



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company:	NEW EDINBURGH ORCHESTRA (Making Music Scotland)	
Venue:	NICOLSON SQUARE METHODIST CHAPEL	
Title of Event :	Concert	
Type of Event:	CONCERT	
Date of Visit:	13 JUNE 2009	
Overall Rating:	Good [NB please note comments on the nature of the event below]	
<i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – ie 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>		
Name:	SVEND BROWN	Date: 15 June 2009
Scottish Arts Council Officer		Specialist Advisor

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 on 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 future 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:

- Very poor**- standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- Poor** - not well conceived and executed
- Satisfactory**
- Good** - well conceived and executed
- Very Good** – well conceived and executed to a very good standard
- Excellent** – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally 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	<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of ideas• if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons	Very Good	<p>New Edinburgh Orchestra is an amateur orchestra of around 50 players. On its website it advertises that new players join the orchestra for a trial period, and that principal position may require auditions, but the ability range is clearly very wide – from the very proficient to the aspirational. It would be fair to say that it is not an orchestra which aims for playing standards comparable to professional orchestras; but that emphatically does not diminish its value. NEO offers amateur players the chance to give orchestral concerts and play major works from the symphonic repertoire. The satisfaction of the players and conductor is as important as that of the audience - and the audience's satisfaction comes from sharing the performer's pleasure and applauding the enterprise. In those terms this was a very good example of what amateur orchestras achieve.</p> <p>The orchestra has made a point of commissioning new music specifically for amateur orchestra and including these works in every concert – fantastic. There should be more of it. The piece by Jennifer Martin (Seeing Sounds) was not new (composed 2003 and performed again since) but it was arguably the most successful performance of the evening, since Martin had so astutely written music that played to the orchestra's strengths.</p> <p>The orchestra generally features a young local soloist too – and again this is an excellent thing. In this case, Kirsty Orton is a talented Edinburgh violinist and was given the opportunity to play one of the standard concertos of the repertoire.</p>

<p>All (if relevant)</p>	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? • If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	<p>good</p>	<p>This concert was typical of NEO's concerts in that the programme was ambitious and diverse: it included a major symphony (Brahms 3), one work with soloist (Prokofiev's second violin concerto with Kirsty Orton), one NEO-commissioned work (Jennifer Martin's <i>Seeing Sounds</i>) and one other (Gounod's Symphony No.1). On anyone's terms this was a long programme: the first half lasted around 75 minutes and the concert as a whole lasted two-and-a-half hours. Add in the fact that the audience was sitting on uncushioned pews, and that made for a long evening. The organisers might serve everyone better by programming shorter concerts. In this case the Gounod was both the least well played <i>and</i> felt like one symphony too far. Without it the programme would have been as meaty as most symphonic concerts – and without the Gounod, the other pieces may have got more rehearsal time.</p> <p>There is also a question of programming for the strengths of orchestra. NEO has some good wind players, while the strings are a great deal weaker. That was cruelly exposed in the Gounod which really is a strings showcase. The Brahms, in contrast, fared a lot better because of the more prominent role of the winds.</p> <p>I raise these two specific points because, looking ahead to the 2009 season, all the future concerts look equally long, and feature works which expose the strings.</p> <p>As mentioned above, the commissioning of new work, and re-performance of previous commissions, is a fantastic aspect of the orchestra's work and should be supported. Martin's piece was performed with great commitment, and warmly received.</p>
<p>All</p>	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? • How well did it communicate the artistic themes? • How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	<p>Very good</p>	<p>As mentioned above, the success of a performance such as this needs to be measured against many different standards. I rate this 'Very good' not because the playing was comparable to a top flight amateur orchestra, but because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Clearly the orchestra had worked hard at preparing the performance and gave as good a performance as it is possible for them. 2) Clearly the audience appreciated and cheered their work with enthusiasm. 3) The audience and player expectations were fulfilled.

