



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Visible Fictions at Kings Theatre Edinburgh

Title of Event: Into the Dark

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 23 September 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.)

Good

The script should be edited and focussed more, and this would result in a more taught and effective piece. The production achieved high production values but the impact was dissipated by a too long drawn out narrative. Some of the directorial conceits, such as the repeated use of the planks did not really add value in my view.

Name: David Taylor

Date: 27 Sept 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	Good	The idea of a thriller for teenagers is a good one- it combined characters that the audience would identify with and a genre that is popular in film, but rarely produced on the stage for this audience.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	The performances were clear. Despite the speech being rapid fire and in naturalistic accents it was all comprehensible. The plot was less transparent – that is in the establishment of the motivation of the characters.

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	Competent	The knockabout banter was well observed and convincing. The plot was too extended and meandering. The script would have benefited from some trimming to cut out some of the repetition and pull the focus in. There were some potentially effective high points in the writing but these were not always made the most of in the timing. There were some sections where the language did not seem to square with the kids being “schemies” (would they really use the term “rational”?) - and I wonder if kids like that would ever call themselves schemies anyway.
2.2	Direction	Competent	I thought that the piece needed tighter direction. The points of tension and revelation were not quite precise enough in the execution. I also found the use of the planks a little awkward and not really adding value to the piece. The device of using the board to simulate the explosion of a banger did not really work and the general moving of the planks felt a little pointless. The exception was when they were used with torches to indicate the interior of the house, but even those sequences went on too long. In general the production was moved along at a good rate, but there was just too much of it and thus it tended to become tedious. That said the effect on the audience did create frissons of fear or thrill and so the ingredients for greater effects were there, bit needed refining. The use of projected video images of young

			children acted as a contrast to the dark themes of the live action.
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Good	The performers were all strong and convinced as adolescents.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Good	An effective recorded score and sound design that created atmosphere and tension.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	Good	There was a considerable amount of energetic action and gymnastics and this was well done.
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	A non naturalistic rendering of the wood with timber uprights and moveable boards to indicate various elements such as gravestones and trees. The various inclined planes created good spaces for the action to take place.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	Technically well presented
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Good	The mainly teenaged audience was responsive and engaged. They shrieked and ood and aahed as appropriate and seemed to with the show throughout. It is hard to estimate the audience size, but it seemed perhaps one third full.

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. 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- this was a prosc arch production
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	The programme had a suitably edgy design and appropriate content. The typeface was very small and the lack of contrast made it difficult to read
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	A striking image was used on the print that I saw.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	N/A
3.5	External signage and signposting	Inadequate. The theatre does not seem to be signposted in the area and it is not easy to identify it for a stranger.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Adequate
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	I was not able to check this out.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	As mentioned above the production was a little on the long side, at two hours and a half hours including interval.
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	Reasonable- logo was rather small- but then so was the typeface throughout the programme

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.