



Scottish **Arts** Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Artist/company: TAG

Venue: Kings Meadow Primary School, Haddington

Title of Event: King Lear

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

Performance

Date of Visit:

Overall Rating (Please rate the production overall, using the ratings * below and taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses.)

Rating	Comment
Poor	I should note that in discussions with colleagues and other practitioners my thoughts about the show were very different from almost everyone else, where the production was highly regarded. The day starts brilliantly, with the question for the audience to ponder over, 'which of my children loves me the most'? I was fascinated to see how the day would develop, exploring this central idea and seeing a clear way that TAG could make King Lear utterly relevant to the audience. After the initial scene, the audience is split into groups and the day is set out for them and the workshops begin. After a while I realised that the initial

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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.

	<p>question raised had been almost completely forgotten and we were going to have a morning of basic comprehension rather than exploration, with the added factor of learning basic responses to commands so the children would be part of the action during the performance. So we had the interpretation of some of the language, some play around working in the castle and some discussion about what would happen in the end. In such a short period of time it was information overload and, for me, a real opportunity to explore a theme or themes had been missed. As an interactive workshop it was ok but as a way into King Lear for this audience it seemed very shallow. My question is why were they performing this play for this audience in this way?</p> <p>The afternoon session saw the production performed and I was interested to see how they would tackle the play and also to see the reaction of the children to what is perhaps one of the strongest endings in literature. The ending was hinted at during the workshops when one of the leaders asked the children what they thought would happen at the end. The children enjoyed the interaction, and had fun with being part of the performance. Then the ending came and Cordelia didn't die. And Lear before he dies gives his heartbreaking speech to the wrong dead daughter, and when the show finished one of the actors tells the audience ' in the real play they all die'</p> <p>My question remains, why do you want to do this production at this time for this audience? I have no issues with an adaptation of a story for a young audience, if that story has a clear relevance to the audience. Hamlet by Det Lille Turneteater and Of Mice and Men by Theater Mollen were both powerful adaptations that gripped the audiences they performed to. But the bottom line for any production for children must be, if you feel that the audience is too young for a story or if the story, even at a basic level, is too hard for them, then don't tell it to them. And if the reasoning is to get the children excited in seeing Shakespeare later in life then again I would question a watered down version with a cop out ending is the way to go about it. 10 year olds should be presented with exciting, dynamic productions aimed squarely at 10 year olds, and not with a view to them coming back to 'the real thing' as 18 year olds, or 30 year olds.</p> <p>I don't see any reason why it couldn't be King Lear that is presented to them. Following TAG's initial question as a hook for its audience I could see a thrilling and utterly relevant piece which, at the end, pulls the rug from underneath you by being so fundamentally unfair. And what child can't relate to that?</p>
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1. Artistic Assessment - please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the event taking account of the following:

	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Vision and imagination	poor	I didn't understand why the company wanted to do this production for this audience and the set up of the day and the presentation of the piece didn't convince me that there was a strong vision for the piece.
Clarity of communication	competent	As an interactive workshop the instructions were clear and carried out effectively.
Quality of production	competent	The production was not particularly exciting in its own terms though the children enjoyed the interactive nature of it.

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

	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Direction	competent	Guy Hollands is one of the most interesting and innovative directors working in Scotland. I think the expectations of 'doing' a Shakespeare in a school and the framing of the production got in the way of him producing the exciting and individual work he is capable of.
Script	Poor	My reason for a poor rating is not the rest of the script which quite skilfully moved directly through the piece but the changed ending which completely ruins the story.
Performers	competent	Sound performances though Lear's lines were quite often lost.
Sound		
Design	Very poor	The central piece was fine and could have been left at that..the stage and the silver paper were like something out of a bad Dr Who series.
Choreography		
Technical standards	competent	
Overall production	competent	The overall production felt very old fashioned in terms of ambition and realisation.
Audience	Good	The children enjoyed the experience and getting up and playing and being part of the show. My only point would be that they would have done this with any decent workshop stimulus, so why King Lear?

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.

	Comment and key reasons for rating
Suitability of the venue for the event	Good
Information/	Good

interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc), incl. the range of materials, quantity and clarity	
Publicity/ pre-publicity ¹	
Accessibility of venue	
Ease of booking and payment	
Location of venue	
External signposting and signage	
Internal directional signage	
Access and provision for disabled people	
Timing of the event	
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	

Name: Tony Reekie

Date: 9 February

Advisor



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 above. 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.

¹ Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the 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

² 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.