

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**  
**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue: Scottish Youth Theatre**

**Title of Event: Our Town**

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, work in progress, opens rehearsal etc) **Performance**

**Date of Visit: Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August**

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 a Council Officer, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work, 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

**1.1 Vision and Imagination.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: To transpose Thornton Wilders play to a small Scottish town is a good idea. However to present its outdated and sometimes offensively stereotyped notions of marriage, couples, families, race and gays with little or no discernible sense of irony made the show a questionable choice I believe for a Youth Theatre. Now not that every Youth Theatre piece has to be another Zigger Zagger but I wondered about the benefits of the young people performing, despite its essential humanity, such a class based piece of theatre, with little or no relevance to their day to day lives. I felt that there had been little effort made re-interpret the play for a modern day audience and we were left with a sentimental work that preached some extremely reactionary values.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The story was clearly told the young performers all working hard.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>X</b>	
Excellent		

You are also asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with specific reference to the following:

**1.3 Script** (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions).

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The script was a successful translation and transposition of Thornton Wilders original into a Scottish setting. However much as Wilders original was a Norman Rockwell version of America this translation was a slightly Brigadoon version of Scotland. If satire was intended it was not achieved in this production.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Directing a large Youth Theatre production, where everyone needs to have some sort of go, to an audience of family and friends wanting to see their own particular charge do well, is never easy. However whilst this play seems to provide a perfect solution with a cast of thousands and a non threatening sentimental tale, for the reasons already stated I believe it was an inappropriate choice. The large cast and expansive Citizens stage were well martialled and the piece worked well as a slice of heritage theatre.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.5 Standard of performers- where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The performers all worked hard, "spoke up well and avoided bumping into the furniture". There were one or two excellent performances, notably the choirmaster who had a fine voice and the principle female lead Catherine Wallace who was very good and could comfortably hold her own in a professional company. A lovely caricature as well from Helen Milne as Prof. Beaton.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>x</b>	

Good		One weakness was the performers use of mime. This was used extensively throughout the show and whilst an important discipline to introduce the young performers too, in general I'm afraid its execution was lackadaisical.
Excellent		

**1.6 Use of music** – 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 part, and what effect this had on the quality of the production.

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> Some good use of unaccompanied voice and choral work. The music dove tailed with aims of the production.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> See comments above re mime.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.8 Design** – including set, costume and lighting design. Please take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue, and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> Costumes were good if a little unimaginative which I'm afraid probably sums up my feelings about the design generally. It suited the interpretation of the piece and reinforced the themes on display.
Very Poor		
Poor		

Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.9 Technical Standards** – please comment on whether the production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Well presented.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.10 Overall production** – was the production successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material, and stated aims and objectives)

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: From the stated aims on the website re education, training etc it is inappropriate for me to comment. However I find it hard to believe that the aim of making work that addresses the issues of young people was addressed through this choice of material, although once again I was not part of the process and this is mere supposition on my part.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?** Yes in that it was playing to family and friends but note comments about conservative nature of the piece.

**1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.**  
40, positive reaction.

## 2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

2.1 **Was the venue suitable for the event?** Yes. Good to give young people access to a major producing theatre with all its history and tradition.

2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)

- range, quantity and clarity. Good displays and souvenir programme. Specific show programme a little disappointing. More information required about the nature of the pieces chosen and the involvement of the young people in the production.

2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc) I

- range, content and when and where available. Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Please also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised. Comment on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information.

Prior to attending I was not aware of any publicity regarding the piece. The companies website is clear and up to date but does not seem to mention the summer pieces specifically.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue

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- ease of payment good
- location good
- external signposting poor
- internal directional signing adequate
- access and provision for disabled people Physical access good and staff welcoming and informed. Ramps and slope in theatre a little steep without assistance.  
There is no mention of signed or audio described performances in the souvenir programme and as much as one can tell I was not aware of any disabled or deaf performers amongst the cast.
- timing of event

### 2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering). Good see above

### 3. **Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding** (if applicable) In souvenir and show programme and on web site.

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 and 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, and computer programmes etc. "*

Please comment on whether the above conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

**Name: Garry Robson**

**Date: 21/8/03**

Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

(Please tick above as appropriate)

