

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Organisation/Venue: Suspect Culture at the Tron

Title of Event: Lament

Type of Event: performance

Date of Visit: April 5 2002

1. Artistic Assessment

- 1.1 Please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the event - its Vision and Imagination; Ability to Communicate; and Quality of Production.

An original approach that dealt obliquely with issues that surely affect us all. There was no real narrative or plot and so this may have presented difficulties to those not used to the company's work. The quality of the writing and presentation was high.

- 1.2 You are also asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with specific reference to the following:

- Script (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions)
This was a new piece by David Greig, arising from a collaborative process with members of the company. The piece started with pre-recorded "confessions" by the cast members shown on video. Eventually the cast members began to repeat the lines spoken by their video selves. This established a link between the Actors and their real selves. In their statements they described themselves in their favourite style of dress, and owned up to their fantasy lifestyle. These were used as bases for the ensuing scenes.

The piece was a lament for the loss of liberal values- this was expressed explicitly (and I thought with a touch of banality) in a loss of faith in the Guardian newspaper. At a deeper level there was regret for the inability to grasp what was going on in the world, and what it might mean to act morally, or to take "right" action. There was a series of scenes which attempted to tell a story, but in which the storyteller forgot the key word or

event. Was this a demonstration of collective amnesia? The characters all seemed self-absorbed, perhaps a reaction to their inability to act or influence the world in any coherent way. The fact that all acts have consequences was acknowledged, but the chain of events is so extended on a global scale that one cannot ever predict, or even know, what the results (for good or evil) of one's actions might be.

I thought it admirable that the piece was able to express rather than describe these feelings, and this was a major strength of the piece. Where it was less successful was where it became too specific- e.g. the reference to the Guardian, and the strange scene relating to George Bush's brush with the near-fatal pretzel, which seemed out of place.

The production veered dangerously close to the pretentious and the self indulgent, and I am sure there are many that would find that their overriding impression. I managed to suppress these feelings in favour of respect for a subtle and considered attempt to honestly show some of the moral complexities of contemporary life.

- Direction

The direction was really interwoven with the devising of the piece. In this it enjoyed the same strengths and weaknesses of the script. I was not keen on the final scenes where the cast seemed to revert to a communal/tribal non-verbal wail. Was this their only response in the face of the difficulty of expressing their predicament? Surely this was bit of a cop out?

The music was appropriate and supported the production. In the final scenes where the pianist came out front to play the volume level was too high and drowned out the text spoken by the actors.

- Standard of performers

Good performances all round. There was a lightness of touch and self mockery in a number of performances that helped them to side-step the trap of portentousness. In others there was just a little too much seriousness.

- Design

The set was clever and effective. There was an on-going video display of news bulletins, shopping channels and financial indices. These, together with the

effective representation of airline flight routes created a sense of the global economy and politics.

Costumes were street clothes, and these were appropriate.

- Technical Standards

Technically the production was well presented.

- Overall Production

I thought this was a stimulating piece. As mentioned, there was a danger of straying into the self-indulgent but I think that the thoughtfulness of the script and the skill in presentation helped it to transcend that accusation.

- Appropriateness of production for the audience
Appropriate for a Tron audience I would say.

- Approximate size of audience and reaction to the programme of work

About one third full I think-which was disappointing for what is a relatively short run. Reaction was fairly average, I would say- one young woman in front of me fell asleep.

2. Management of Event

2.1 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.

2.2 Suitability of the venue for the event:

Good

2.3 **Information/Interpretative material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc.**

- range, quantity and clarity.

2.4 **Publicity/Pre Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc.):**

- range, content and when and where available.

2.5 **Accessibility of the venue:**

