

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: **Traverse/Visible Fictions Theatre Co**
Title of Event: **Monster**
Type of Event: **Theatre Performance**
Date of Visit: **Thursday 9th October 2003**

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 a Council Officer, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work, 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

1.1 Vision and Imagination.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: Very clear vision of this adaptation of the story from book to theatre production. Strong use of the imagination on the overall production. Clear and defined use of the role of video worked well to reinforce some of the main mechanics of the plot, story line and the relationships in the play. All the different supporting characters strongly drawn by the two female performers, Clare Waugh and Christina Cochran. Central character provided complex opportunities to develop the ongoing theme of ambiguity. |
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good to | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.2 Clarity of Communication.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: The ambiguity the central character in the piece seemed very clearly one of the main themes of the piece, and this was presented in a very strong way. The use of the three performers interlaced with the video footage worked very well to create a sense of place and interaction. There was a strong build up to the final outcome. In addition the palpable sense of ambiguity was present from the start. |
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

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

1.3 Script (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions).

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: Strong adaptation from book to theatre production. The central theme remained intact, and the play relied upon the inherent strength of the characters in the book. |
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.4 Direction

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: The direction was clear. Using two actors to play all the witnesses and lawyers was very “black and white” and allowed the audience to see the ambiguity of the central character all the more clearly. Director used the set to its full capacity, and integrated the video footage in a seamless way. |
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.5 Standard of performers- where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: The roles of Witnesses and Lawyers were very well played by the two supporting actors, Christina Cochran and Claire Waugh. There were many different characters to cover in the piece by these two performers, and they were very slick, moving between the different roles in a very professional and smooth manner. The central character was complex. The play revealed its inherent message of ambiguity as the story unfolded. This was handled well by the male performer Clayton Wilson. The performers in the video footage were also well portrayed, realistic and convincing. |
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.6 Use of music – 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 part, and what effect this had on the quality of the production.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: Original music composed by Yngvil Vatn Guttu was presented at a very chilling level, and although it became repetitive after a while, this underlined the tension and bleakness of the subject. |
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography

| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: There was no choreography, although the stage space was used to full capacity, and the actors moved around a lot using different parts of the stage to represent different places. |
|--|--|---|
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.8 Design – including set, costume and lighting design. Please take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue, and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.

| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: A good and imaginative stage set, that was reflective of the bleakness of the story. The use of video really heightened how well the set was integrated into the story. The video became a part of the set, whilst the set also provided a place for the extra “video” characters to be projected into, reinforcing the use of the design to create different times and spaces for the action. Lighting very gloomy and dark. Underlined nature of the piece. |
|--|--|---|
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.9 Technical Standards – please comment on whether the production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.

| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: Professionally presented. Very slick and complex technical requirements handled well. |
|--|--|--|
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good to | | |
| Excellent | | |

1.10 **Overall production** – was the production successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material, and stated aims and objectives)

| Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i> | | Comments and key reasons for rating: |
|--|--|---|
| Very Poor | | |
| Poor | | |
| Competent | | |
| Good to | | |
| Excellent | | |

The production succeeded in delivering all that the pre-publicity material suggested it would. The material was pitched at the right age (audience was 12 upwards). The material was appropriate for 12 upwards, yet also remained very challenging. The story engaged the audience whilst also posing some very complex questions about innocence and moral ambiguity. The central character Steve Harmon, was sinister, manipulative and emotive, serving to reveal the central themes of the play.

1.11 **Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

Yes

1.12 **Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.**

Two-thirds full

2. **Management of Event**

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.

2.1 **Was the venue suitable for the event?**

Yes

2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)

- range, quantity and clarity.

Good

2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc)

- range, content and when and where available. Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Please also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised. Comment on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information.

Posters and programmes clear and direct.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment
- location
- external signposting
- internal directional signing
- access and provision for disabled people
- timing of event

All Good

2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering).

Good

3. Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding (if applicable)

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 and 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, and computer programmes etc. “

Please comment on whether the above conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

Yes, everywhere on information

Name:

Date:

Advisor

(Please tick above as appropriate)

Scottish Arts Council Officer