



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: TOSG at Mallaig Community Centre

Title of Event: “Coille na Ceilp”

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 3 December 2004

Overall Rating

**Good.** The strengths of this performance were in the music and the colourful set design. The majority of the actors were excellent and well received. The use of the sealskin belt to link the present with the past was a clever piece of writing. The main weakness was in the delivery of the lines with one actor in particular quite difficult to understand. In the opening scene (which set the play in context – the storm at sea), the sound of the wind and the storm drowned out the voices of the two fishermen, despite the fact that they were to the front of the performance area. Altogether a well worked use of folklore and the link to current environmental issues.

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Date: \_\_14/12/2004

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

| 1.  | Criteria                 | Rating | Comment and key reasons for rating   |
|-----|--------------------------|--------|--|
| 1.1 | Vision and imagination   | Good   | A legendary tale brought into context of today's environmental situation. The overfishing of our seas, the destruction of wildlife, litter, etc. tied in with the story of Neptune and the undersea world. An excellent use of sea creatures such as mermaid, octopus, etc.  |
| 1.2 | Clarity of Communication | Good   | Good involvement of children in the activity of the play as in the case of the chase, i.e. "Have you seen him/her?" and "Which way did he go?" as in pantomime style.<br>As stated elsewhere in this report I felt that the sounds and music were too loud in opening scene with some of the actors' lines being drowned out by the sound effects. |

## 2. Strengths and Weaknesses

| 2.  | Criteria   | Rating | Comment and key reasons for rating  |
|-----|--|--------|---|
| 2.1 | Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions                            | Good   | Imaginative use of legend and modern day situations. Some funny moments but I felt that most of the laughter came from the actions of the performers rather than from the script. That being said, the audience consisted entirely of primary school pupils and their teachers who may not all have been fluent Gaelic speakers.  |
| 2.2 | Direction  | Good   | I think that the direction was done as well as it could be. The tour was in its second last week and yet the performers still worked hard to make things work with good movement and slick changes when required.   |
| 2.3 | Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments | Comp   | Three of the actors were very good but one actor was not as good, perhaps due to lack of experience or lack of fluency in Gaelic. I had difficulty understanding some of the lines, which led to some frustration on my part. I would have to say that some of the singing left a little to be desired but I recognise that some of the actors are not established vocalists.   |
| 2.4 | Use of Music <sup>1</sup>  | Good   | The use of the clarsach for musical contribution and for accompaniment was an excellent idea and the placement to the left side of the performance area worked well. The music content was very good with some new (and appropriate) words to some well-known tunes. The clarsach player had the use of microphones, both for voice and instrument, which helped her but as the other actors had not it was somewhat difficult to understand all the words of their musical pieces. |

<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.

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|-----|--|------|--|
| 2.5 | Use of Movement/<br>Choreography   | Good | Good use of stage and entrance/exits on/off stage.   |
| 2.6 | Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design                                       | Good | Excellent costumes – colourful and well designed. The use of the boat as a multi-use prop was good, as was the reversing of the backdrop to provide the sandy shore look.  |
| 2.7 | Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view       | Comp | This venue did not have a stage and the audience was in banked seating with most looking downwards on to the performance area. I felt that there were times when the audience was distracted by off stage activity. It was perhaps not the best venue on which to judge the technical standard.... |
| 2.8 | Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction | Comp | The difficult task of “holding” the attention of school age children was not entirely successful – maybe this was due to the fact that some children did not understand (or indeed hear) the lines and it led to some unrest in, and distractions for, the audience.                               |

### 3. Management of Event

| 3.  | Criteria   | Comments   |
|-----|--|--|
| 3.1 | Suitability of the venue for the event                   | This is a superb new facility but the voices did not carry as well as I would have expected. The performance was done at floor level (without the use of a stage – if one was available!) while the audience of some 50 children and 5/6 teachers sat in banked seating on plastic stackable chairs. |
| 3.2 | Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup> | There were flyers on display but no sign of a programme or details of cast, etc. There had been some advertising in various newspapers (West Highland Free Press for example) and I did read a review of the play in the same paper.   |
| 3.3 | Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>                    | An advert in the West Highland Free Press enabled me to find out where the play was being performed. I noted that not all the performances were open to the public – I assume that some were for school pupils.  |
| 3.4 | Ease of booking and payment                              | Paid at the door – no pre-booking or ticket necessary.   |

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

<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

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|------|--|--|
| 3.5  | External signage and signposting   | No signs in evidence although the minibus used by TOSG was evident on my arrival in the village. I didn't notice any posters, etc. in local shops.   |
| 3.6  | Internal directional signage   | TOSG staff directed people into the hall.  |
| 3.7  | Access and provision for disabled people   | The venue had good disabled access and there were seats at floor level for anyone unable to climb the steps to the banked seating.   |
| 3.8  | Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? | As this play was targeted at the younger audience, and the performance lasted just under 1 hour, it was probably of the right duration. The performance commenced at 1.30pm and all the audience were seated by that time. I suppose that one or two parents or other adults may have attended had it been performed in the early evening (7pm or 7.30pm?) |
| 3.9  | Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)                   | Courteous welcome from door staff.   |
| 3.10 | Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>5</sup>  | Acknowledged on flyers and in newspaper adverts.   |

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<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.