

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**  
**ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:** Traverse Theatre  
**Title of Event:** The Slab Boys  
**Type of Event:** Performance  
**Date of Visit:** 18 November 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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The play is now a modern classic of Scottish Theatre and this was a worthy production. The script demands a realist treatment and the production delivered on this. It would be true to say that the original production was ground-breaking and thus one would not expect a revival to really move it on much. Indeed it would be hard to see how one could bring significant innovation to the piece given the nature of the form and its status.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: This was a clear straightforward presentation which communicated well with its audience.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

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 still works very well, with great use of patter. If some of the quips seem a little lame they are compensated for by some great one-liners. One of the scripts achievements is to reveal the vulnerability behind the swagger of Spanky and Phil. The tragedy of their lives and the compromises forced on them is present as a sombre counterpoint to their bravado. The plotting is well constructed and creates a strong sense of dramatic tension with a number of resolutions worked towards through the play.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: As noted above there is a sense in which the director's scope for development is limited in tackling this piece. However, Roxana Silbert moves the piece with flair and humour. The Spanky and Phil skip and hop through the play with inventive moves and tricks. The potentially tricky humiliation and farcical re-entry of Hector is well handled. The final somersault and killer line at the end of the play from McCann is a treat-thought he somersault could have been a little more smoothly executed.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

**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: Good throughout. Interestingly I though Paul Hickey's performance failed to gain any real empathy for his character. Perhaps this rather unappealing portrayal was deliberate, and this would be a perfectly legitimate reading of the piece.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

**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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Pre performance and inter-act recorded pop music of the fifties helped to create appropriate atmosphere.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: N/A
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: A naturalistic set depicted the “slab room”. This worked well. Costumes were well observed and accurate from a period point of view. Lighting was appropriate.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

**1.9 Technical Standards** – please comment on whether the production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Well presented technically.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

1.11 **Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

Yes. A bit of a “first night “ audience which took some time to warm up, but seemed to have a good time.

1.12 **Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.**

About 90 % full, and a fairly enthusiastic response from this atypical audience.

## 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

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

- range, quantity and clarity.

The programme was in the form of the script. Various items of background material were displayed in the foyer.

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.

- Good strong publicity images. A good user friendly website with attractive images and useful information. See below re lack of SAC acknowledgement. The Traverse has a fresh approach to the use of email newsletters which complement its printed material with informal news and information.

**2.4 Accessibility of the venue**

- ease of payment-good
- location-good
- external signposting -fair
- internal directional signing- fair
- access and provision for disabled people-good
- timing of event-a full evening's worth

**2.5 Customer service**

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

Good.

**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.

No obvious acknowledgement of SAC funding on the website.

**Name: David Taylor**

**Date: 19 December 2003**

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

**x**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*