

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: reader / Tramway

Title of Event: DUMB BUNNY

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

Date of Visit: Friday 10th October 2003.

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: Dumb Bunny revealed an ambitious imagination and playful inquisitiveness for the juxtaposition of ideas mixed with a leftfield sensibility which was tempered by a desire to please. This desire to please limited the tension and contrast of the performance and averted the possibility of taking the audience on a more fulfilling performance journey. The performance itself did not match up to the company's vision and imagination. They are, however, a young company with plenty of time to develop their vision. Their website (see 2.3) throws up many interesting ideas and influences.
Very Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Competent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1.2 Clarity of Communication.

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The company communicated a sense of curiosity and playfulness about the natural world and man's relationship with it. The performers could all be seen and heard clearly.
Very Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Competent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The script was based on various found materials (e.g. Karl Lagerfeld interview) as well as original text and was more interested in story-telling and ideas than the power and meaning of words themselves. Their choices were interesting and although they seemed unconnected at first, they all related to the theme of the performance - that of man's relationship with the natural world, how to make things better and the company's fascination with animals, real, surreal or mythical.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	/	
Good		
Excellent		

1.4 Direction

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: No director - but there was, I assume, some form of direction / outside eye involved in the creation process. The pace was gentle, unhurried and confident but the overuse of comedy meant that meaning was not allowed to develop its full potential. The construction of the performance environment (see 1.8) worked well.
Very Poor		
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: The performers were very competent, confident and at ease with the audience - engaging and warm performances. Unknown if performers trained or untrained.
Very Poor		
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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Pre-recorded music by the Inkspots. No original music except minimal banjo playing and some live singing of a lullaby. The company placed the music well within the performance.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	/	
Excellent		

1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: No choreography.
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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: At the start the stage was bare. During the course of the performance elements were added - plants, suspended and pierced sandbags dripping sand, cardboard penguins, sheets/sails. This live construction worked well, the performers creating a world for themselves which reflected the main question of their creation process - how to create a better world? The seating arrangement was also interesting - in the shape of a horseshoe so that audience watched other audience members as well as the performers creating an intimate atmosphere. Costumes, except one, were neutral and of minimal importance.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	/	
Excellent		

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: The performance's technical requirements were minimal - a few sound cues and lighting changes, but were well presented.
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: No stated aims in programme. However, website included many aims, too many to mention all of them here. In relation to "harvesting the results of impossible juxtaposition" and exploring themes of "wonder" it worked with the use of, at first, seemingly unconnected texts and their sense of wide-eyed playfulness. However the performance did not hit the mark on all of the following - "...dark, chaotic, often very funny and always sharp, sensuous and affecting", instead it focussed on the 'funny' and slightly 'chaotic', paying less attention to the dark and affecting. The company needed to take more risks. There were times when the performance appeared to move towards a greater poignancy but those moments were always either shrouded in humour or retreated from by playing for laughs. This reduced the potential emotional affect on the audience.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	/	
Good		
Excellent		

1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?

The audience was mixed in terms of age - from 18 to late 50's, mix of genders, all white. Majority of audience were in their early twenties, reflecting that this was a Tramway Dark Lights Commission for young and emerging practitioners.

1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.

45 - full capacity. Positive reaction.

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, Tramway has reputation with its Dark Light Commissions for supporting work that is difficult to classify.

2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)

- range, quantity and clarity.
Free programmes (one sheet double-sided) handed out - contained source material relating to the performance - ranging from "Zoology on (post)modern animals" to "The Lemming Year", a list of uses for a whale and text excerpts from source material. The intriguing programme hinted at the company's creation process and concerns.

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.
Company/performance included in Tramway brochure - informative, interesting, alluring. Preview in The List.
Website - easy to use, very original, info on current work, past projects, company, news and links - witty, clever and full of surprises - excellent.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment - easy - phone booking.
- location - Tramway, southside, easy access by car, bus, train and short walk from underground.

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- external signposting - can't miss Tramway.
- internal directional signing - very clear.
- access and provision for disabled people - ground level, wheelchair access.
- timing of event - 8.00pm

2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering). - F.O.H. - very efficient and friendly. Bar quiet but staff 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 company's website. SAC logo included in venue brochure and website.

Name: Mark Waddell.

Date: 20.10.2003.

Advisor * Scottish Arts Council Officer

(Please tick above as appropriate)