



Scottish Arts Council

**ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:** Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

**Title of Event:** Shimmer by Linda McLean

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2004

**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.)

This was a beautiful, poetic and daring new play given a memorable production during the Traverse's Festival season. The cast, direction and design are all excellent, and the overall rating has to be excellent.

**Name:** Alison Coates

**Date:** 9/9/2004

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*Please tick the relevant title*

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.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
1.1	Vision and imagination	Ex.	<p>The strength and imagination of this production is almost totally in the writing, which is structurally complex but hauntingly vivid. The set gives a wonderful sense of the imprisonment of the characters, both in the present as they shelter from the elements, and in their interwoven pasts (real and reflected). It contributes to the ghostlike portrayal of all six characters.</p> <p>It was bold, but typical of the Traverse to produce this risky new play in its Festival season.</p>
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	<p>This is physically a very static play, with its impact resting solely in the storytelling of its characters. The structure of the play, with its cyclical, repetition of events and emotions, and its voicing of thoughts takes some moments to adjust to. This could be a barrier to communication, but the tightness of the writing and the humour among the tragedy gives the piece rhythm and a clarity which is almost unexpected.</p>

## 2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with reference to the following:

2.	Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
2.1	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions	Ex.	<p>As stated above, this is a beautifully written play by Linda McLean – complex and uncomfortable at times, but haunting as its characters face their ghosts and come to terms with their pasts and their futures.</p>
2.2	Direction	Ex.	<p>A challenging play for director Lynne Parker as stories are repeated and varied, and thoughts are spoken out loud around the polite dialogue between strangers. The direction defines the structure and rhythm of the play beautifully and draws tight ensemble performances from the cast.</p>
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Ex.	<p>The three female cast members, Una McLean, Hilary Lyon and Lesley Hart gave memorable performances. The male characters were more weakly drawn, and the performances were less compelling, but overall the acting was excellent.</p>

2.4	Use of Music <sup>1</sup>		N/A
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography		Touching final dance – not really choreography, but beautifully drawn
2.6	Design <sup>2</sup> – including set, costume and lighting design	Ex.	Monica Frawley's set was stark and vivid – with water pouring down the back of the stage providing a constant backdrop to the grief-filled memories of the six characters.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Ex.	Well presented; well lit.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction		Very attentive and enthusiastic. Full house – wide age range.

### 3. Management of Event

*Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations.*

3.	Criteria	Comments
3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Excellent
3.2	Information/interpretive material at venue <sup>3</sup>	Good front of house displays; reviews; good poster

<sup>1</sup> 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 parts, and what effect this has on the quality of the production.

<sup>2</sup> Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule

<sup>3</sup> These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>4</sup>	Well advertised as part of Traverse season at Fringe. Well described in brochure.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Traverse box office as usual was friendly and efficient
3.5	External signage and signposting	Good.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Helpful staff to assist with wheelchairs, but access through backstage. Induction loop was working.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	As part of Fringe so not ideal at 12.15 p.m. on Sunday!
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Excellent as usual
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>5</sup>	Credit on all material and on theatre displays.

<sup>4</sup> Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the range, content, and when and where available. Be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised, commenting on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information

<sup>5</sup> 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.