



Scottish Arts Council

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Organisation/Venue: X-Factor/Royal Scottish Museum
Title of Event: Excerpts from Dearly Departed
Type of Event: Dance
Date of Visit: 2nd November 2002

1. Artistic Assessment

1.1 Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event - its Vision and Imagination; Ability to Communicate and Quality of Production.

This event brought together a professional company and degree students from Telford College to perform excerpts of a previously choreographed piece in a public space. I found it wonderful in all aspects: many of us have seen this piece but never in a museum space – in fact, in the museum which originally inspired the work by Alan Caig. It seemed many people were drawn to watch this contemporary dance piece (because it was there) who otherwise might not have ever watched such a performance. The material was accessible (clear verbal images and thoughts on the soundtrack which were seamlessly communicated into movement). The movements well executed and the aesthetic was interesting and visually pleasing. I felt X-Factor had provided a very high quality piece in an unusual but fitting venue carrying an educational as well as an artistic message to the public and to aspiring young dancers.

1.2 You are also asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with specific reference to the following:

- **Script (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions)**
The space was large enough to show the number of dancers off to full advantage – there were perhaps twenty dancers and they fit comfortably into the area designated for performance. The length of the piece was short – a quarter of an hour – which seemed correct for the environment where one is looking at one part of an exhibition then passing on to another (personally I was enjoying the dancers so much I would have loved to see more but for this place and space it seemed exactly right). There were also some very young children in the audience – perhaps passer-bys’ – whose attention span might not have lasted longer.

- **Direction**
The choreography was gorgeous: the movement material did not mime the words on the soundtrack but took images from them and skilfully transposed them into kinaesthetic language – for instance, bodies falling and tumbling into each other with ideas of death and after life being verbally explored. The choice of the space seemed particularly apt: right in front of the disturbing clock at the end of the public hall of the museum. The clock formed an excellent backdrop for the piece and the marble floor (although perhaps not a dancer's preference) worked well to complete a visual environment for the ideas of the piece. I have not seen this subject explored in this way before so I found it very original and the use of the space – even using the stairs at the end, for instance, organic and inventive.
- **Standard of performers**
The technical standard of the group was high; with the students well integrated into the choreography (I am sure some people might not have recognised which dancers were students, which were professional dancers – certainly no movement material was obviously “sacrificed” or simplified to accommodate a less proficient performer). All were clearly committed to every movement they made and their connection did not waver despite being very close to the audience most of the time. The communication of the ideas of the piece between each other and the audience was excellent.
- **Music**
The tape collage of interviews with ordinary speaking of their beliefs of life after death or death itself, interspersed with music by Tom Murray worked well – both accompanying and exemplifying the choreography. The sound system was excellent and did not suffer from being in a huge public space.
- **Design**
Costumes were clear and simple – coordinated but not separated from the piece.
- **Technical Standards**
NA – no lighting – sound system good (see above).
- **Appropriateness of production for the audience**
Programme notes were good – I liked the way they were integrated into Halloween and immediate events going on.
- **Approximate size of audience and reaction**
There may have been 40-60 people sitting with more standing around the periphery of the space – all seemed to enjoy it and participated in some questions/answer discussion afterwards.

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

2.2 Suitability of the venue for the event:

The venue was suitable for this piece – I don't know if it would prove to be so for dance.

2.3 Information/Interpretative material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays) - range, quantity and clarity.

Good – I particularly liked the idea of a discussion afterwards between the dancers and the audience.

2.4 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the event (leaflets/posters, etc) - range, content and when and where available

I saw poster and leaflets in various places before the event – though it was well published and the museum announcement of it at the time was also well done.

2.5 Accessibility of the venue:

- ease of payment Free
- location Good
- direction Good
- access for disabled people Good
- timing of event Good

2.6 Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (eg box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)

Fine

3. Background to your visit

Enjoy X-Factor's work but had never seen a combined project in this kind of space.

3.1 Have you seen the work of this artist/company before? YES

3.2 Is this your first visit to this venue? NO