



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DRAMA

Organisation/Venue:	Wee Stories at the St Bride's Centre International Children's Festival
Title of Event:	Labyrinth
Type of Event:	Performance
Date of Visit:	26 May 2005
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	
An extremely enjoyable, educational celebration of life and theatre in an atmosphere of mutual respect between audience and actors and between children and adults. Great theatre with some wonderful performances, text and visual imagery.	
Name:	Angela Hogg
Date:	7 July 2005
Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scottish Arts Council Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Please tick the relevant title</i>	

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	Wee Stories' adaptation of the Greek myth <i>Theseus and the Minotaur</i> was delivered in a totally unique fashion and, in my view, provided the ultimate model for audience participation. The experience was truly celebratory and demonstrated how theatre can bring people of all ages together to experience the human journey in mutual respect. This approach epitomises the vision of Wee Stories to create high quality, original work for young audiences and their families.
1.2	Clarity of Communication	Excellent	The performers consistently communicated directly with the audience. The text used was very accessible and clearly delivered.

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	As with Wee Stories' general approach, the text reflected modern cultural language and modes of expression. This creates an effective device in drawing the audience into the story. It provides a sense of ownership and reference point. This is particularly potent when adapting a classical tale such as <i>Theseus and the Minotaur</i> . The <i>take</i> on theatre culture which had the audience acting like <i>luvvies</i> was very funny and also provided an opportunity to break down barriers to theatre in general. Some extremely witty moments. The audience learned a lot about Greek myth, tragedy etc through the story, making it highly educational.
2.2	Direction	Excellent	This was a highly interactive piece which required a great deal of marshalling of audience members (particularly children) in participating on stage (and from their seats). The ease and confidence with which participants presented their various roles is testament to Andy Cannon's <i>magical touch</i> in motivating audiences. While a great deal of time was spent on audience interaction Andy Cannon still managed to create a theatrical feast for audiences. A highlight, in particular, was the depiction of the Minotaur's first appearance through his positioning/stance on a plinth bathed in red light. This was extremely effective in creating a sense of the power and horror of the creature. In general the show's use of lighting, sound, staging and set/props came together to support the action of cast and audience in a clever, imaginative way. A fast moving, dramatic experience was created and delivered.

2.3	Standard of Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in you comments	Excellent	The interaction between Andy Cannon and Dave Troughton (and their interaction with the audience) was superb. The Wee Stories multi-layered style which provides a story for the actors as themselves in parallel with the action they are portraying provides yet another great device in persuading audiences to <i>buy into</i> the theatre experience. I particularly loved the end scenes where Dave Troughton <i>gets precious about</i> having a happy ending (to no avail). Participants played a fantastic role in acting out scenes. In particular the children were very engaged and improvised beyond their instructions at times. This added an extra layer of enjoyment for both participants and audiences.
2.4	Use of Music ¹	Excellent	Live and recorded music, sound effects and singing provided effective and touching moments. Sound effects to depict the labyrinth and minotaur had a strong impact in depicting environment and mood.
2.5	Use of Movement/ Choreography	NA	
2.6	Design ² – including set, costume and lighting design	Excellent	The set, props and costumes were simple and effectively used. In particular the use of masks provided great dramatic effect. Lighting played a key role in creating atmosphere and effect. Simple devices, such as using a paintbrush to depict a beard, may have provided some inspiration for young people to believe they too can use their imaginations to make theatre.
2.7	Technical Standards – was the production professionally presented from a technical point of view	Good	Supported the action well.
2.8	Audience Response – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	Excellent	A full house of children and adults immersed themselves completely in the action. Everyone appeared to be having a great time and they responded enthusiastically at the end. It struck me that the cast must also have a great time experiencing a theatre full of people providing eg sound waves and beautiful impromptu choral singing.

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.
3.2	Information/ interpretive material at venue ³	Good. Wee Stories information (as well as the Imagineate publicity/programme) was provided.
3.3	Publicity/ pre-publicity ⁴	Good. A range of postcards, emails, website information etc. was provided.
3.4	Ease of booking and payment	Good.
3.5	External signage and signposting	Fine.
3.6	Internal directional signage	Fine.
3.7	Access and provision for disabled people	Appeared to be accessible.
3.8	Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Suitable.
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	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.