

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**  
**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:** Perth Theatre co-production with Mull Theatre  
**Title of Event:** Kidnapped  
**Type of Event:** Performance  
**Date of Visit:** 24 September 2003.

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 a Council Officer, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work, 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

**1.1 Vision and Imagination.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: I found this production pedestrian and unexciting. I had read the book many years before so was looking forward to seeing something which would add to my understanding of it. Having seen the work, the rationale behind producing this piece was not clear.
Very Poor		
Poor	<b>X</b>	
Competent		
Good		
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The programme refers to the time in which Kidnapped is set being a time when “our country and it’s people were struggling with identities and loyalties”. There was no sense of this to be gleaned from the production. It was a straightforward and pedestrian retelling of a literary narrative with little in the way of nuance, excitement, suspense or ambiguity. It demonstrated no sense of place, or difference between the places that David Balfour and Alan Breck visit.
Very Poor		
Poor	<b>X</b>	
Competent		
Good		
Excellent		

You are also asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with specific reference to the following:

**1.3 Script** (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions).

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The script, an adaptation by Robert Paterson and Alasdair McCrone was competent in pushing the narrative along but failed to bring any psychological depth to the characters.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The direction by Alasdair McCrone was dull and unexciting. For example there seemed to be no directorial imperative for David Balfour to show any emotion, even when threatened with death or shipwreck
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.5 Standard of performers- where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Acting seemed to be reasonable within the context of a dull production. I felt the actors were let down by the script and direction. However only Alan Steele as the murderous Ebenezer Balfour injected any sense of menace and ambiguity in the production.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.6 Use of music** – 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 part, and what effect this had on the quality of the production.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The live music by John Davidson was good and added much need vitality to the production. The soundscape, also by John Davidson, was interesting but at times intrusive and too long
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: There was little movement for comment
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.8 Design** – including set, costume and lighting design. Please take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue, and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The set was ingenious but overly fussy and took too much time between scenes to rearrange. Aesthetically it was drab and uninteresting.
Very Poor		
Poor	<b>X</b>	
Competent		
Good		
Excellent		

**1.9 Technical Standards** – please comment on whether the production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Technical standards were competent
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.10 Overall production** – was the production successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material, and stated aims and objectives)

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Foyer publicity referred to Kidnapped being a precursor to Trainspotting. This is not a comparison easily made and this production failed to demonstrate the validity of the claim. The production appeared to be aimed at young people as much as adult theatre goes but seemed to have nothing offer them other than a performative retelling of the text for those studying Kidnapped as a set book.
Very Poor		
Poor	<b>X</b>	
Competent		
Good		
Excellent		

**1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

The audience were mainly middleaged and over. A number left in the interval

**1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.**

Audience was approximately 40% full

## 2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

The event appeared to be organised appropriately

### 2.1 Was the venue suitable for the event?

The venue was suitable for the event

### 2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)

- range, quantity and clarity.

There was a lot of foyer information about the production which was interesting to read but ultimately frustrating given the standard of the production

### 2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc)

- 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.

All appeared to be appropriate although the programme copy made claims for the show that it was unable to live up to.

### 2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment

Trying to book a ticket for this show from London a month before was difficult. I sent through an email requesting a ticket, as directed by the website which informed me that box office staff would telephone to take credit card details. No one phone back. Whenever I rang the box office, I was held in a queuing system for up to 10 mins. I tried booking my ticket over a period of 3 days and was finally successfully. I was unimpressed by the box office service.

Good

- location

OK

- external signposting

OK

- internal directional signing

- access and provision for disabled people

OK

- timing of event

OK

2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering).

Catering in the restaurant was acceptable

**3. Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding** (if applicable)

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 and 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, and computer programmes etc. “*

Please comment on whether the above conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

Conditions of grant seemed to be met

**Name: Felicity Hall**

**Date: 20 November 2003**

**Advisor**      **X**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*