

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: **Traverse Theatre**

Title of Event: **The People Next Door**

Type of Event: **performance**

Date of Visit: **30 July 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: A brave undertaking that was searingly topical, hugely funny. It used many conventional theatre conventions, such as farce, mistaken identity to create something that was of the moment and touch a nerve with the audience.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

1.2 Clarity of Communication.

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The presentation of the production was generally clear throughout. One or two punchlines could have been a little clearer, and the time lag before the laugh came indicated that the audience missed crucial words at times.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

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: This was a darkly witty script (Henry Adams) narrative interest to hook the audience in. It engaged the audience fully through its dangerous gallows humour and its tackling of very sensitive, indeed threatening issues. Some were unsettled by the scripts cutting across PC convention, but I thought that it subverted tokenistic correctness by laying bare the realities of racial hatred and paranoia with such savagely effective satire. I thought all of the characters' speech patterns and vocabularies were entirely appropriate. There did seem to be a flaw in the logic of the play in that Mrs Mac did not recognise her neighbour Marco when she entered Nigel's flat. Albeit she had not seen him naked before, one would have thought that she would have recognised him. The script had a good root around in issues of identity, global terrorism, belonging, and the horror of international terrorism (institutional and otherwise) and presented these with flair and humour, and was ultimately an assertion of the value of genuine human relations in the face of global threats or police intimidation. The fleeting establishment of a relationship between the policeman and Nigel was both amusing and intriguing-creating a believable bond between oppressor and victim, with vulnerability transferring from one to the other instantaneously. The ending, however, was anti-climatic and felt like a bit of a cop-out, being just a little to re-assuring, given the mayhem and moral chaos that preceded it. It felt a bit of a Hollywood ending.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

1.4 Direction

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The Direction (Roxanne Silbert)served the play very well with good timing, excellent use of space and good pacing. Little details happening off the main narrative helped to enhance the story and create a sense of reality and other lives. The physical action and fight arranging was very effective –creating a real sense of menace and danger as a counterpoint to the dark humour.
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: A cracking cast, with a virtuoso performance by nnnnnnnn as the hapless Nigel, ably supported by NNNNNN as the nasty policeman. Eileen McCallum was surreal as Mrs Mac, and the actor playing Marco gave a strong performance, although he looked too old for his supposed 15 years.
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Recorded music was used principally as entre-act music.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The key movement related to fight scenes and these were very well conceived and executed.
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 comprehensively realistic set worked well for the play, crating the various spaces required to create a real worked and paying spaces. I think the naturalistic approach was appropriate in order to root the action in an everyday world and make the point that this is the world that we inhabit daily, and is not restricted to CNN news reports.
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Very well presented technically.
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: A first class piece of topical theatre that challenged and entertained. It was almost unbearably violent and physically and emotionally threatening, and in turn hilariously funny. This exemplified the ability of theatre to make the leap from the particular to the universal and to speak to audiences of their contemporary world in a meaningful and challenging way.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?

Yes

1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.

A full house who were very enthusiastic in their response.

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.

Due to the multiplicity of events on at the Traverse at the Fringe there is not much room for interpretive material. The script was on sale, but many may not wish to spend £2.50 , and no other cast list was available.

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.

As usual an attractive and clear brochure.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment- Good
- location-Good
- external signposting – not apparent in the vicinity
- internal directional signing- fair

- access and provision for disabled people- reasonable
 - timing of event- just a touch on the long side.
- 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.

I could not find acknowledgement on the website. Other acknowledgements are appropriate.

Name: David Taylor
Date: 1 August 2003

Advisor **Scottish Arts Council Officer**
(Please tick above as appropriate)