



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

Title of Event: *One Day All This Will Come to Nothing*

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: Tuesday 29 March 2005

Overall Rating Good

This production is the first staging of a debut play by Catherine Grosvenor, clearly and dramatically fulfilling the Traverse Theatre's manifesto of being a new writing theatre. However, while extremely impressive when thought of under this label of being a first play – and while also containing some sharp humour, arresting imagination and touching characterisation – both the play itself and the production as a whole also have many limitations.

In terms of the production the most serious of these limitations are the result of an overly slow pacing and the poor use of the stage space, while the production's greatest successes rest in the central performances.

Name: Matthew Reason

Date: 31 March 2005

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	Good	A play about loss and identity that attempts to weave the narrative themes into the very style, design and tone of the production. Sometimes failing and at times at once both wilfully oblique and symbolically overly obvious but more often ambitious and interesting.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Competent	At times the production felt far too slow, especially between scene changes. While the objective may have been an atmosphere of elegy or longing too often the result was verging on the laboured and ponderous. A marked change of pace towards the end seems forced rather than a natural climax.

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	Good	First production of debut play by Catherine Grosvenor, difficult not to mark up for the welcome ambition, wry humour, engaging imagination and empathetic characterisation. At the same time sometimes overly abstracted and uncertain as to whether to aim for naturalism or almost absurdist symbolism. The two plot strands accompany each other very well thematically, but are forcefully and slightly painfully (and perhaps needlessly) yoked together at the end.
2.2	Direction	Competent	For too long the production is paced too slowly, with the frequent scene changes handled largely unsubtly. The stage area and design is used in a way that exacerbates this difficulty. Much more successful, however, in establishing some excellent performances from the cast.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Good	Good performances across the cast, catching the wry and off-beat humour, providing the atmosphere of longing and loss with a warmth and humanness. Excellent central performance by Molly Innes as Anna, and also Anne Lacey as Harriet, both allowing understated distress to emerge effectively from repressed personalities and social situations.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Competent	Pre-recorded score, supporting the production instrumentally and thematically.

¹ 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.

2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	N/A	
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Competent	Visually the stage design is very intriguing, a flowing shape appearing at once like water, glass or grass. While not perhaps actively at fault, however, the design does not offer any solutions to the challenge presented by the multiple scenes changes. While the fixed element of the design works well (a fold neatly doubling as a wall, a trench, a bath tub) the props are awkwardly and intrusively handled.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Competent	Seemed to take a long while to get the audience seated, which meant the production started ten minutes late. Cueing for some scene changes (partly those set in the bar) also seemed slow.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Competent	Mainly young audience, with the smaller Traverse Two space just over half full. In the small space the responses of one group of school students became slightly dominating, particularly their awkward giggling at scenes of nudity and homosexual kissing. Perhaps the pace of the production failed to draw them into the characters and emotions to the extent that such awkwardness could be left behind, leaving them too much space to think about themselves and their peers.

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	Fine.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good display material in venue, including reviews, photographs and posters. As usual with the Traverse the programme is pricy but contains the full script. Would be useful to include at least some textual introduction in the programme.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Excellent, good brochure and extensive website.

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

³ These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

⁴ 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

3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Fine, no problems.
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fine, no problems.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Fine, no problems.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	As far as I was aware, fine.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Fine, no problems.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Excellent.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Good. Present on all print, programmes, website etc.

⁵ 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.