



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: **MULL THEATRE @ CAIRNDOW VILLAGE HALL**

Title of Event: **Jekyll and Hyde**

Type of Event: Public Performance

Date of Visit: **16/11/04**

Overall Rating EXCELLENT

There can be no more amazing experience in rural life than travelling through torrential rain and turn up in a village hall to find a warm, welcoming atmosphere with a substantial set and a very good evening's entertainment.

This was a new version of that staple of Scots horror stories by Robert Louis Stevenson. It openly chose to approach the story not by a repetitive retelling but by exploring the hypocrisy and guilt of the main characters. The true test of a staged version of this tale is the transformation of the two protagonists. These can be pretentious or hilarious. This was neither – it was a variation on the Spencer Tracey - fall behind desk and someone or something returns. In this case, the appearance of a man/boy/beast that cleverly evoked birth was a welcome surprise. This moment was greeted with silence – his return evoked wonderful horrified laughter. Great Stuff.

Name: **Jon Pope**

Date: **_19/11/04_**

Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please tick 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:

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 | EXCELLENT | It says a great deal about the stamina, enthusiasm and enterprise of Mull Theatre that they brought a fully staged, technically adept evenings entertainment to Cairndow. The weather was atrocious and we all thought of the cast and crew as they did the "get out" in a gale. |
| 1.2 | Clarity of Communication | GOOD | I rather enjoyed the atmosphere of the production – in that it did not attempt some slavish modish feel. The actors spoke clearly and the lighting adapted swiftly to the confines of the venue. Only the rolling about on the floor escaped some of the audience. But it being Argyll they just stood up ! |

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 | GOOD | I welcome the decision by Robert Paterson and Alasdair McCrone to try and tease out different strands of this familiar plot. I wasn't sure that the location of the play was explicit enough but my teenage son was provoked into a long and detailed discussion by the play. |
| 2.2 | Direction | GOOD | The action moved along without hitch or languor. However, too much of the first transformation took place on the floor and was obscured to younger members of the audience. Alasdair McCrone had got super performances from the actors. |
| 2.3 | Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments | EXCELLENT | Alan Steele gave a really "proper" central performance. He was not shy of conveying the horror of his predicament without resorting to contemporary mannerisms. Kevin Lennon was effective and a good foil as Hyde. I enjoyed Stephen Clyde's Enfield. |
| 2.4 | Use of Music ¹ | GOOD | The music by Martin Low was complicated and evocative. It was nice to hear underscoring used extensively and that the actors were clearly at ease with a technique that requires good projection and enunciation. |

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 | GOOD | The actors moved confidently over the set and extensive sets of treads. I wasn't entirely convinced that the later physicalized transformation of Jekyll to Hyde was entirely convincing – but it didn't, for example, hint at a spurious eroticism that is no part of Stevenson's intention. |
| 2.6 | Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design | GOOD | The costumes by Alicia Hendrick were in period and luckily did not attempt to "trendify" a piece that has no need for such attention. The set gave a nice backdrop and successfully evoked the wynds of Edinburgh. |
| 2.7 | Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view | EXCELLENT | The set filled the end of the hall to the ceiling and was substantial. What was more impressive was its solidity. It did not shift as the performers clambered over it and slammed doors. Recently, I have seen two productions that did not achieve this. Super to see a computer lighting board here - a first. |
| 2.8 | Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction | EXCELLENT | FULL - 87 – many larger venues would like to have posters, that days before, declared the event – Sold Out ! Everyone I spoke to really enjoyed it. There was warm applause at the interval and two extended curtain calls. There were a mix of ages from 11 to pensioners. |

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 | Given that the Village Hall was not purpose built to house theatre – it adapted most successfully. There was also space for the actors to change without the audience impinging on them. No separate toilet though. |
| 3.2 | Information/ interpretive material at venue ³ | There was an EXCELLENT free programme. This is often not the case. For those of us with teenagers it is a really good way to revisit the experience after the event. More biographical information on Stevenson would have been nice. |
| 3.3 | Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴ | Posters and leaflets were on display locally well in advance and clearly succeeded as the event was sold out, days before the performance. Good roadside signs nearer the time. |

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 | GOOD Tickets were picked up at the door after booking by telephone and all seemed to pass without mishap. |
| 3.5 | External signage and signposting | COMPETENT – the hall has extensive exterior lighting but no illuminated roadside signage. But its' geographical location make it difficult to miss. |
| 3.6 | Internal directional signage | EXCELLENT - The toilets and exits are well signed and the emergency lighting is easily visible. |
| 3.7 | Access and provision for disabled people | EXCELLENT Cairndow Hall has a disabled toilet and full disabled access that does not necessarily require assistance. There were no disabled members of the audience but I know that they would be welcomed with equality. |
| 3.8 | Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? | GOOD – The play was 2 hours plus interval. A West Coast rural audience – having travelled for an hour or more – require a good evening out. Finishing at 10 was ideal. |
| 3.9 | Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering) | GOOD. Nice and friendly given that the event is run on a voluntary basis. This is not the first theatre show that Cairndow Arts have promoted and I look forward to more. |
| 3.10 | Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵ | Mull Theatre clearly acknowledges the Arts Council on its promotional material and on its website. It's good to see that this has up date to date information (a local repertory theatre, in receipt of considerably more public subsidy, should take note) as more and more rural audiences are using online to plan their entertainment. |

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.