THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL
ASSESSMENT REPORT

Organisation/Venue: Royal Lyceum Theatre
Title of Event: The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie
Type of Event: Performance
Date of Visit: 11 Jan 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.

A new adaptation of the novel, with considerable enhancement of the storyline through the use of choral music and performed by a largish cast of young girls. The production showed imagination and style in its approach. It communicated the story and themes of the play very effectively.

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 adaptation worked well, although it will always suffer a little from lack of real dramatic structure. The concerns of the piece do not feel irrelevant as one might imagine, as the multi-faceted central character is always going to engage and challenge.

• Direction

The direction was inventive, considered and enriching. The stage and handsome set were well used. There was a consistent theme worked through the design, of framing, in the sense that a picture is framed. This worked well, together with projections of photographic images and reproductions of artistic masterworks. The ensemble scenes with excellent use of music were excellent – creating a real sense of the life of the school and providing a social and educational context for the main characters’ activities. There were some lovely moments of wit, such as the “lost angel” and the scene where one of the pupils conducted the choir while rubber-necking Miss Brodie’s goings-on. The choreography was entertaining and well-judged.

The scene between Lloyd and Sandy which should have been charged with erotic power was strangely flat. Perhaps it was set too far upstage or perhaps the actors had not yet relaxed into their parts and the scene. Brodie was portrayed as a complex character inhabiting a real and credible world.
• **Standard of performers**

Siobhan Redmond was outstanding as Brodie and well supported by the rest of the cast. Her 'set' were all excellent and the young chorus all performed extremely well. Both men, (Peter Kelly and Kevin McMonagle) were good value, though I thought that McMonagle’s Welsh accent hampered rather than helped his portrayal.

I thought the portrayal of the headmistress was particularly interesting. Instead of being a one-dimensional martinet, we were given a woman who was charged to act by her conscience. Dealing with this "difficult" staff member was clearly no easy task. The puritanism that finally crushed Brodie’s spirit was leavened by a real sense of humanity in her persecutor.

• **Design**

The design was very evocative and provided plentiful opportunities for a variety of entrances and exits. As mentioned above, the flown-in frames worked well, as was the instant cloakroom. Costumes reached a similarly high standard and lighting was good.

• **Technical Standards**

The production was technically well presented.

• **Appropriateness of production for the audience**

Overall this was a thoughtful and enthralling production. A strong directorial vision did not falter at the challenge of wringing out the complexities and ambiguities of the character, her beliefs and emotions.

• **Approximate size of audience and reaction**

A near capacity house was attentive and responsive. This piece is clearly food and drink to the Lyceum audience.

• **Overall Production**

Stylish and engaging with real popular appeal without mugging it up.

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:**

Good

2.3 **Information/Interpretative material provided at the venue (egg programmes, displays) - range, quantity and clarity**

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

2.5 Accessibility of the venue:
   • ease of payment  Good
   • location         Good
   • direction        Good
   • access for disabled people  Good
   • timing of event  Good

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

3. Background to your visit

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

3.2 Is this your first visit to this venue?  NO