



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Mull Theatre at Mull Little Theatre

Title of Event: Cyprus

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 25/07/05

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 A well written play presented with very high production values. The piece entertained while also provoking thought.

Name: Jaine Lumsden

Date: 19/08/05

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:

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:

1.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	Excellent	In one sense a very traditional play in structure and set-up – a stranger introduced as a catalyst to a remote household, father/daughter/family relationships. However, it had a particular contemporary pertinence because of its subject matter of foreign policy within the context of Afghanistan, Iraq etc. The underlying issues were about the morality of intelligence and espionage and the use of violence, which in turn poses questions about the government's and the individual's culpability and responsibility for these activities.. A strong overall vision meant that the two levels of the play were intertwined and interdependent.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	The narratives (for there were several stories interlayered) were all clearly communicated.

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	<p>By Peter Arnott. This was a multi-layered piece with many sub-plots interwoven. This was technically well-handled. The dialogue was very realistic and helped to ensure that the shifting relationships between the characters was believable. Arnott showed subtlety in ensuring that what was not said by the characters was palpable and as relevant as what they actually uttered. This in turn helped to add to the tension of the piece.</p> <p>The “twist” at the end worked well dramatically. Sadly what the actual twist was came as no surprise to me which lessened its impact. This was a little disappointing in an otherwise excellent piece of writing.</p>

2.2	Direction	Excellent	By Peter Arnott. This had excellent changes in mood and pace, with humour injected at certain points. There was a subtle but apparent build of tension that ran throughout the play. The climatic final scene was well-handled and kept under control. The play itself did not require much movement from the performers as it was very dialogue-based, but the use of space ensured it never felt static.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	High quality performances from all of the cast. Sandy Neilson had a quality of stillness which was very appropriate to his character. Marshall gave a convincing portrayal of a complex and complicated person and her dramatic change of attitude to her father was very convincing. Stephen Clyde was exceptional in his portrayal of a character that could very easily have ended up as a stereotype with a less able performer.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Good	Commissioned music from Martin Low which added atmosphere.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	N/A	N/A
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	Set by Robin Peoples. This worked well for the production and within the limitations of a small and idiosyncratic space. Lighting design was unobtrusive, which was exactly what was required for this particular show.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	A relatively simple show technically apart from the stage management problems presented by the lack of space. Professionally=y presented.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	c. 75% capacity on a Monday night (small capacity venue – 43.) Audience seemed to be a mixture of locals and tourists and were very engaged throughout. (Much animated discussion during interval and after show.) Very good reaction.

3. Management of Event

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

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 intimate space worked well for this play.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Information/press articles in foyer. Well designed programme with interesting director/writer notes.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Listings. Possibly local press that I'm unaware of (performance was on Mull only.)
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	N/A arranged with company
3.5	External signage and signposting	?
3.6	Internal directional signage	Too small to need it.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Getting to the theatre up the drive could present problems for people with mobility problems.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Fine
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Friendly and informal
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Acknowledged

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.