

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Wee Stories / Theatre Royal
Title of Event: Arthur
Type of Event: Performance
Date of Visit: 4 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 Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	X	

This was an extremely well conceived production which delivered the ultimate storytelling experience. The effect for me was of a large scale imaginary book from which diverse characters, beautiful pictures and enchanting sounds came to life through the telling of an historical tale.

The production was full of wonderful, simple effects which enabled the audience to use their imaginations while following the story. I particularly loved the depiction of Merlin which grew out of a red table cloth and candlestick.

The piece had layers of light and dark / humour and depth which successfully collaborated to deliver a well rounded meaningful production.

1.2 Clarity of Communication.

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

The production was extremely accessible to young people and adults. The plot was clearly explained through the narrative and performance. Throughout the production there were moments of dialogue between actors (stepping out of role to comment on the narrative) and between actors and audience. The effect was a weaving together of historical and modern day cultural references which added an additional layer of meaning and relevance. This device would likely have enhanced audience engagement with the plot and characters.

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:

Very Poor		The company set themselves a complex task in building the script for Arthur. The creation of parallel and interweaving plots and dialogues enabled a true reflection of the historical context while retaining the trademark Wee Stories wit, humour and engaging storytelling style.
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	x	

1.4 Direction

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		The seamless integration of a wide range of mediums and dimensions to this production was integral to the production's success.
Poor		
Competent		The "Blue Peter" approach which built up the characters and story context initially through various uses and manipulation of cereal packets was ingenious and must have required a lot of time and planning (as well as imagination) to ensure its effective delivery, entertainment value and ability to simplify the initial assimilation process for audiences.
Good		
Excellent	x	

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:
Very Poor		The Wee Stories performers/musicians have a particular storytelling, humour/pathos based, audience interaction approach which adds to their ability to deliver an engaging and entertaining performance.
Poor		
Competent		
Good	x	
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	Comments and key reasons for rating:
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<i>(Please tick)</i>		The live music and musicians were intergral to delivery of the various moods and atmospheres created within the production contributing a great deal to the deeper layers of the piece.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	X	

1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography

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

NA

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:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	x	

The production was beautifully designed and provided an elegance to the piece which enhanced its enchantment and ability to delve into the deeper layers and remind the audience they were in the company of a legendary king. The multiple use of the round table and props was extremely clever and effective.

The musicians set behind a transparent screen and their constantly changing perspectives through excellent lighting, costume changes etc enhanced the magical elements ie The Lady of the Lake with the sword. The backdrop provided a feast of pictures and words depicting the era in storybook fashion.

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:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	x	
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		
Excellent	x	

1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?

WS achieved their aim of creating work for families. The audience was engaged throughout the production. Children (and adults) were given an opportunity to use their imagination. I would imagine that Arthur provided a high quality alternative to many audience members who may only ever attend Panto as their main theatre experience.

1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.

Approx half full and a very appreciative reaction.

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and 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?

Suitable. While not completely full it should be acknowledged that this is a first time for the company in touring to large scale theatres.

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

- range, quantity and clarity.

I did not see any background information to the story however audiences were given a Follow up sheet with an associated word game, craft based instructions and a song.

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.

Suitably relevant and engaging.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment - *Fine*
- location - *central*
- external signposting - *clear*
- internal directional signing - *fine*
- access and provision for disabled people – *I did not witness any problems*
- timing of event - *fine*

2.5 Customer service

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

No problems

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.
Conditions of grant met.

Clearly acknowledged on all publicity material.

Name: Angela Hogg

Date:

Advisor **Scottish Arts Council Officer**

(Please tick above as appropriate)