



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Mull Little Theatre, Mull

Title of Event: Cyprus

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 22nd July 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.)

Excellent. Cyprus by Peter Arnott is an intelligent and well written piece of theatre commissioned by Mull Little Theatre. The play, with three actors, is set in Mull and is an involving drama about intrigue connected to UK foreign policy and warfare, with several subtle sub-plots concerning gender politics and familial relationships. Peter Arnott made this his professional directing debut.

Name: Sally Hobson

Date: 22nd July 2005

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	<p>This play was written by Peter Arnot, commissioned by Mull little Theatre. A very shrewd move. The play is written in the present day and explores intricately the corruption inherent in UK foreign policy, military and intelligence services. Dealing deftly with espionage and counter-espionage both in the public world and the private space within the family.</p> <p>Some of the outcomes of the sub-plots were totally engaging, and slowly revealed the author's perspective on individual responsibility within the state, and how savage life can be. The dissolution of a family torn apart by division that can be created by a life in the services ran alongside the plot line about how the UK no longer can deliver a foreign policy that reflects values of some merit.</p>
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Excellent	<p>Clear performances and direction helped what was a very convoluted set of plot lines. It was very clear from the dynamic created what was going on within the family and the relationships. Lots of suspicion and a total lack of trust between people - because of past hurts and disappointments. The microcosm of the family reflected beautifully the overarching theme of the play-UK foreign policy.</p>

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	Excellent	<p>A wonderfully well-written piece of work. At times not particularly easy, full of very complex plots and sub-plots, and undercurrents which were not really developed or explored enough by Arnot for a full inclusion of his audience. Occasionally leaving his audience wondering had happened.</p>
2.2	Direction	Excellent	<p>Very good. An intimate and intense experience in the small theatre. Everything was observed and watched by everyone. It's a bit like being in someone's living room and watching a drama unfold. Very good piece of programming.</p>

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	Excellent	A very strong cast, uniformly able. They worked very well together. Beth Marshall played Alison who is the daughter of Traquair, a retired officer in military intelligence played by Sandy Neilsen. Griffen is played by Stephen Clyde. All the characters were well rounded and very believable. There was a sense that these relationships were real since the connections and dynamics between each actor was palpable and convincing.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	N/A	N/A
2.5	Use of Movement/Choreography	N/A	N/A
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	A small and intimate space was created in an authentic and interesting way. The play set in a cottage on Mull. The set was very well designed by Robin Peoples.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view		High and to a professional standard.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction		The audience was very engaged and enjoyed the production. The house was full. All 43 seats were filled. The show would tour well to mainland venues. It would transfer to a mainland audience without having to lose any of the local Mull references.

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
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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

3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Excellent
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good information in foyer.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	This assessor lives on the mainland and this is a island based show. There was an article in The Herald.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Good – if unconventional – no tickets issued. Programme attached as proof of payment for ticket!
3.5	External signage and signposting	An island experience.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Not required
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	The theatre is complex in its geography. It is quite accessible in that it is a very simple building, but likewise had very little facilities. It is charming and well run.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Good
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	On programmes 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.