

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

**Organisation/Venue:** Theatre Babel at Perth Theatre

**Title of Event:** A Doll's House

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

**Date of Visit:** Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2004; Matinee at 2:30 pm;

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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Theatre Babel succeeded in creating a high quality, rich theatre experience with an excellent ensemble cast (in particular Rebecca Rodgers as Nora and Stephen Hogan as Torvald) and creative team. An interesting combination of lighting, set and costume, also included well chosen music pieces.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Extremely well delivered and clear dramaturgy stripped of any excess: simple, clear and comprehensive.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
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 <i>(Please tick)</i>	Comments and key reasons for rating:

Very Poor		A very clear presentation of Henrik Ibsen's script, making it modern and relevant.
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		The actors were extremely well directed in regards to their emotional journeys and range. Peter McAllister created simple but effective conventions: a row of chairs to which the actors retreated, entering and exiting the scene rather than the stage. The stripping of the decorations from the Christmas tree - layer by layer - signalled the passing of time but also reflected the emotional stages of the relationship between Nora and Torvald. PMA created a comfortable pleasant world (distorted in between scenes) into which we were allowed to look, just like a real doll's house.
Poor		
Competent		
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:
Very Poor		An excellent ensemble lead by Rebecca Rodgers as Nora and Stephen Hogan as Torvald who made the nature of their relationship entirely comprehensible and believable. RR performed with great range. At the beginning displaying great lightness, later on sharing her descend into break down with the audience. RR's physical characterisation and costume was reminiscent of a doll, without being too contrived.
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
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.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The music was pre-recorded and not original. The quality and choice of the classical music was entirely suitable: bridging the scenes during the twilight moments of set changes, reflecting the emotional state of the scenes and characters, in particular Nora.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

### 1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Only applicable for Nora's dance which was a dissonant dance of despair, equally surprising and unsettling. The combination of the lighting and movement to turn Nora's expanded shadow into a twirling wind up doll against the backdrop was ingenious.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
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.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Fabulously simple and effective, stripped of anything that would take away from the actors and the script. A marriage of set, costume and light design. When entering the dimmed Perth Theatre we were made to feel as if we were looking into the window of a doll's house with pleasant, coordinating colours. A gorgeous backdrop reminiscent of antique
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		

Excellent	√	<p>wallpaper was made to fall at the end when the relationship disintegrated and Nora left her husband. A square carpet with an interestingly shaped sofa that disrupted the straight lines of the rest of the set. Even children's toys were arranged on the set, adding to the picture book image. Warm, beautiful lighting for the scenes with twilight side lighting in between the scenes signalling the inner life of the characters and installing discomfort.</p> <p>The costumes, like the set were period, beautiful to look at, and reflected restrictions or liberties of individual characters.</p>
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**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: Good. A few problems on the cross fades between light cues to start the scenes and sound level of music cues made the top of the scenes hard to understand.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
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: As stated in their programme: Theatre Babel succeeds in its aim to reinvestigate and reinvigorate classical drama while giving a Scottish perspective. An exciting, fresh and visually stunning production. Their aim of putting great works on stage has created a powerful contemporary insight into "A Doll's House" and has made it highly relevant. This production speaks loudly and clearly to a contemporary theatre audience.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

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

In spite of a modern uncluttered approach, the audience of this matinee performance, which consisted of mainly elderly people, seemed to enjoy this interpretation and had animated conversations after the show came out.

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

310 people.

Laughter at appropriate places, concentration and silence throughout the performance and a warm applause with 2 curtain calls at the end.

**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)**

- range, quantity and clarity.

The poster display was on a small scale. No obvious signs of reviews or previews. A Doll's House was included in the Perth Theatre brochure. Brochures, leaflets and programmes were all suitable for the style of performance. The programmes were clear and interesting, including comprehensive information on the cast, creative team, the company, playwright and play.

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

- 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.

See above. Brochures, leaflets and programmes were all suitable for the event. A preview appeared in The List in the week prior to the performance. I found the website easy to use, interesting and in line with the general artistic and marketing concept.

**2.4 Accessibility of the venue**

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- ease of payment
- Very easy
- location
- Central
- external signposting
- Good
- internal directional signing
- Good
- access and provision for disabled people
- YES
- timing of event

2:30 pm Matinee. As stated the performance lasted 1h 40 min without intermission.

2.5 Customer service

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

Professional and friendly

**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. "*

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

The Scottish Arts Council Logo was well displayed on all printed materials (posters, leaflets and programme) as well as on the home page of the company's website.

**Name: Magdalena Schamberger**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2004**

Advisor  Scottish Arts Council Officer

(Please tick above as appropriate)