



ARTISTIC ASSESSMENT

Creating Great Work: A summary of artistic assessment

Queensland Theatre Company holds a debrief of every production. This includes reports from the Managers of all departments and, in the case of Artistic Development, the artists involved in the production.

Part of the process is measuring each production against the Company's goals as set out in the Business and Strategic Plan. This is usually done by the Artistic Director but at recent Managers' meetings, where the debriefs take place, other Managers have been asked to comment on this part of the process.

The discussion of the goal "we will create great work" led to questions about how such a goal is measured. Since it's important all Company employees understand these goals, it was decided to broaden this discussion to all staff at a monthly staff meeting.

At a recent Board meeting a recent production was also discussed. Board members, too, began to ask how we measure this goal. This discussion in all areas of Queensland Theatre Company resulted in some broad criteria by which we can measure the standard of the Company's work.

What is greatness?

Is *great* the right word? It was agreed that what is actually meant is perhaps better conveyed by the word *excellent*.

There are two areas we can measure the standard of our work

- Within the Company
- In the world at large

Within the Company

The more a member of staff understands the reasons for selecting a play for production and the way the production interprets the play, the greater the sense of value. When staff members feel they have been inspired to do their absolute best work and can take pride in the result, the work is, for them, great.

The shows that have the least sense of value for staff members are those that have not expected the highest standard from every department, that have not created excitement and anticipation across the Company at design presentations, briefings, marketing briefs, dress rehearsals, previews, openings, debriefs; every step of the process.

There is a great sense of achievement if the box office targets are achieved or bettered, but this is not, for staff, the only measure of success.

In the world at large

The sense of any work the Company does being great has also to do with its impact on the local theatre scene, the media, the general public and the wider Australian theatre going public.

The reception of our work does not have to mean total acceptance; it has to do with a sense of having made an impact.

A measure of the greatness of any show could perhaps be summarised as

1. Critical and audience acceptance.
2. Critical rejection but audience acceptance.
3. Critical acceptance but nonetheless slow box office.
4. Critical and audience division; some for, some against, but plenty of discussion, letters to editors, letters positive and negative to the company, discussion on blogs. This kind of work may have been deliberately provocative, designed to push boundaries, experiment with style and form introduce new artists or techniques.

A show that can't find a place in one of these categories is probably one that can't be defined as being 'great'. To be dismissed quickly and forgotten is the mark of a piece of work that has fallen short of the Company's high expectations of itself. It fails the Company purpose; to be living proof that theatre matters.

Michael Gow
Artistic Director
13/5/08