

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



ARN: 02003

ARTS COUNCIL CRITICAL EVALUATION REPORT – ABBEY THEATRE

DATE:	30 September 2013
PLAY/AUTHOR:	Major Barbara by Bernard Shaw
CREATIVE TEAM:	Director: Annabelle Comyn, Set Design: Paul O'Mahony, Costume Design: Joan O'Clery, Lighting Design: Chahine Yavroyan, Original Music and Sound Design: Philip Stewart, Fight Director: Donal O'Farrell, Movement Director: Liz Roche, Voice Director: Andrea Ainsworth, Period Movement Coach: Sue Mythen,
PERFORMERS:	Ian Lloyd Anderson, Fiona Bell, Killian Burke, Gerard Byrne, Clare Dunne, Liz Fitzgibbon, Emmet Kirwan, Aonghus Og McAnally, Paul McGann, Chris McHallem, Eleanor Methven, Caoimhe O'Malley, Marty Rea, Stephen Swift, Ali White

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 (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?)	2
I don't fully understand why the Abbey have chosen to produce this play at this time. There doesn't seem much to connect it to current Irish Society or society in general except perhaps the conflict between reality and imagination. Poverty, Religion, Arms manufacture are all touched on but not in a way that would immediately connect with a contemporary audience. The production remains faithful to the words and although it is not world-class, the evening never feels slow.	
Ambition (innovation, risk-taking, originality)	2

There is nothing particularly ambitious or risk-taking about the production. Quite a safe production overall.	
Execution (<i>quality of technique, skill, performance, scenography, direction, etc.</i>)	3
<p>I found the direction very static particularly in the first act and it did eventually perk up in the final scene. Some good performances particularly from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were moderately interesting together but the battle between them and their beliefs never really comes to life. [REDACTED] never quite convinced me that she had complete mastery of the part and there were some unconvincing cockney accents to be found among the rest of the cast.</p> <p>[REDACTED] made the most of a small part, while [REDACTED] as [REDACTED] struggled to make an impression.</p> <p>Scenery works well for the Drawing room & there is an ingenious transformation into final scene. Act 2 looked quite bland and there were some technical problems with a door. Lighting was good particularly in the 1st & 3rd Acts. The scene changes required crew in modern day clothing. These were slick but the clothes undermined the period detail that had gone into the rest of the production. The Sound was mushy in parts. I don't know if this was the the source material or just the output equipment.</p>	
Effectiveness (<i>connection with the audience, engagement & response, the extent to which piece affects change and leaves a lasting impression</i>)	3
The house was 2/3 full on a Monday evening and the audience seemed engaged throughout the 3 hours. The play is dated but the writing is so strong that even with some patchy performances kept me interested throughout.	
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>)	3
The production was patchy but there were a number of good parts to the production. Overall not very innovative but there are some strong performances. It has a reasonably large cast which fits with the current philosophy and the Abbey have given the play quite a traditional production. It's a pity that the production wasn't sharper and more polished.	
Quality of New Writing (in the case of new writing, dramaturgical technique as well as artistic ambition and originality will be taken into account)	N/A
Any other comments: Interesting Programme particularly the notes on the costumes. It is a pity none of the original preface to the play (even abridged) had been included.	
Report Completed by:	[REDACTED]

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



ARN: 02003

ARTS COUNCIL CRITICAL EVALUATION REPORT – ABBEY THEATRE

DATE:	16 th September 2013
PLAY/AUTHOR:	Major Barbara by George Bernard Shaw
CREATIVE TEAM:	Director: Annabelle Comyn Set Designer Paul O'Mahony
PERFORMERS:	Ali White, Eleanor Methven Paul McGann, Gerard Byrne etc

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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?)	2

Please comment briefly on your score here: This play's relevance now to a younger (or even middle-aged) audience must be in doubt, and the very Englishness of its theme makes it seem somewhat irrelevant. The director of the theatre says in the programme note that Shaw is asking us: "how engaged are you in your society?" ; the musty, and dated dialectic of the play makes this a difficult ask. Its length also makes it a challenge to engage an audience, especially when played so slowly and statically. The production lacked flair, and the arguments within the play were handled without wit or charisma.

