



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue: Wee Stories at the Traverse

Title of Event: Tam O'Shanter

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, work-in-progress, open rehearsal etc.)

Date of Visit: 24 November 2004

Overall Rating: Excellent

A unique and engaging piece of storytelling theatre. A high calibre, uplifting experience.

Name: Angela Hogg

Date: 9/2/05

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 highly imaginative piece of interactive theatre/storytelling which captivated all ages alike. The production epitomised Wee Stories vision to create accessible theatre to family audiences. For me the experience provided a sense of communion (as if around a hearth) where one can share and bond with others young and old. It reflected a recognisable inner personal landscape from my own childhood as well as a celebration of our cultural characteristics. In my view this type of experience provides great scope to draw wide audiences into the theatre.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Excellent	Simple, straightforward interpretations of the poem and delivery of the whole piece. The mix of Burns language and wit with contemporary language and humour provided an accessible and relevant experience. The clear, expressive delivery provided ample scope for audiences to use their imaginations. Clever visual devices also added to the clarity of communication.

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	An excellent meaningful and humorous script which really draws you in to the piece. Sometimes it felt like you were having a conversation with the characters. The story provided valuable educational information as well as positive messages which I believe provides scope to instil inspiration, confidence and motivation particularly in relation to self expression. Overall a great celebration of language, culture and people.
2.2	Direction	Excellent	Andy Cannon excelled in his direction of this multi-layered production. He created a riveting piece of theatre around a plot which (on paper) could have sounded dull, twee and obvious. I believe Andy's sensitive, insightful and feather light approach to themes, plots, staging and audience needs/interests is the root of his success in producing such imaginative, engaging work. The constant changes in pace, mode and settings to portray the various layers of plot were brilliantly handled with the support of lighting, music, visual devices and puppetry (particularly given that there were only 2 main actors involved).

			<p>The interactive moments involving spontaneous performances of children was extremely well directed.</p> <p>The taped section with children reciting Tam O'Shanter was beautifully delivered and highlighted young Scottish talent.</p> <p>I loved the moment when the music teacher first appeared out of the music cupboard.</p>
2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	<p>Andy Cannon and Wendy Weatherby provided excellent depictions of the various characters. They really complimented each other as performers.</p> <p>As outlined the children on tape was a highlight. Their delivery of the poem was very clear and articulate.</p>
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Excellent	<p>Wendy Weatherby's live cello playing provided a beautiful accompaniment and backdrop to the piece. Additional music/sound effects were also effective.</p>
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	NA	
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Excellent	<p>Excellent lighting added atmosphere and strong visual effects. Good multi use of boxes/seats. I loved the museum scene where the boxes open up to become exhibition pieces depicting various aspect of Burns' life.</p>
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Excellent	<p>Provided great support to this fast moving, ever changing production.</p>
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	<p>This was an invited audience of families, funders, MSP's etc. All ages responded really well. There was something for everyone in the production. The children were very enthusiastic as audiences and participants. I loved the moment when Andy Cannon called for involvement by asking <i>hands up if you would like to be hung drawn and quartered</i> to which many desperately keen young people responded. A full house.</p>

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 in general although the theatre stairs are very steep.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good displays.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	A variety of very engaging and fun filled materials. Website informative.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	NA
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fine
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?	Appropriate.
3.9	Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	Excellent.
3.10	Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁵	Appropriately 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.