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

All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. • How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? • In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Satisfactory	<p>The performers are amateur musicians conducted by a professional musician, Tim Paxton. He directed the evening well and conveyed his view of the pieces well.</p> <p>The soloist was a young professional violinist who gave an admirable rendition of the Prokofiev. Kirsty Orton had a lovely, full sound which showed to particular advantage in the slow movement.</p> <p>Little formal effort was made to engage with the audience beyond the production of the programme book (see below), but the sense of community in the hall was strong and added to the pleasure of the evening.</p>
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<p>All</p>	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience? • Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? • Were you/ engaged/inspired? • Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? <p>Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art produced by the participants? • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</p>	<p>Satisfactory</p>	<p>The event was not targeted at any particular audience, though friends and family formed an important portion of it.</p> <p>The event was very appropriate for its audience who were fully engaged and inspired, responding warmly to all of the performances.</p> <p>I was fascinated by the performance because, despite any reservation one might have about listening to an amateur orchestra of 50 players performing Brahms 3, it was a rewarding experience. You listen in a quite different way: the strengths and weaknesses of the performance reveal different aspects of the piece itself. As a listener, you extra-enjoy the moments when it really comes together. Also, the conductor and orchestra did convey a view of the pieces – these were interpretations, not just play-throughs.</p> <p>Approximately 150 people were there, of wide age range (from students to 80-year-olds).</p> <p>I was not aware of any specific materials offered to blind / deaf attenders.</p> <p>The only supporting material available was the programme book (£1) which contained programme notes and biographies of the artists and composer. The concert itself was very conventionally staged and everyone behaved mostly as though they were at a professional symphony orchestra concert. Perhaps a slightly more informal approach might have enhanced the event further. e.g. Might it be an idea to have each piece introduced either by the conductor or a member of the orchestra? As a punter, I would have been interested to hear what the special pleasures and challenges of the piece were for the players. And in the case of the Jennifer Martin piece, the composer was actually in the hall, so we could have heard from her about her work.</p>
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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
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy to find? • Is it on a main transport route? • Are the spaces clean? • What were the sight lines like? • How big was it? 	<p>Nicolson Square Methodist Church is centrally located and easy to find. There was a link to a map on the orchestra's website. The Church is off Nicolson St which has many bus routes and lies around half a mile from Waverley Station.</p> <p>The spaces are well maintained. The seating is in pews with good sight lines. There are pillars (supporting a gallery) but with unreserved seating, it is not difficult to choose a seat with an unobstructed view.</p> <p>The audience was seated only downstairs, and the capacity is around 200.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? • Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>There were no fliers/posters for this concert at the venue, but there were leaflets advertising next season's concerts.</p> <p>Full information was included on the orchestra's website.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? • What publicity materials are produced? • Is it easy to understand? • Where can you get the information? • Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>I did not find the event advertised in many leaflets, posters or websites aside for the NEO's own.</p> <p>It was not listed in The Herald or The Scotsman on the day of the concert – which is a shame as a competing concert by another amateur ensemble (The Carlton Consort) was included in both.</p> <p>The main publicity appears to be a leaflet advertising future events handed out at the concert itself.</p> <p>Scottish Arts Council is not acknowledged on the website, but the logo was featured on both the programme book and the leaflet.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>According to the website, tickets were on sale through orchestra members and the Queen's Hall box office. I booked by phone on 8 June through the Queen's Hall which was quick and easy (though I noticed that the Queen's Hall website had no listing for the event, and there was no facility to book online which is usually my first preference). When I got to the venue my tickets were not there to be picked up. However substitutions were offered immediately.</p>

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.

Criteria	Comment																
Timing of the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	<p>The concert started at around 7.30pm and ended around 10pm. I felt that the programme was one piece too long for all concerned and that dropping the Gounod would have enhanced the evening. (see comments above)</p>																
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance clearly marked? Is there clear internal directional signage? Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	<p>The entrance is clearly visible.</p> <p>Internal signage could be clearer.</p> <p>I did not see Braille signage or audio loop signage.</p>																
Access and provision for disabled people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1" data-bbox="571 533 1251 1055"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>No</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>No</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	Yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	No
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Customer service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p>Front of house was managed by volunteers – some of them also playing in the orchestra. They seemed a little overstretched when I arrived (e.g. did not immediately know where my tickets were and what had happened to them), but it would be wrong to suggest that this was a problem to the audience as a whole.</p> <p>Refreshments were served in the basement café.</p> <p>One problem I found was that people did enter and leave the room during the performance more than usual at a concert; and noise from the foyer area is readily audible in the chapel which could be intrusive. I could not see if there was someone manning the doors outside the room, but if so they could have been more vigilant.</p>																

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.

Thanks for your comments, which provide very useful and welcome feedback. We would like to respond to a few points:

We agree that the concert was too long, both for the orchestra and for the audience, and are adjusting next year's programmes to make sure that this doesn't happen again.

We are delighted that our commitment to new music was singled out for praise. It may be worth noting that we never commission "amateur" music, but music which should be worthy of professional performance.

We feel that the criticism of our advertising was a little harsh – the major newspapers charge a lot for ads, and we don't have much money to spare. We do submit our concert listings to the free papers, and to several major concert listing websites. The Queen's Hall does not currently allow external concerts to advertise on their website or to sell tickets online. We also distribute posters around the Edinburgh City libraries and give them to our members to put up in their local shops and businesses.

We apologize for failing to acknowledge the Scottish Arts Council on our website, this has now been corrected.