



Scottish **Arts** Council

**ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DANCE**

**Artist/company:** Siobhan Davies Dance Company

**Venue:** TRAMWAY

**Title of Event:** Plants and Ghosts

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

**Date of Visit:** 13 June 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 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:

**1.1 Vision and imagination**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		The theme of this new work from Siobhan Davies is growth, explored from a number of starting points and angles – embryonic movement through to the spiritual and emotional growth of the human being, at once liberated and constrained by the body. Although by no means a new theme for contemporary dance, there were several sections of powerful and striking images (the most memorable being the section accompanied by the text “she bit her tongue” and the sequence on stilts.
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of communication**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		Siobhan Davies’ work communicates on an abstract, cerebral level, and this piece succeeded in this way. I sometimes found myself wanting to be touched emotionally – the “ghosts” of the title being a potentially potent source – but I never felt stimulated or moved beyond the intellectual.
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

**1.3 Quality of production**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		A solid production from a seminal contemporary choreographer, performed to a high standard. The traverse style seating facilitated a very close view and created the sense of being within the piece.
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

You are also asked to **assess the strengths and weaknesses** of the event with specific reference to the following:

**1.4 Choreography (including originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc)**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

As noted above, there were a number of striking sections that elevated this piece beyond what might be expected from the thematic starting point. Davies is a fine craftswoman who draws on the physical characteristics and strengths of her dancers to create powerful, dynamic movement phrases and progressions. The dancers' involvement in developing the movement vocabulary is evident in the focus and control of their individual and collective performance.

**1.5 Performers – including technical standard, performance skills, and ability to communicate.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	✓	

The company benefits from having a number of dancers who have worked with Siobhan Davies for many years, and therefore a company "style" is evident. The performers were technically highly skilled and projected a sense of unity without creating anonymity.

**1.6 Sound – appropriateness of sound/music to the production. Please also 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:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

Max Eastley created a new sound installation for this piece, using ambient, electronic sound and incorporating a text piece by Caryl Churchill (“She bit her tongue”). The installation, like the seating configuration, created a sense of being surrounded and, therefore, immersed in the piece.

**1.7 Design – including costume, set, lighting design.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	✓	

The production looked beautiful. The white floor was the perfect canvas for strong lighting design by Peter Mumford. Simple, well-cut costumes. Effective use of props in one section (stilts, lengths of thick, bendy metal wire, and poles).

**1.8 Technical standards – comment on the whether the production was technically well presented (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc)**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

This was not a technically complex piece, in the context of international- standard contemporary dance. It was well presented.

**1.9 Overall production – assess the success of the production in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material)**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	✓	
Excellent		

**1.10 Audience – assess the appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size of the audience and record their reaction.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	✓	
Good		
Excellent		

**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 Suitability of the venue for the event.**

Good.

2.2 *Information/interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc), including the range of materials, quantity and clarity.*

A good programme brochure was provided by the company itself, with informative programme notes and detailed information about the company, dancers and creative team.

No internal or external displays were evident.

2.3 *Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the 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.*

I noticed a preview piece in The List and listings in the weekend papers. I also received a direct mailing, but I didn't see leaflets/posters in the usual outlets, nor the Tramway season brochure.

The Tramway website is easy to use and has up-to-date programme information.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue, including:

- Ease of booking and payment

Poor. I had considerable difficulty getting through to the box office, and when I did, the operator had problems finding the show on the system.

- location of venue

Good – although it's not central, it is easy to get there.

- external signposting and signage

Competent. Tramway would benefit from clearer external signage.

- internal directional signage

Competent. Signage is evident, but not obvious. Tramway would benefit from clearer internal signage.

- access and provision for disabled people

Competent. Again, like signage, it is there but could be more evident.

- timing of the event – Good.

2.5 Customer service, including: quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering).

Competent – front of house staff were friendly and helpful. As noted, box office staff had some difficulties.

### 3. **Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding** (if applicable)

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.

The Scottish Arts Council is acknowledged in the season brochure and on the website.

### 4. **Scoring**

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.

Good – a strong production in all aspects which sits well within Tramway's performance programme. I was disappointed by the poor attendance level.

**Name:** Cindy Sughrue

**Date:** 15/06/03

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

