



Scottish Arts Council

**ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue: Mull Theatre at Tron Theatre**

**Title of Event: The Lonesome West**

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit: 15 June 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.)

**Good**

A very accomplished production. Just a little on the long side for in my view, and very strong performances from the two lead actors, not quite reflected in the role of the priest. A little more detail in the design would also have helped to raise this to a higher level in my opinion.

**Name: David Taylor**

**Date: 23 June 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:**

**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	Good	A good choice of play for a Scottish tour taking in rural areas and urban venues. The staging was naturalistic which suited the text.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	The text was clearly presented and issues such as place, time and the narrative were all well 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	Excellent	I thought this an entertaining and yet emotionally charged piece of writing. In the tradition of Irish playwrighting it combined melodrama with strong storytelling, and meditation on things spiritual and ecclesiastical. The big themes of life and death, including parricide (cf Synge), were all there. The dark humour was always near the edge of bad taste and the playwright was not afraid to satirise the church with no holds barred.
2.2	Direction	Good	The direction was strong with the violence well handled within a restricted space. The modulation from humour to palpable tension and despair was achieved with skill.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Good	I thought the performances by Stephen Clyde and Alan Steele as the two brothers were excellent: they were completely convincing as two repressed and isolated individuals. They managed to bring the writing to life even when it teetered on the verge of overstatement and was in danger of descending into bathos. Beth Marshall gave a good performance as Girleen. I as less sure of Kevin Lennon as Father Welsh- his head movements were irritatingly repetitive and his whining voice lacked any kind of priestly gravitas to such an extent that it was hard to believe in him as a priest at all, rather than an inadequate/failed priest. He did do a good job of his key monologue, earning a deserved round of applause.

2.4	Use of Music <sup>1</sup>	Good	Well- chosen recordings of Irish folk songs used as curtain and inter act music.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	Good	No choreography as such, but good fight sequences referred to above.
2.6	Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	<p>A simple three-door set of flats suggested a poor rural home, but I thought that some of the detail could have been better. While it was shabby, there was not evidence of human hands on the door latches or light switches- a bit more of grubbiness would have helped. I also thought the set was under-dressed. While one understands that the characters had little or nothing, and the prominent role of the figurines was important, there would surely have been other personal objects around, and at least <b>some</b> food in the cupboards and some crockery beyond the much used glasses for potcheen.</p> <p>The lake-side scene was well realised – though again, the jetty looked rather fresh and not located in a real situation. The transformation between lake side back to kitchen was cleverly managed.</p> <p>Costumes were tellingly accurate. However, I thought that some better use of makeup could have added conviction to the priest's alcoholism. He looked rather too fresh-faced to convince as a toper.</p>
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	Technically well presented, including the tricky shooting off of the cooker panels. Gunshot cues and sound effects were convincing.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	The house was over half full and the response was active and engaged. A significant number of the audience were audibly amused and occasionally scandalised (in an enjoyable way

### 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.*

<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

<b>3.</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Good
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup>	Good
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>	A well produced flier communicated clearly about the production.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Good
3.5	External signage and signposting	Good
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	A little on the long side.
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 <sup>5</sup>	Good

<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

<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.

