



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Visible Fictions at the Palace, Kilmarnock

Title of Event: Into The Dark

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: 14/10/2004

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 production with excellent integrated use of all creative elements. This was a genuinely scary story that was also accessible and entertaining. Especially strong was the portrayal of mindless violence and how easily this can happen.

Excellent integrated use of all creative elements. High production standards.

Name: Jaine Lumsden

Date:

Advisor
relevant title

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please tick the

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:

1-Very Poor – standard falls well below what is acceptable.

2-Poor – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.

3-Competent – routine rather than especially interesting.

4-Good – well conceived and executed

5-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	Strong unifying vision apparent throughout the production. This demonstrated a commitment to producing high quality theatre for children and young people that does not flinch from looking at dark themes.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Good	Story clearly communicated at all times.

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	<p>By Donald Mcleary. Very realistic dialogue, which typified the interplay and ever-shifting allegiances of a group of young people under pressure. The characters were not especially “nice” or sympathetic but very believable. Although they were to some extent based on stereotypes (overweight boy, good boy) as the play developed it became clear that each character did not necessarily behave in the way one would expect.</p> <p>The conclusion of the play was entirely unexpected and very chilling. It is to Mcleary’s credit that he did not write either a neat or a happy ending.</p>
2.2	Direction	Excellent	<p>By Douglas Irvine. Very assured direction that took the audience through the gamut of emotions. Good development of relationships of characters which proceeded at a believable pace. Excellent use of action, stage, lights and music to create genuine suspense.</p>
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	<p>Strong ensemble playing. The majority of the actors were obviously older than the ages they were playing, which can be difficult to portray convincingly. However, they all managed this consistently. A special mention must be made of Vari Sylvester’s Mrs Liddle, who at times evoked compassion and yet also at others fear.</p>

2.4	Use of Music ¹	Excellent	Use of pre-recorded sound added considerably to the dramatic tension.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	Competent	Choreography by Michael Popper. This was mixed. The repeat of the same movement sequence at the end of the first half and the start of the second was a good idea which reinforced the narrative thread. This sequence was high energy and worked well in the context of the play. Other more set movement pieces failed to convince in quite the same way. They seemed slightly unfinished.
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Good	Set design by Evelyn Barbour. This was quite stark using large simple shapes which was visually interesting and worked very well. Lighting design by Kai Fischer. Atmospheric and subtle (especially given that this is a touring show.)
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Competent	Professionally presented with no obvious problems.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	Rated for 11+ - which in my opinion was appropriate. (Despite some media comment that this was too young an age.) Audience c. 165, mostly young people and children, though it was interesting to see some adults without children. Very well received.

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
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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

3.1	Suitability of the venue for the event	Fine
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Programmes – well designed.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Reviews, flyers, listings.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	N/A
3.5	External signage and signposting	Not that I could see.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Fine
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Fine
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Fine
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Friendly bar staff.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Acknowledged.

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.