



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Ek at the Tron Theatre (Co Production)

Title of Event: Habitats

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 3 November 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.)

Excellent

A difficult but rewarding play, given a careful and thoughtful production, with high production and performance standards.

Name: David Taylor

Date: 4 November 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	Excellent	This was a brave production of a difficult script. It is not a piece that is lively to appeal to a wide audience, but it has an intellectual seriousness and emotional power that made it a worthwhile project. The feel of the production was akin to a visual art installation. There were resonances with recent work such as Whiteread's "House" and John Landy's "Semi-Detached" in so far as location and the "habitats" that people occupy have a significant role in defining their identity and continuity of personality. The slides of different houses (in the main middle-class and respectable dwellings) created a sense of the existence of their inhabitants through metonymy.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	This is not an easy piece and resists interpretation- it needs to be approached in terms of a meditation – much in the way one would approach a work of visual art or an installation. The performances were all very clear and there was no problem in understanding the text in a literal sense.

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	Excellent	The script (Phillipe Minyana) offers little in the way of narrative or even obvious thematic unity, however the themes that are suggested rather than stated, are laid down in a deliberate way and the aggregate leaves one with the feeling that the notion of identity has been scoped out and illuminated. The overload of business-speak in the first monologue, punctuated with questions about the salesman's identity served to point up the fragility of the identities humans adopt and how these can be divorced from their essential being. Each of the monologues succeeded in illustrating this theme through different means through the performance and illustration of identity through , respectively the social/commercial, the philosophical or meditative, and finally through the forensic.
2.2	Direction	Excellent	The production was meticulously put together by Pamela Carter with obvious attention to detail. The pacing was well-considered and the whole production was well thought through.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	Excellent	These were difficult parts to play with no real opportunities for the actors to establish a rapport with the audience- in fact this was consciously avoided. Therefore the actors were exposed, and coped well with this challenge. They all handled what is fairly intractable material well.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Good	There was a subtle and appropriate recorded soundtrack.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	N/A	
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	The most significant design element showed itself in the projected slides of dwellings. These were evocative and served the text well. The representation of business presentational material was also well created. Costume was contemporary and appropriate and the lighting was also fit for purpose.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction		The majority of the audience seemed attentive, but a number left at the interval and some comments overheard after indicated a level of bemusement.

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

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

3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	The programme was informative as far as the personnel was concerned, but might have offered an opportunity for the director to offer more of a way in to this difficult piece. Given the reaction of some of the audience, the absence of narrative and other theatrical conventions suggests that more help for the audience would have been appreciated.
3.3	Publicity/ pre- publicity ⁴	I was aware of the entry in the Tron brochure-that was all
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Fine
3.5	External signage and signposting	Good
3.6	Internal directional signage	Good
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Good
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Good- a very customer-friendly idea to have water and plastic glasses on the bar for the public to help themselves in the interval.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Not strictly applicable as the project did not receive direct support. However, as it was billed as a co-production with the Tron, it is reasonable to expect some acknowledgment, given the core-funded status of the Tron.

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

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.