

Appendix 2: Arts Council/Abbey Theatre Critical Evaluation Report Form (CER)



ARN: 02003

ARTS COUNCIL CRITICAL EVALUATION REPORT – ABBEY THEATRE

DATE:	4 May 2012
PLAY/AUTHOR:	<i>Alice in Funderland</i>
CREATIVE TEAM:	Bk & Lyrics Philip McMahon, Music Raymond Scannell, dir Wayne Jordan
PERFORMERS:	Sarah Greene, Tony Flynn, Susannah de Wrixon, Ian Lloyd Anderson, Kathy Rose O'Brien, paul reid, Mark O'regan, Ruth McGill, Philip Connaughton, Aileen Mythen, Lisa Byrne, Aobhinn McGinty, Emmet Kirwan, Keith Hanna, Robert Bannon

Please ascribe a value for each criterion below. It is important to keep in mind what the numbers represent in **language**, and not the value of the number itself.

- 1 – Falls below what would generally be regarded as an acceptable standard for professional theatre presentation
- 2 – Achieves an acceptable standard, but not much more in terms of technique, ambition, innovation or quality
- 3 – Is good in terms of overall standard
- 4 – Is very good in terms of standard
- 5 – Is of an excellent standard in the view of the assessor

CRITERION	VALUE
The Abbey's Mission (<i>The Abbey Theatre, as Ireland's national theatre, has a cultural, social and political role in Irish society. Its stated mission is to "to create world-class theatre that actively engages with and reflects Irish society." To what extent does the production deliver on and reflect this role and this mission?</i>)	3
Please comment briefly on your score here: I think this fills criterion 3 not because it is a particularly masterful production (it isn't) but because it did try and reflect some elements of today's Ireland in an imaginative pantomimic format, and expressed a certain amount of energy, imagination and joie-de-vivre; it also clearly attracted to the theatre a new kind of audience who would not normally be heading to the Abbey on a Friday night. It took risks, which a national theatre should do.	
Ambition (<i>innovation, risk-taking, originality</i>)	3

Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>The idea of taking 'Alice in Wonderland' through a Dublin drugs/youth culture/gay prism was appealing and ambitious; the idea of such a canonical text could have imposed certain limitations, and a decision was clearly taken to play quite freely and easily with it. The actual production, in terms of pyrotechnics, costumes, use of the set, was also imaginative if not always successful.</p>	
<p>Execution (<i>quality of technique, skill, performance, scenography, direction, etc.</i>)</p> <p>This was less successful. The framing device for Alice's dream (sister's wedding, scratchy parents etc) was awkward, and came across in a rather sit-com manner, providing a disappointing opening. The lurches into fantasy and threat were better handled and the use of LED technics to suggest the O'Connell St streetscape was exciting and involving. The Monopoly sequence was good, ditto the Tea Party and some other fast-moving and ironic set-ups. Drugs and 'Alice', a venerable connection since the 1960s, were exploited effectively. But performances were uneven; Sarah Greene coped with a demanding role as Alice, but didn't make the most of it. Tony Flynn, in a number of drag parts, was suitably over-the-top and Paul Reid's cameo as 'The Gay' was a brilliant reworking of Humpty-Dumpty. But the cast in general seemed to take their cue from the conventions of pantomime, which the production resembled more and more as it went on (and on).</p>	2
Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>Effectiveness (<i>connection with the audience, engagement & response, the extent to which piece affects change and leaves a lasting impression</i>)</p>	2/3
Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>The audience –largely young- were immensely supportive and responsive, which was very good to see. My divided score here is because I didn't find it effective myself, and didn't leave the theatre with a very 'lasting impression'- I also found it too long and too self-indulgent. But I am very conscious that I was surrounded by people who would answer this question differently.</p>	
<p>Excellence (<i>the extent to which, in the view of the assessor, the work presented is excellent when compared to best international practice, i.e. the extent to which the work is "world class"</i>)</p>	2

Please comment briefly on your score here

In terms of its ambition, it didn't rank with classics of 'black musical' such as 'Sweeney Todd'; the flavour was far more of a rather old-style panto given a new twist, full of Dublin references and knowing nudges for an insider audience; it was also very camp. All this is in a fine and venerable tradition but didn't reach the cutting edge.

Quality of New Writing (in the case of new writing, dramaturgical technique as well as artistic ambition and originality will be taken into account)

2

Please comment briefly on your score here

The writing was not up to the challenge of the basic idea. It missed the intelligence needed to update or parody a classic. The eventual resolution of the dream was far less effective than the house of cards/falling leaves in Lewis Carroll; many of the exchanges were banal in the extreme; the songs failed to deliver very much, raising echoes (sub-Lloyd Webber, sub-Grease) without living up to them. The concept of 'Hartstown' as a no-go area was effective at first, but didn't deliver all it promised. The attempt to introduce a grim contemporary edge with the 'torsos' song didn't work- perhaps it came too late in a production which often opted for sentiment.

Any other comments:

Report Completed by:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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ARTS COUNCIL CRITICAL EVALUATION REPORT – ABBEY THEATRE

DATE:	SATURDAY Natimoe 12/04/2012
PLAY/AUTHOR:	ALICE IN FUNDERLAND / This is possibly
CREATIVE TEAM:	McNabon / Jennings / Scannell / Jordan
PERFORMERS:	Sarah Greene and Ensemble

Please ascribe a value for each criterion below. It is important to keep in mind what the numbers represent in **language**, and not the value of the number itself.

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CRITERION	VALUE
The Abbey's Mission (The Abbey Theatre, as Ireland's national theatre, has a cultural, social and political role in Irish society. Its stated mission is to "to create world-class theatre that actively engages with and reflects Irish society." To what extent does the production deliver on and reflect this role and this mission?)	4
Please comment briefly on your score here: A well-performed musical that actively reflected contemporary Irish society - its satire and entertainment was achieved by a diverse and totally engaged audience	
Ambition (innovation, risk-taking, originality)	4
Please comment briefly on your score here: Good to see the Abbey tackle a musical - particularly a new one on a contemporary theme. An important, brave choice with some risk involved	
Execution (quality of technique, skill, performance, scenography, direction, etc.)	4
Please comment briefly on your score here: Extremely well-acted, designed and directed. The level of singing and musicianship was high. The cast were very talented and enthusiastic. The choreography slightly disappointing	

Effectiveness (connection with the audience, engagement & response, the extent to which piece affects change and leaves a lasting impression)	4
Please comment briefly on your score here The connection with the audience was excellent. There was a real buzz in the auditorium. It was an enjoyable experience for an audience, but I slightly doubt it would leave a very lasting impression.	
Excellence (the extent to which, in the view of the assessor, the work presented is excellent when compared to best international practice, i.e. the extent to which the work is "world class")	3
Please comment briefly on your score here On a domestic scale this was good musical theatre, very well performed by a talented cast but though the performances and commitment were "world-class" the script, lyrics, music, and effectiveness of the production were on a scale that felt somewhat shorter.	
Quality of New Writing (In the case of new writing, dramaturgical technique as well as artistic ambition and originality will be taken into account)	3
Please comment briefly on your score here The quality of the writing was disappointing. The structure and plotline could have been stronger and the "Alice" character structure was irrelevant and under-explored. An original structure might have been braver and more successful.	
Any other comments:	
Report Completed by:	(Your name here and date) Nicolas Keet 24 May 2012