



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company:	Forth Valley Chorus
Venue:	Ross Theatre, Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh
Title of Event:	Jazz on a Summer's Day
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	30th Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival
Date of Visit:	Sunday 27 July 2008
Overall Rating:	4
<i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.)</i>	
Forth Valley Chorus are a glamorous, dynamic and slick <i>a cappella</i> group of around 80 women conducted by David Sangster (?), who presented a short but varied programme of vocal music.	
Name: Susan Nickalls	Date: 28/07/2008
Specialist Advisor	Scottish Arts Council Officer <i>Please circle the relevant title</i>

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named above. 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 will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and 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 Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its 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, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Vision and imagination of work - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	4	This was a short but varied programme of a <i>cappella</i> vocal music presented at the outdoor Ross Theatre. The small stage didn't do a group this size justice and one got the impression their lively choreographed movements would be even more impressive with room to breathe on a bigger stage. Whilst the group sang well, their whole performance was marred by a poor microphone and PA set up. Nearly all of the six numbers featured some popping or rumbling microphones.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned. If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	4	The repertoire of the chorus included Stepping Out, Fever, Operator and Tuxedo Junction. This made for a nice contrast with the other groups on the bill - the Edinburgh Schools' Jazz Orchestra, Topsy Chapman and the Dave Donohoe Band - which were more orientated towards traditional jazz or blues and swing. They were a lot more low-key in terms of performance, so the high energy and dynamism of the Forth Valley Chorus made them a highlight of the afternoon.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see ¹ below for guidance	3	As mentioned above, this looked an impressive performance but unfortunately didn't always sound like one due to problems with the microphones and the PA. The sound balance, which favoured the singers in front of the microphone, didn't accurately reflect the rich vocal textures of the group and many of the numbers were spoilt by popping and humming microphones. However, the group looked stunning and performed well, even if it wasn't always possible to hear them clearly. It was also a pity that the Forth Valley Chorus' name was omitted from the line-up published in the festival programme.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	4	Forth Valley Chorus are a very engaging and professional group of singers. Quite apart from their vocal quality, the carefully choreographed moves helped enliven the songs and these were executed with energy and enthusiasm. It was difficult to judge the full extent of their vocal quality due to microphone problems skewing the vocal balance but the closely-knit harmonies produced a satisfying sound.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		

¹ Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		
Dance, Theatre	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.		
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	2	<p>The technical aspect of this performance was disappointing, particularly compared with other groups appearing either side of the Forth Valley Chorus who didn't appear to experience any problems with the microphones or PA. In part this was due to trying to fit a large group on a small stage, but even so, the microphone and PA set up was not really adequate to do this group justice. This was a pity as the chorus were already competing with helicopters flying overhead and trains rumbling past behind the stage without having to contend with unsatisfactory microphones and PA.</p>
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		<p>It's estimated that over 20,000 people, including families with young children, flocked to Prince's Street Gardens to this free concert as part of the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival. The area in front of the Ross Theatre was packed, as were the adjacent areas of grass. Many people got up to dance in the area in front of the stage or simply enjoyed lying in the sun listening to the music. It was a very relaxed atmosphere and everyone seemed to be enjoying the weather and the music.</p>
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>		N/A

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?		N/A

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. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	In terms of playing to a large number of people, and also encouraging people passing by to come and see what's going on in the centre of Edinburgh, the Ross Theatre set against the dramatic backdrop of Edinburgh Castle in the middle of Princes Street Gardens is ideal. However, as mentioned several times now, the small stage was not really suitable for a vocal group the size of Forth Valley Chorus.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	
Publicity/ pre-publicity – leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	The festival's website had details about the Sunday afternoon concert but didn't list the groups who would be playing. These were however listed in the festival brochure, copies of which were freely available to the public at the event, although the name of Forth Valley Chorus was omitted. I personally didn't see any other publicity material relating to the festival.
Ease of booking and payment	This was a free concert and Princes Street Gardens are centrally located in Edinburgh and easy to find.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The music could be heard from Princes Street so the venue was not hard to find.
External signage and signposting	N/A
Internal directional signage	N/A
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Whilst there is wheelchair access down into Princes Street Gardens, the Ross Theatre has steps and tiered seating so wheelchair users would either have to go down the front or at the very back of the venue. Access to the gardens from the ramp in Princes Street is quite steep and might be difficult for some people.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	This concert started at 12.30pm and finished at 5.30pm and people could come and go, staying for as long as they liked. Fortunately the weather was wonderful which made the gardens, and therefore the concert, an attractive place to be on a hot Sunday afternoon.

Criteria	Comment
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	There were security people on hand to give out programmes.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The Scottish Arts Council logo is included in the festival programme which is also available for downloading on the festival's website. During the afternoon compère Todd Gordon acknowledged the support of the City of Edinburgh Council and sponsor Tom Farmer.

² In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max 500 words. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.