

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

**Organisation/Venue:** Theatre Babel at the Assembly Rooms (Fringe venue)

**Title of Event:** Thebans

**Type of Event:** performance

**Date of Visit:** 23/08/2003

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.**

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> A piece verging on the epic, based on three major Greek tragedies. A very ambitious undertaking whose universal themes of love, loss and war are pertinent to every generation.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>X</b>	
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> The individual stories were clearly communicated. It lacked emotional impact at times, which given the themes within the piece was disappointing.
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: By Liz Lochhead, who resisted the temptation to reproduce Medea #2. There was some strong dialogue and the chorus script was effective. What was missing was any humour – even the subtlest, blackest humour would have enlivened the script which was a little monotone, and would have heightened the sense of tragedy which (obviously) ran throughout the whole piece.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Simple, sparse direction which partially worked. The chorus also acted other parts and the choreographed movement that enabled them to do this was complicated, slick, but a little lifeless.  It was a very static production and perhaps because of this the actors seemed a little lost on the stage at times.  There was a perceptible energy dip in the middle section of the play where it seemed to lose impetus and slightly lost audience attention. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly why this occurred.
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: Generally competent ensemble acting, with some variation in the quality of the main roles. John Kazek was entirely convincing and had a powerful stage presence as Creon. Vari Sylvester did her best – but her strange accent and semi-nudity were incomprehensible within the context of the piece. Paul Collins seemed to grow into his role as Oedipus, gaining depth and emotional range as the play
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	

Good		went on. The reverse seemed to happen with Jennifer Black, who somehow lost power and the ability to engage the audience.
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> Pre-recorded music that was used well within the production to add atmosphere.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>X</b>	
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> This was very simple and in that sense was potentially very powerful. The device of the central circle onstage in which actors often stood when talking, and the relative immobility of the chorus, led to a visually static performance. This became a little boring to watch after a while and I felt at times that I was listening to a play reading as opposed to watching a performance.
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> Very stark and simple. The lighting design was excellent (as is usual for this company.) Good use of video, which was well-produced and worked well within the production.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		

Good	<b>X</b>	
Excellent		

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

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> Professionally presented with no obvious problems.
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)

<b>Rating for this section</b> <i>(Please tick)</i>		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> <b>Entirely successful.</b> This was a disappointing production given the expectations raised by the creative people involved. It did bring classical theatre to the Scottish stage, but it was all a little flat. It did not manage to portray the incredible depth and range of emotions that the stories on which the play was based contain.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>X</b>	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

Yes

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

Sold out (or nearly.) Good reaction on the whole.

**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.

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

Not clear – but this is a busy Fringe venue so I might have missed it.

**2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc)  
In Fringe programme and in venue programme.**

**2.4 Accessibility of the venue**

- ease of payment fine (Assembly Rooms box office)
- location fine
- external signposting fine
- internal directional signing not that clear, but there were front of house staff to ensure people went the right way
- access and provision for disabled people unclear
- timing of event fine - afternoon show

**2.5 Customer service**

Fine but not very welcoming.

**3. Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding (if applicable)**

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. “*

Scottish Arts Council Evaluation Form

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.

SAC acknowledged on website and print.

**Name: Jaine Lumsden**

**Date: 16/10/2003**

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*