



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – DANCE

Artist/Company: X Factor Dance Company

Venue: The Space, Dundee College
(and Howden Park Centre, Livingston)

Title of Event: Lareigne & Uncanny

Type of Event: Performance

Date of Visit: Friday 28 January 2005
(and Wednesday 16 February 2005)

Overall Rating 5 – overall X Factor Dance Company achieved what they set out to achieve which was “to deliver thought-provoking and entertaining dance productions for everyone to enjoy.” Although I personally enjoyed *Uncanny* more than *Lareigne* I understand and applaud the decision to incorporate this work and to pair the two in this programme. There is no question that incorporating a Petronio piece raises the stakes for the company. By programming *Uncanny* first the audience, (which in both performances that I saw included a number of students who had already worked with the company and were therefore well prepared and receptive to the company) who were unfamiliar with the company’s work were already “on side” and receptive to the harder message of *Lareigne*.

Name: _____ David W S Todd _____ Date: 09/03/2005

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle 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:

- 1-Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- 2-Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
- 3-Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
- 4-Good** – well conceived and executed
- 5-Excellent** – conceived and executed to a high standard.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, taking account of the following

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Vision and imagination	5	Alan Greig, artistic director, has produced an original and highly imaginative (if short) new work – <i>Uncanny</i> and cleverly programmed this with <i>Lareigne</i> by Stephen Petronio – X Factor’s first guest choreography. Programming <i>Uncanny</i> before <i>Lareigne</i> was enlightened as the audience were captivated by the company in the first piece and more receptive to a more challenging second piece.
Clarity of communication	5	X Factor communicated extremely well with the audience in <i>Uncanny</i> which is a very clever amalgam of short episodes of dance to different sound tracks – some music and some speech. There are many different moods including humour and much for the audience to relate to. <i>Lareigne</i> is not as obvious in its message but the striking costumes and energetic dance movements maintain interest throughout.
Quality of production – production’s success in relation to stated aims i.e., in the programme or other printed material)	5	X Factor state that their mission is to deliver thought-provoking and entertaining dance productions for everyone to enjoy and they certainly delivered this in this double-bill.

2. Strengths and Weakness

Assess the strengths and weakness of the event with reference to the following:

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	5	<i>Uncanny</i> is highly original with a very individual collection of sounds – both music and speech. The choreography is as varied as the soundtrack sometimes using the whole stage sometimes focusing on the centre – e.g. the pyramid for Alan Greig’s live spoken monologue and subsequent static dance “Running doon the stair”. There is an extraordinary scene of two dancers in a kissing embrace where they move all over the place without separating at the lips for an inconceivably long time. Six dancers are employed in different groupings and the piece lasts 28 minutes. <i>Lareigne</i> is showy in a different sort of way. The choreography is energetic and flamboyant and the seven dancers fill the stage for much of the piece using broad arm movements and much rushing from corner to corner. Two of the dancers appear to have smaller roles and appear briefly in this 21 minute piece.
Performers - technical standard, performance skills, and ability to communicate	5	The dancers performed to a very high standard and particularly in <i>Uncanny</i> communicated brilliantly with the audience. The youngest dancer who appears briefly in <i>Lareigne</i> matches up to the experience (particularly of David Hughes) extremely well.

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Sound – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.	4	The sound for both pieces was recorded as one would expect for such a touring production. The impact of Alan Greig speaking live on stage was enormous. I did not particularly enjoy David Linton's music in <i>Lareigne</i> which I felt added to the poorer communication of the piece compared to <i>Uncanny</i> .
Design – costume, set, lighting	5	<i>Uncanny</i> has a simple light coloured backdrop with occasional projections and lighting to fit the varying moods of the episodes. The costumes are glamorous. I worried initially about the full-length frontless velvet skirts getting in the way but they were used imaginatively later in the programme. <i>Lareigne</i> has a simple black backdrop and almost constant blue light. The costumes (particularly for the men) are outrageous and sexy – all white and very striking.
Technical standards – technical presentation of the production (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc)	4	The technical presentation was seem-less. The lighting in <i>Uncanny</i> was as varied as the moods. There was much less variation in <i>Lareigne</i> but with so much action on stage this was probably sensible. The sound levels were well maintained in both theatres.
Audience – appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	5	There was a capacity audience of 184 in Dundee including press and a number of students that had benefited from workshops earlier in the week. In Livingston there were 100 audience including schoolchildren who had benefited from workshops earlier in the week and who performed a five minute creation of their own at the start of the evening.

2. 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.

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Suitability of the venue for the event	5	The Space was just the right space for this production with the company making full use of the stage and the audience filling the auditorium. The steeply raked seating guaranteed every audience member a great view.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ¹	4	The printed programme is black and white, (photocopied) simple and informative with biographies of those involved, credits and information about the company. They were available to all without charge.
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²	4	The leaflets and posters are striking with strong images of male dancers. The website is informative but I would recommend having a more obvious section for their tour – it is headed “New Work” and the tour dates are just out of sight on the initial screen.

¹ These include programmes, displays etc., assessing the range, quality and clarity

² Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the 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

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Accessibility of venue	3	See under location
Ease of booking and payment	4	The Box Office line was prompt and efficient.
Location of venue	3	The Space is on the ring road north of Dundee. Going by car is simple, travelling by train from Edinburgh necessitated a taxi.
External signage and signposting	4	Good.
Internal directional signage	4	Good.
Access and provision for disabled people	4	There is good with space for wheelchairs at the back of the auditorium still with a good view.
Timing of the event	5	The performance started at 8pm and finished at 9.15pm including an interval.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	5	Good. The Box Office staff were extremely helpful and offered to take my coat but I think that was because I had said that I heard about the event through the SAC! I did not use the bar but the interval drinks system seemed to work and the bar remained open after the performance. The Front of House staff were attentive.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ³	5	SAC is acknowledged on website, leaflet, poster and printed programme.

³ 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.