



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Traverse Theatre

Title of Event: The Found Man

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 2 August 2005

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.)

Good

Although this was a preview, there was no real evidence of its being unprepared- despite a half hour delay in starting.

The production was very professionally delivered with strong performances and good direction. The play itself was absorbing but the thematic content was somewhat laboured. The direction could have brought more heightened tension and a sense of terror which would have made the whole experience more compelling.

Name: David Taylor

Date: 4 August 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 powerful, mythic play that tackled big themes. A suitable undertaking for a Traverse Festival production.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Excellent	The production was very clear in its approach and delivery.

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	<p>The script created a mythic and mystic island world where elemental themes were worked through. The resonances were many :thematic similarities with Beckett's <i>Godot</i>, Miller's <i>Crucible</i>, Synge's <i>Playboy</i> and not least Shakespeare's <i>Tempest</i>. Added to this were strong Biblical allusions reflected in the naming of the characters (Agnes the innocent martyr, Mary the vessel of God's conception, Rafter the roof tree of the community etc etc) and of course the themes of redemption, sin and resurrection. However this tended to lead to thematic over-load with the audience having to work extra hard to follow the unravelling threads, far less resolve them on an intellectual level. The overall result was a text that felt self-consciously over-burdened with too much significance which created a drag on the dramatic dynamic.</p> <p>The key moral dilemmas were however, compelling and had strong contemporary relevance: a society under real or perceived threat, the gullible lead by false leadership, and the projection of fear on to "the other" in the search for a scapegoat. I think these could have been allowed to stand rather less encumbered by extended metaphor and the drama allowed to speak for itself.</p> <p>I thought there were some infelicities in the language that jarred- such as the use of "get out of my face"(or similar), and John's shout of "I know you're in there", and Moffat's rather feeble call of "men!" to the fishermen after Agnes' return. Overall thought I thought this an interesting and absorbing text, if slightly overwrought.</p>

2.2	Direction	Good	The direction was slow paced and I think this worked to create a sense of timelessness and the sense of elemental forces at work. Some aspects of the direction were hard to fathom, such as Mary and John's reluctance to touch the found man in the first instance. Or was this explained through the later reference to possible "sores" (plague). Perhaps, but this again required a lot of supposition on the part of the viewer. The direction did not I think succeed in creating enough tension or horror to really drive the piece. The death scene did not appal except on a moral and cerebral level and I felt that more of the thriller and less of the morality tale would have helped it as a drama. I thought that the simplicity of the staging and design was successful and the avoidance of clutter helped the production.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	This was a fine cast with a particularly impressive presence from John Stahl.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Good	The sound effects, rather than music, were very effective. The storm scene very well realised. The offstage crowd noises perhaps a little less convincing.
2.5	Use of Movement/Choreography		No choreography as such
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	Suitably sparse and simple. Good use of lighting and good costuming. The set felt a little tight within the space and the down-stage scene with Moffat and the keel was awkward and felt like a real compromise.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	Well executed.

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

2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	The audience was very attentive and responded well at the end of the play. It was a full house for this Fringe preview. Anecdotal response I heard indicated that some people found the play rather ponderous.
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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	Good- although the action appeared physically constrained by the size of the stage- see above.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Good- although the front cover of the well-produced brochure did not seem to really relate to or reflect the varies and interesting contents.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Good
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fair
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Fair
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good- part from delayed start.

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

3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Good
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Good

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.