



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: TAG at Cumbernauld Theatre

Title of Event: A Taste of Honey by Shelagh Delaney

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, work-in-progress, open rehearsal etc.)

Date of Visit: Friday 28 October 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.)

Rated - Good

Strengths - the script, the direction which achieved the essence of Delaney's script, and the fine performances from the cast, with particularly strong performances from Jo, Helen and Geoff. The set, costumes, lighting designs all worked well together to reflect time and place.

Weaknesses - some scenes could have been edited or cut completely.

This was an extremely good production, well conceived and well executed. The issues raised in the production then are still valid today. We may not view teenage pregnancy, inter-racial relationships and homosexuality as 'taboos' now, that is we do speak about them openly. But what is our society's *real* understanding and acceptance of them in 2005? 'A Taste of Honey' enables the debate to be continued.

Name: Phyllis Steel **Date: 09 / 11 / 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	Excellent	TAG's fresh approach to this piece of social realism evokes new debate and discussion about our society's current opinions on racial and sexual diversity which are perhaps more alarming and aggressive now than they were in the 1950s.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Excellent	This production is strong and clear in its message, well conceived and well executed.

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	The dialogue and language are superb - a true and honest representation of time, place and circumstance. Although some scenes suffer from too much writing and repetition, the overall piece is well structured with a good blend of naturalism (from the main character Jo), and cartoon with others as caricatures and stereotypes.
2.2	Direction	Excellent	This was a sensitive piece of direction and faithful to the original essence of Delaney's script. The main character, Jo, was beautifully developed and directed in portraying the innocence, naivety and growing maturity of the teenager, cleverly juxtaposed with the absurdly selfish mother, Helen, and the supportive but impotent friend, Geoff. The audience gets a full diet of realism and surrealism in the one helping, highlighting Jo's no-win situation, but fully exposes her tenacity and determination to find a way out of her hideous situation.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	Good	The standard of performance overall was very good, and in some scenes excellent performances from Jo, Helen and Geoff. English regional accents were convincing and well-sustained.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Good	Background music and sounds of the fairground were appropriate and well used.
2.5	Use of Movement/Choreography		N/A
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Excellent	The set worked particularly well, again portraying the sadness and madness of the time, place and circumstance, eg the use of the many doors were reminiscent of Brian Rix's infamous Whitehall farces; the down-at-heel, sparsely filled front room, the set enveloped in fairground lighting. The costumes were very well accomplished, although stockings with seams would have added a perfect touch! The lighting was very good and greatly enhanced the mood and tone of the piece - washed out, tired and again juxtaposed with the idea of music-hall, vaudeville and fairground.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	All technical aspects worked very well and to a high professional standard.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	The audience was fully engaged in the piece and was extremely appreciative at the end. The audience estimate is 90-100. However, it was not a young audience, and this was a bit of a disappointment. Teenagers would have found it very easy to relate to and empathise with Jo, the vagaries of her young life and her somewhat claustrophobic existence. Are there youth theatres or youth clubs who use the theatre who could have been targeted for this evening performance?

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. 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	Cumbernauld Theatre's horseshoe shaped stage is not an easy space for touring theatre, but the shape and design of this set overall fitted well.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Posters about the show were on display in the foyer along with front-of-house photographs and information about TAG.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	I was very aware of the show via previews and reviews in The List, Metro and The Herald. I also receive via e-mail information about TAG's tours and workshop programme.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	This was very straightforward with no problems.
3.5	External signage and signposting	There are a number of AA signs from Cumbernauld Station to the theatre, but the theatre itself is poorly signed.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Signage for toilets, bar and theatre all adequate.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	There is access to most of the building but not the public bar - there are a few steps making it difficult/not possible for a wheelchair user. The theatre bar is accessible as is the main theatre (via a side door and ramp) and access toilet. Room for improvement - physical changes required as well as more obvious promotion of access information to people with different needs.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	All aspects of the night out were good and appropriate to the audience.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	The box office, front-of-house and bar staff were all friendly and helpful.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	The SAC logo was clear on the front side of the programme and well acknowledged on the poster and web-site.

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.