
| 2.5 | Use of Movement/ Choreography | 3 | The use of movement in the overall direction was effective, particularly in distinguishing the different scene settings. Jane Howie is credited as choreographer; however there was little choreography other than Ying bopping to her personal stereo. |
| 2.6 | Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design | 4 | Set and lighting design were to a high standard and produced some atmospheric and evocative imagery. The shadow puppet section, for example, was particularly effective. |
| 2.7 | Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view | 4 | The production has complex technical demands including video projection, which were all professionally presented to a high standard. |
| 2.8 | Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction | 3 | There was a good sized audience for this performance (approximately 80-85% capacity). With the length of the production and its inability to engage, the audience was getting restless towards the end and it got a luke-warm reception. |

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 Lyceum was the appropriate sized venue for this production and was able to meet the technical demands of the work. |

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 Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

| | | |
|------|--|--|
| 3.2 | Information/ interpretive material at venue ³ | A programme was available for £2.50 which contained two contextual articles informed by interviews with Chiew Siah Tei - the writer and production details. However the programme is predominantly festival credits and advertising. A more imaginative approach to design and lay-out could be taken. |
| 3.3 | Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴ | Full details of this production were included in the festival brochure which was available extensively. |
| 3.4 | Ease of booking and payment | I booked tickets over the website which was straight forwards and easy to use. The tickets were posted out to me. |
| 3.5 | External signage and signposting | The Lyceum is within a central location and with good external signage. |
| 3.6 | Internal directional signage | The Lyceum is quite a complex venue to find one's way around. Internal signage could be improved to ease access. |
| 3.7 | Access and provision for disabled people | The venue has reasonable access for those with 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 7.30pm and came down at 10.20pm with one interval. As referred to under the artistic assessment, the production was too long. |
| 3.9 | Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering) | Front of house staff were helpful. The dress-circle bar was not open in the interval which meant that the stalls bar was crowded so I did without. |
| 3.10 | Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵ | Scottish Arts Council was credited on marketing material and the programme, in the EIF season brochure and website. |

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

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.