



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Theatre Workshop

Title of Event: The Jasmine Road

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 7th October 2005

Overall Rating (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.)

Excellent – This production was very well acted, written and produced. The design and direction showed great understanding of the text chosen.

Name: Sally Hobson

Date: 7th October 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:

1-Very Poor – standard falls well below what is acceptable.

2-Poor – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.

3-Competent – routine rather than especially interesting.

4-Good – well conceived and executed

5-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	Excellent	The Jasmine Road was devised by the company from the writings of Ghazi Hussein – a Palestinian exile and directed by Robert Rae. The narrative of the production is based on the lives of poet Ghazi Hussein and activist Rachel Corrie, and explored a relationship between two fictional characters, Adham and Rowan based on the emails of Rachel Corrie and the writings of Ghazi Hussein. Programme notes explained that Robert Rae had visited Gaza to research and explore for himself life in Palestine. The play charted Rowan's exploration as she was drawn to the situation in Rafah, Gaza and the discovery of her passionate connection with the lives of people living there. Adman's character explored his exile, torture, persecution and relationship with Palestine and the people he had been forced to leave behind. This was a complex and intense experience.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	All the facets of these people's lives were clearly wrought on stage. The text and narrative caught intensely the predicament of Palestine and explored it in a genuine and committed manner.

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	Excellent	This is a devised piece of theatre. The writing is very strong and personal, drawing upon real experiences of suffering - the devised process allowed the non-theatrical sources to inform the very strong theatrical script without creating any sense of artistic conflict. The material was well integrated into performance form and structure.
2.2	Direction	Good	The play was sensitively directed by Robert Rae, and staged in a way that allowed it to be both sympathetic to the material and yet very bold. It was on the whole very simply directed driven visually from the text and the real lives of people as its core.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	Both Nabil Shaban and Marnie Baxter produced wonderful performances of great passion and depth. Nabil Shaban embodied through his notable and expressive performance the suffering of an individual connected deeply to this own personal suffering and that of his nation and people. Marnie Baxter encapsulated beautifully the passion and commitment of a youthful activist searching for moral peace.

2.4	Use of Music ¹	Good	There was a wonderful musician who played through the production – however no acknowledgement of the musician was made in the programme. The soundscape by Daniel Williams was very interesting and supported the action of the production.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	Good	Movement was limited to necessary action. Marnie Baxter was excellent when required to perform the tortured movements of the dying mother.
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	Alison Irwin produced a very beautiful and functional set for this production. The text, which was central to everything, was picked up repeatedly in the set by the clever use of stage gauzes imprinted with Arabic text acting as veils and backdrops. These gauzes were dropped at certain points through the production to reveal the unfolding of the story and to re-locate the action. It was very effective.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	The technical standards of the production were to a high professional standard.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	The audience were very engaged. This subject is not easy to understand. This was not an easy piece of theatre to digest, and on the whole the audience was supportive and very connected to the action. The strength of the performances carried the audience into this difficult material, allowing it to be poignant and deeply touching without preaching or moralising. The audience seemed to appreciate this. Any discomfort felt was because the material was genuinely affecting and distressing - not because there was a moral high ground being presented on stage. In this sense, this where The Jasmine Road is at its most successful – it educated by emotional and moral stealth allowing the didactic of these people's lives to do the real work. This undercurrent of artistic compassion jarred very slightly with the moralistic tone of the programme note.

¹ 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.

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

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	Good
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Posters in the venue. A programme for £1 to buy – this was incomplete omitting the name of the musician, and also some of the text was grammatically poor written. The biography of the writer has sections of text missing.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	On the website
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	OK
3.5	External signage and signposting	Good
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Good
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Good
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	On website, posters and programme

³ These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

⁴ 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

⁵ 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.