



Scottish Arts Council

**ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue: Theatre Workshop at Tramway, Glasgow**

**Title of Event: BLACK SUN OVER GENOA**

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

**Date of Visit: 5 July 2005**

**Overall Rating Good**

(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.)

This production's strengths are : the concept and the diverse range of professional and community performers who came together to create theatre. The large ensemble pieces were quite spectacular and were greatly enhanced by live music and song. The intelligent dove-tailing of video footage of the Genoa 2001 riots with characters' stories onstage.

The production's weaknesses are : the sometimes laboured script which reiterated rather than advanced the political argument; the variable standard of performance skills.

Overall, Black Sun over Genoa is a tremendous theatrical achievement and a good example of community theatre.

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.

**Name: Phyllis Steel**

**Date: 16 July 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	Good	It was astute of Theatre Workshop to mount this production at the time of the G8 Summit in Scotland. <u>Black Sun over Genoa</u> was well conceived and researched. It was an informative piece enhanced by the video footage from the demonstrations in Genoa in 2001; it was at times highly theatrical with large ensemble pieces, the use of narrator and Greek chorus, large scale grotesque puppets and the spectacle of 80 or so performers moving to live music and singing.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Competent	In the first twenty minutes or so, it was often difficult to hear the actors tell their stories as citizens of Genoa or protesters. This happened regularly throughout the piece and was both disappointing and irritating.

## 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 show evolved from a devised promenade production <u>Nothing Ever Burns Down by Itself</u> . The script, collectively devised by the company, reflects the strengths and weaknesses of working with such a large cast of actors, ie everyone is involved in telling the story, the narrative is slow to move because of this and each character's experiences feels too similar and many points are repeated to ill effect. On the other hand the large ensemble pieces by the protesters are total theatre and highly memorable. I feel there was room to cut a number of scenes, which reiterated rather than advanced the political argument. The script also was a tad too serious at the beginning in its efforts to describe the politics. However, in general it was convincing and some speeches, eg the one describing Carlo's death, was very moving and memorable.
2.2	Direction	Good	Overall, this was very good. Dove-tailing the characters' speeches with the video footage of the demonstrations was extremely powerful, effective and informative. The strength of the show was in the large ensemble pieces - very powerful through image and music.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	Good	The richly diverse cast helped to give the impression of the international anti-capitalist movement, but the standard of performance was very variable. Some performers struggled with the size and scale of the performance space. Their words were often garbled and sometimes it was difficult to hear what they were saying, particularly in the first crucial scenes when the story was being laid out. The cast displayed a mixture of confidence, stage presence and awareness. However, the show reflected the strength of people coming together to make theatre and for many performers - community and professional - the process, I can only imagine, must have been inspiring.
2.4	Use of Music <sup>1</sup>	Excellent	Both taped and live music were wonderful. Live music and song was a real bonus to the mood and feel of this historical event and it really made the large ensemble pieces work so well, ie when the protesters were in carnival mood or on a demo march.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	Good	Overall, the movement from scene to scene, and the movement within each scene with such a large cast was well performed. There may have been a missed opportunity to enhance some scenes with a specific piece of choreography, eg the arrival of the large-scale puppet replicas of the world leaders.
2.6	Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	Overall, all areas of design worked very well in recreating the look and sense of place and time. The clear stage enabled each scene to be set with speed and effect as the story moved from one group of protesters to the next. The costumes worked well, again reflecting the diversity of the movement - the frivolous pink block to the dank and dark anarchists.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	At the beginning, the sound did seem very loud and there may have been a few technical problems with this area. (This added to my annoyance of not hearing what the actors were saying). However, in general the production was very professionally presented.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	The audience absolutely loved this show. They applauded at all the demo scenes, joined in with the chants and songs, and were on their feet for a lengthy ovation for the cast at the end. They appeared to be very involved and moved by the show, and the coup de théâtre was the presence of Carlo's mother, Haidi Guiliani, who made a very strong, appealing, but non-sentimental speech at the end. The audience's response was electrifying.  The audience comprised of political supporters, many of whom were in the 'grey-haired' age range.

<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

			This was a one-off performance at Tramway. With all its virtues and costs, it is a great pity the show was not offered to a wider audience, eg school matinee or to have been promoted as part of the current Ya Basta Festival
--	--	--	---

### 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	The main stage at Tramway was an ideal venue for a show of this scale, enabling the power and emotion of the protests to invade the audience.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup>	The show programme was very comprehensive and free of charge.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>	Very strong images on the poster and throughout the programme.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Very easily accomplished and I was dealt with by friendly well informed box office staff.
3.5	External signage and signposting	I am aware of signs from railway station to the venue. I think there could be attractive signage at the venue itself - it isn't obviously a theatre for the first time theatre-goer.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Some areas around the cafe on the ground floor are quite poorly lit, so seeing signs for toilets is not particularly easy.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	From an able-bodied person's view Tramway in general appears to be easily accessible. Low level lighting in the cafe area might be a problem for people with visual impairments. The performance I saw had BSL interpretation and I don't know if an induction loop was in use too.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the	Show time was 7.30pm (started at 7.40pm) and finished at 10.20pm (approx.) I felt this was too long as many of the points and issues being raised were repeated. There weren't many children in the audience, and a few on stage, who obviously had a late-night pass to be involved!!

<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

	audience?	
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	In general, Tramway front-of-house and box office staff are efficient and friendly.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>5</sup>	SAC was well represented in all the print and publicity material.

---

<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.