



Scottish **Arts** Council

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL ARTISTIC EVALUATION REPORT

Organisation/Venue: X Factor/MacRobert's Arts Centre
Title of Event: In Your Dreams
Type of Event: Dance performance
Date of Visit: 2nd April 2003

1. Artistic Assessment

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

I felt this was designed to be a multi-discipline form of theatre entertainment where dance quality was of little significance as a performing art? Also I wondered how important were the back stage projections which seemed of little real relationship to the motif developments? In my opinion, this small group of excellent artists are creative and talented but not thinking through their ideas into the full potential of a professional DANCE presentation as a performing art. They need to aim at increasing their audiences by providing them with real aesthetic visual experiences of colourful dances of which they are most eminently capable of.

I wish them well but hope they will consider Dance more than staged Theatre in future. As a professional Dance Company, they seemed to be too self-indulgent in developing their own creative ideas rather than focusing on the audience's expectations of Dance as an aesthetic experience.

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

- **Size and company and length of piece.**
Small company. Four artists plus technical staff. Single performance of 50 minutes followed by discussion.
- **Choreography, originality of work and use of space.**
In terms of choreography, perhaps the pace of changes reduced the opportunity to develop and enrich the visual reinforcement of good motif themes towards the aesthetic potential of each idea. This presentation of over

50 minutes contained enough material for a full two hours of real dance. So many fleeting ideas could have been sorted into thematic units, of nightmare, of love and rejection, of comedy (the audience did laugh at the idea of the indigestible curry) and in particular the empathy and great idea of whether two people could experience the same dream as in the "Garry" pair dance. This was a real winner in leading a unit of serious and sensitive presentation of the human feelings in dream relationships in the whole performance.

- **Standard and technique of performers, and powers of communication.**

In terms of dance performance, the artists had admiral technical skill particularly in smooth floor contact and travel, touch sensitivity in relationships was also good and overall mastery of flexible body actions.

The theme of "In Your Dreams" was introduced by a spoken delivery by one the dancer followed by a well spaced floor sequence of individual curling and stretching as in sleep with a pulsating ringing sound accompaniment. Then these small actions were replaced by erect activity and more dynamic actions, relationships embracing lifting and lowering, under and around with good quality pair work, and group unison interspersed with exits and entrances.

Frequent spoken deliveries and recorded voices introduced varied dream descriptions of situations and feelings with changes of musical accompaniment. Themes varied widely which gave opportunity for great changes in expressive actions and relationships. Occasionally group motifs were performed with excellent unison contrasting with random individual complementary motifs. Fast changes in dynamic actions made a somewhat whirlwind presentation difficult to appreciate with constant changes which challenged one's understanding of the meaning of the actions in relation to the spoken words and recorded vocal inputs. It was quite complicated to keep hold of the pace of changes of theme.

- **Music (appropriateness for choreography and quality of musicians/tape)**

Good sound facilities available. Recorded sound and live vocal used.

- **Design (set, costumes, etc.).**

Use of front stage low lighting, ceiling suspended cloth red and blue netting material and changes of projected images onto backdrop.

The costumes were fairly low key, red, blue, mauve tops with black trows supplemented by plain jackets often removed. A contrast occurred with bright reds, and pure white dress and it seemed that with fully equipped stage lighting more use of coloured spots would have enhanced the visual effects. However one appreciated that in a one-off tour situ this is not always possible, however desirable.

- **Technical Standards (lighting, sound, etc.).**

- **Appropriateness of programme of work for the audience.**

- **Approximate size of audience and reaction to the programme of work.**

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.

2.1 Suitability of the venue for the event:

This is a well managed theatre with full services and most helpful staff who are just reopening following a refurbishment and development of extended premises with great potential in widening their scope as a performing arts centre.

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

Programme provides explicit information on the company, the creative idea of this piece and a list of works from 1990 under their Artistic Director Alan Greig.

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

Being on the MacRobert's mailing list I received the season brochure, but I am not aware of local news information but the box office displayed many leaflets of future productions.

2.4 Accessibility of the venue:

- **ease of payment** Booking easily made on phone.
- **location** Within University campus – parking spaces available at night.
- **direction**
- **access for disabled people** Full access available. Audio Loop, signing, guide dogs, etc. I discussed with management if they are going to introduce audio description services for the visually impaired. They have the equipment I know because I attended the first described performance there some years ago when I was Chairman of the Committee on Arts at Disability Scotland (now extinct, alas!). They said they hoped to compile a complete list of disabled services for the new extended facilities. They do have many visiting one-off shows which

cannot be previewed and prepared for Audio description but they are aware of, and in touch with, the Scottish Describers Association.

- **timing of event**

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

Friendly, helpful, courteous throughout from box office to restaurant waiters and bar staff. There is a full and varied menu available.

3. Background to your visit.

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

3.2 Is this your first visit to this venue?

No