Ambition (innovation, risk-taking, originality)	2
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Please comment briefly on your score here: It is difficult to justify putting this into the repertoire without having an inspirational directorial vision for the play or a lead actor whose exceptional talents are worthy of it

Execution (<i>quality of technique, skill, performance, scenography, direction, etc.</i>)	2		
Please comment briefly on your score here The acting was not of a very high standard with the exception of an excellent performance from [REDACTED]. The production was slow and tentative, and, apart from a very striking initial image, seemed both static and unimaginative. The London scenes in the Salvation Army hostel were particularly unconvincing. The set was effective, but the, almost subliminal, munitions sound effects were distracting and unhelpful.			
Effectiveness (<i>connection with the audience, engagement & response, the extent to which piece affects change and leaves a lasting impression</i>)	2		
Please comment briefly on your score here A mature audience in a 60% full auditorium seemed not particularly enthusiastic about the evening.			
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>)	2		
Please comment briefly on your score here A disappointing evening at the Abbey that would just about have passed muster in an English regional repertory theatre.			
Quality of New Writing (<i>in the case of new writing, dramaturgical technique as well as artistic ambition and originality will be taken into account</i>)			
Please comment briefly on your score here			
Any other comments: . This was a a surprising choice for a Summer production given the heaviness of the last year's repertoire, and the lack of a comedy or plays with a lighter touch in this season. I fear that overweight of serious classic plays on the main-stage over the past year might deter a younger audience, and detracts from the excitement and exuberance that the Abbey generated with the production of <i>Alice</i> twelve months ago.			
<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="204 1787 491 1912">Report Completed by:</td> <td data-bbox="491 1787 1311 1912"> <div>[REDACTED]</div> <div>[REDACTED]</div> </td> </tr> </table>		Report Completed by:	<div>[REDACTED]</div> <div>[REDACTED]</div>
Report Completed by:	<div>[REDACTED]</div> <div>[REDACTED]</div>		

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



ARN: 02003

ARTS COUNCIL CRITICAL EVALUATION REPORT – ABBEY THEATRE

DATE:	16 Sept 2013
PLAY/AUTHOR:	Major Barbara by GBS
CREATIVE TEAM:	Dir Annabelle Comyn
PERFORMERS:	Ian Lloyd Anderson, Fiona Bell, Killian Burke, Gerard Byrne, Clare Dunne, Liz Fitzgibbon, Emmet Kirwan, Aonghus Og McAnally, Paul McGann, Chris McHallem, Eleanor Methven, Caoimhe O'Malley, Marty Rea, Stephen Swift. Ali White

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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: It's welcome to see more Shaw at the Abbey, though the inherent problems of this play (which is in a sense two plays) were not really overcome by the direction (see below). More could have been made of the relevance of the themes to today, and the reasons for playing it now.	
Ambition (<i>innovation, risk-taking, originality</i>)	3

Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>It was rather cautiously handled, and the wordy script left more or less unpruned- a speedier and more challenging handling of the whole piece would have been welcome, though the coup de theatre of the set-change at the end was first-rate. Up to then it was oddly static, with the second act (outside the shelter) particularly prone to longeurs</p>	
Execution (quality of technique, skill, performance, scenography, direction, etc.)	2/3
Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>The direction was too slow throughout; the play is a series of dialogues which would lend themselves to a more Wildean, quick-fire treatment, with the aphorisms flashing past. That didn't happen here. There was an air of portentousness about it, which was exacerbated by some of the performances. [redacted] was reliably effective and authoritative, [redacted] brilliant, and [redacted] played very cleverly against type. But [redacted] did not project the kind of idealistic indancescence which is necessary to make [redacted] breathe, [redacted] was awkward and unconvincing, and [redacted] oddly downbeat and oblique performance as Undershaft was a disappointment; if the intention was to present a different 'take' on this Mephistophelian character, it didn't work. The playing of Adolphus by marty rea was variable, and the dialogues with Undershaft rather lost their vim. The sets were splendid, and the opening music highly effective</p>	
Effectiveness (connection with the audience, engagement & response, the extent to which piece affects change and leaves a lasting impression)	3
Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>For a Monday night the house was fairly well attended but the response seemed lacklustre- some of the Shavian brutalities, which should take your breath away, were received in somnolent silence. The themes of militarism, armements and government were left rather in limbo, and the tension between chracters didn't seem to grip the attention- partly the result of the weak playing of Barbara.</p>	
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")	2/3
Please comment briefly on your score here	
<p>This was average rather than excellent; absorbing enough for a committed Shavian like myself, but it didn't come across as a vital re-reading of a fascinating though flawed 'think-piece' play which –like much of Shaw- needs some shortening, speeding up and radical refocussing to get across its real quality to a twenty-first-century audience.</p>	
Quality of New Writing (in the case of new writing, dramaturgical technique as well as artistic ambition and originality will be taken into account)	N/A
Please comment briefly on your score here	

Any other comments:	
Report Completed by:	<div></div> <div></div>

DRAFT