



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

<b>Organisation/Venue:</b>	<b>Theatre Workshop at Tramway</b>
<b>Title of Event:</b>	<b>Black Sun Over Genoa</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b>	<b>Performance</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>5 July 2005</b>
<b>Overall Rating</b> (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.)	
<b>Good</b>	
Overall I viewed <i>Black Sun Over Genoa</i> as a good piece of community theatre which provided a rare opportunity for a large non-professional cast to collaborate on a multi-media production with a strong political focus.	
<b>Name:</b>	Angela Hogg
<b>Advisor</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Scottish Arts Council Officer</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Date:</b>	22 September 2005
	<i>Please tick the relevant title</i>

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	Good	<p>An interesting piece which capitalised on current political events. The use of film and other visual imagery, music and lighting provided a strong theatrical language.</p> <p>An inclusive cast took part which fits with Theatre Workshop's stated vision.</p> <p>However, while I enjoyed aspects of the theatrical presentation as outlined above (and am sympathetic to the issues raised) <i>Black Sun Over Genoa</i> did not impact on me on a deep level. (comments below).</p>
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	<p>In general, very strong and clear messages came through the piece. However there were some moments when the cast did not project sufficiently to the audience.</p>

## 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	Competent	<p>The script presented an interesting background to the lives of people involved, and in particular, how the location of the G8 can affect the local community. It looked at ordinary people living ordinary lives who were suddenly doing extraordinary things as they proactively responded to political events.</p> <p>It aimed to build up a picture of the people/characters involved and present a vision of humanity through stories, humour and pathos. This was aided by the use of <i>authentic</i> dialogue.</p> <p>However, in my view, the production presented a very <i>black and white</i> approach to the subject by depicting certain individuals or groups as specific stereotypes with no subtle (realistic) blurring of the lines or provision of space for consideration of the complexities of society and human interaction.</p>
2.2	Direction	Good	<p>A huge strength of the direction came through the interesting multi media effects used to portray the message of the piece.</p> <p>The use of lighting on the chorus (in conjunction with the half face masks) to accompany their <i>non</i></p>

		<p><i>emotional</i> chanting was very effective in presenting the political situation as a surreal farce. This added to the overall message being presented through the production.</p> <p>Very strong, interesting film images were used to portray issues eg comparisons of wealth and poverty, power and oppression, consumerism and waste.</p> <p>The use of large puppets was excellent in eg presenting a cynical portrayal of politicians.</p> <p>An excellent collaboration between film, live staging and lighting successfully created a strong, sinister image of the police waiting for protesters.</p> <p>Ensembles of different groups came together to create and present various aspects of the production which suggests that a positive, process of focussed involvement for participants was provided.</p> <p>However I did not feel that all of the various elements of this production merged together sufficiently to present a completely coherent and inspiring experience.</p> <p>The particular approach/role of each ensemble group in creating the whole production was not sufficiently galvanised to seamlessly create the <i>whole</i> production, in my view.</p> <p>A strong carnival effect was created through the lively and colourful performances/music playing of one ensemble of young performers. Their overall contribution portrayed issues and events through music, dancing etc. and was extremely effective.</p> <p>However the live text based sections did not always, in my view, have a strong enough impact to live up to the strong film and live visual imagery of other aspects.</p> <p>This is particularly where the production failed to have a deep impact on me. I did not get <i>under the skin</i> of any of the characters and was not able to follow through individual dilemmas to a point of total empathy. I do not believe the piece provided sufficient emotional connection with the characters and their dilemmas partly because of the writing and partly because there was insufficient depth to the performances at times. For example I felt the portrayal of emotional responses sometimes lacked subtlety and seemed to rely mainly on <i>shouting</i>.</p>
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2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	Good	<p>Good overall.</p> <p>The cast were extremely committed to the piece and, as outlined, I particularly enjoyed the performances of young people who provided the musical/carnival scenes.</p> <p>As mentioned above delivery of the text based elements were sometimes not as strong as the visual representations.</p>
2.4	Use of Music <sup>1</sup>	Good	<p>The non live music was often interesting and powerful and effective in adding to a sense of mounting chaos and despair. Having said that I also felt it was a bit too much <i>in your face</i> at times.</p> <p>The live singing was enjoyable and enhanced the creation of an authentic atmosphere and environment.</p>
2.5	Use of Movement/Choreography	Good	<p>The carnival scenes were vibrant and well staged. The dance based anarchist scene was really effective and looked great visually.</p>
2.6	Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	<p>The set, props, costume design effectively expressed the environment and mode of the piece. The puppets were great. Excellent lighting effects.</p>
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	<p>Supported the production well.</p>
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	<p>A busy house of people very sympathetic to the issues (the timing of performances was well planned given the G8 event in Scotland). A great reaction including a standing ovation, singing and chanting. Some people also clapped at certain moments throughout the show demonstrating that it had provided a meaningful experience. An international audience which may have included non theatre goers specifically attracted because of the theme.</p>

### 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.*

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

<b>3.</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Suitable.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup>	A comprehensive programme was provided.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>	Leaflets, emails and A4 handouts provided strong encouragement to attend. It was also mentioned in the G8 event material.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Fine.
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fine
3.6	Internal directional signage	Fine
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	A BSL signer was provided.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	It was quite long at almost 3 hours with an interval however there was enough variety in the production to keep the audience riveted throughout.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Fine.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>5</sup>	Acknowledged in the leaflet and programme I viewed. It was not acknowledged in the A4 (2 for 1 ticket) offer sheet.

<sup>3</sup> These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> 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.

