



Scottish Arts Council

**ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:** Mull Theatre at the Citizens

**Title of Event:** Katie Morag

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 21/09/2005

**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.)

**Good** This was straightforward storytelling for a young target audience. While the approach was not especially original it had good production values and a committed cast.

**Name:** Jaine Lumsden

**Date:** 20/10/2005

**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	Good	As somebody unfamiliar with the original books this seemed to be a straightforward adaptation aimed squarely at its target audience with all of the traditional elements one would expect in a play for young children (scary scene, underlying moral, audience participation.) While the production was not especially original in its vision it did appear to work for its target audience. The piece had a strong visual coherence which was probably its main theatrical strength.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	The story was communicated clearly at all times.

## 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	By Lisa Grindall from the stories by Mairi Hedderwick. I am not familiar with the books so cannot comment how true to the originals the script was. Grindall managed to avoid the usual difficulties of adapting book(s) for the stage and the script worked theatrically. The dialogue was good and avoided the trap of being too simplistic, despite the target age range of the audience. The script had a linear narrative interspersed with jokes and songs which offered chances for audience participation. The “scary” scene in the haunted ruin could have been scarier in my opinion.
2.2	Direction	Competent	By Gordon Dougall. There were some imaginative touches during the production, for example the use of puppets to represent the family departing on the boat and the use of the puppet horse head. However, there was little change of pace and a tendency for the whole piece to be delivered in a slightly monotonous upbeat manner. The physical use of the set was well handled in the ruined castle scene.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Good	The production required commitment and belief from the cast in portraying their somewhat two-dimensional characters. All of the cast gave this as part of strong ensemble playing. Kirsten Mclean as Katie Morag gave a very energetic and suitably enthusiastic performance. Kevin Lennon as Dude and Claire Dargo as Princess had the most interesting parts and both obviously revelled in them.
2.4	Use of Music <sup>1</sup>	Competent	By Gordon Dougall. This was unsophisticated and fairly obvious. However, this worked well for the target age group, especially for the parts where the audience joined in. The singing abilities of the cast varied, but this did not significantly effect the overall production.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	N/A	See under direction
2.6	Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	By Robin Peoples. This was quite literal, which was appropriate for the production. The main set was transformed between post office/cottage/ruined castle/stable etc. by the cast moving various pieces into new configurations. This seemed slow at times, but the end result worked well.  The costumes by Andrea Macphail verged on caricature (and possibly matched any illustrations in the original stories?) but this was exactly what the style of the production required.  Lighting design by Mick Andrew was relatively simple but was appropriate for this particular production.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Competent	Professionally presented.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	This seemed entirely appropriate for the audience of nursery and young primary aged children. Of those children I could see during the performance they all seemed engaged throughout and didn't fidget (usually a good way of measuring response.) Enthusiastic audience participation from the vast majority. Stalls seemed nearly sold out, unsure

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

			about the circles.
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### 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	Appropriate. Some sightline problems, but this was due to the small size of some of the children and was dealt with by front of house staff through swapping seats.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup>	Programme with pictures for children to colour in and in insert of one of the song lyrics.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>	Citizens' brochure, listings
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Fine
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fine
3.6	Internal directional signage	Fine
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Fine
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Morning performance which seemed appropriate – seemed to be mostly organised nursery/school trips. The length seemed appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

<sup>4</sup> 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

3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Efficient staff. There had been some mix up with the allocations of seats for block bookings and the front of house staff dealt with this in a friendly and efficient manner.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>5</sup>	Acknowledged.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.