

# THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

## Assessment Report

Organisation/venue: Traverse Theatre Company  
Title of event: Outlying Islands  
Type of event: Performance  
Date of visit: 06/08/2002

### 1. Artistic assessment

Please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the event - its vision and imagination; ability to communicate; and quality of production

The ideas behind the play (see under script) had great potential to be the basis of thought-provoking and engaging theatre. However, the production failed to “gel” and most definitely dragged throughout the second half.

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

**Script** (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions)

By David Greig. The script had almost *too* many ideas (islands in relationship to mainland, individuals in relation to society, the development of relationships between people when they are in a confined area for weeks, anthrax, impending war.) It was perhaps inevitable that one was left wanting to see the development of at least some of them, which didn't happen.

#### **Direction**

By Phillip Howard. The style of direction (very literal and natural) simply did not work with this script – which was neither. There was one slight departure from this style - when Robert is watching John lose his virginity with Ellen. When the direction worked with the script one got an idea of what the production should have achieved. Ideally it should have been presented to the audience in a manner that would have required them to think about the ideas. Instead it was directed in a way that handed the content out on a plate. Consequently the potentially engaging and interesting aspects of the play were lost.

On another note, I am exasperated with the twee presentation and bizarre accents that appear to be obligatory when a play is set in rural Scotland.

#### **Standard of Performers**

It is difficult to portray pre WWII upper/middle-class characters without falling into caricature, and at some points there was some danger of this. Generally, all four characters came across as two-dimensional and sometimes wooden. At times the pacing of the dialogue was distinctly unconvincing. Much of this could have been alleviated with stronger direction.

#### **Design**

The sweeping curved structure that represented the cliff was effective, especially when projections were used to represent sky/sea. (Pity about the distracting hairy grass.)

**Technical Standards** Good. The lighting design worked well with the set.

**Overall Production**

A frustrating experience. I would love to see the play produced in a different way, where I suspect it could be far more impressive.

**Appropriateness of production for the audience**

Seemed appropriate.

**Approximate size of audience and reaction to the programme of work**

Full house. It was obvious that the humour in the production worked for some audience members, and not for others. Reaction varied considerably within the audience from very enthusiastic to polite.

**2. Management of event**

2.1 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.

2.2 **Suitability of the venue for the event:** Fine

2.3 **Information/interpretative material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc.**

range, quantity and clarity

Script on sale. Posters.

2.4 **Publicity/pre publicity for the event (leaflets, posters, etc.):**

range, content and when and where available.

In Traverse programme, Fringe programme.

**2.5 Accessibility of the venue:**

Ease of payment Fine

Location Fine

Direction ?

Access for disabled people Fine

**Customer service:**

Quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)

Excellent as usual.

**3. Background to your visit**

3.1 Have you seen the work of this artist/company before? Yes

3.2 3.2 Is this your first visit to this venue? No