



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: National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS)

Venue: Culloden Academy, Inverness

Title of Event: Kodály Musicianship Training Weekend

Type of Event: Training Event

Date of Visit: 22 September 2007

Overall Rating: 5

This assessment is based on a visit to one of NYCoS's training weekends. The observations and comments within the assessment therefore focus on NYCoS as a training provider, and ignore, largely, the organisation's important role as a creative force within the music sector. However, some of the observations are influenced by NYCoS's reputation in the field of the performance arts. Overall, the organisation places quality at the heart of all its activities, and this is reflected strongly in how it goes about organising and delivering its training events. The content of the programme was excellent and entirely relevant to the needs of the participants; the quality of the tutors was impressive; the management of the event very professional; and the delivery and presentation of the event was well-gauged to suit the expectations of the participants.

Name: Jim Gaitens

Date: 11/10/2007

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 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.	5	This event was not about performance. However, as a key agency in the development of choral music, NYCoS places a strong emphasis on the artistic quality of its performance events. These events act as a flagship for its comprehensive programme of rehearsals, courses, sessions, and partnership training. There is abundant evidence available (on the web and on recordings) which demonstrates the importance of vision and imagination being brought to the work that NYCoS commissions, and equally, how these qualities bring its performances to life.
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.		N/A
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	5	One of the central aims of the training weekend was to offer participants an opportunity to 'take an in-depth look at our (NYCoS's) methods and resources'. The range, diversity and abundance of NYCoS's resources and practical support were very well reflected in the rich programme of activities over the weekend. The choice of workshops was superb, and in terms of delivery, the emphasis was on quality and professionalism.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	5	The choice of tutors for the weekend and the standards of their teaching, were key factors in the success of the event. Their role was not only to impart information, techniques and methods; but to inspire others to deliver music tuition with enthusiasm, and with a belief in the benefits that music brings.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		Whilst this category is not directly related to the content of the training weekend, there was a strong emphasis placed on using space and movement as an important aspect of teaching the Kodály method. This was emphasised as being particularly important when working with young people, where games form an integral part of the learning process.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		N/A

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, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		N/A
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	5	Music was central to the event rather than incidental. However, it is worth commenting on how music was used as a method of communication as well as being the main subject being taught. In terms of the tuition for children, the instructions from the teacher were ‘sung’, and this lends itself to informality and the idea of learning through fun. Singing was also used at key points in the weekend to bring the delegates together for shared enjoyment and a bit of bonding.
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.		N/A
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>	5	<p>The quality of presentation both at the individual workshops and at the plenary sessions was very high. A strong engagement with the delegates was achieved via lively and well prepared speeches and links between sessions. Teaching methodology was very appropriate to the abilities of the groups (this was pre-arranged through information gained from the application form), and the choice of material was very relevant to the needs, interests and levels of professionalism of the participants. A very popular session on the programme was the ‘See it in Action’ workshop where a group of Primary pupils were assembled in order to give a very practical demonstration of the Kodály principles in action. This proved to be very inspirational, not only because it clearly demonstrated the immediate and long-term benefits to the children, but also because of the charismatic quality that this particular teacher brought to the session and the strong relationship she built with the children.</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 was relatively easy for the Assessor to pick up a strong sense of satisfaction from the participants. There was a noticeable ‘buzz’ surrounding the event, and the delegates seemed to be soaking up the materials and ideas presented through the programme. The event pre-planning was well thought out (and this is reflected in the application form information), and this allowed the organisers the opportunity to fit each delegate within an appropriate level of workshop.</p> <p>The style of delivery was, at once, professional, relaxed, full of enthusiasm, and laced with a bit of humour and informality.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	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.	5	Interpretive activity was core to the event rather than additional. However, there were some excellent additional resources which enhanced the overall event. These were mainly in the form of samples of NYCoS's range of teaching resources on display in the foyer. Also on display were various examples of, and information on, the comprehensive range of activities that NYCoS engages in, including its performance events and choir training.
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)?	5	<p><u>This was the main purpose of the event.</u></p> <p>The NYCoS Musicianship Training weekends are now well established within the organisation's annual programme of activities. This is the second training weekend that has been held in Inverness, and the healthy numbers of delegates that it has attracted would suggest that it is conveniently located for those who live North of the Central Belt and for Island dwellers.</p> <p>The training programme is based on the Kodály principles, and is therefore accessible to a wide range of participants. However, the main interest for this kind of training comes from professionals (mainly tutors, group leaders and school teachers). The programme of workshops covered a very comprehensive range of choices over the two days – not only in terms of the types of activity (e.g. voice, instrument, percussion, choir repertoire), but also offered a range of workshops aimed at specific age groups (e.g. 0-3, early years, middle years, etc.). Delegates were also obliged to sign up for a Core Musicianship Class each morning and afternoon.</p> <p>The sessions were delivered at the highest professional standards, and the style of teaching promoted the importance of learning within the context of being enthusiastic, positive about the subject, and having fun.</p> <p>The learning outcomes were manifold, and there was a sense that the delegates left with enough ideas, resources and enthusiasm to last through at least a year of teaching.</p> <p>The content of the workshops and the teaching methods employed, are ideal for strategic linking with the formal curriculum in schools, and no doubt enhance the curriculum greatly. However, it is important to note that the Kodály method is equally suitable for teaching within a more informal setting, and is therefore adaptable for other users such as pre-school groups, youth and community groups, etc. – as long as the quality of teaching is maintained at a professional standard. By using the Kodály approach, NYCoS is ideally-placed to deliver accessible training to a wide range of client groups and individuals.</p>

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	Very good in terms of the number of classrooms available, and the suitability of the community theatre for plenary sessions.
Information/ interpretative material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There was an excellent display of NYCoS's resources in the foyer area, as well as useful background information on the organisation. The Delegate's Pack was well produced, easy to navigate and informative.
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 NYCoS website is well-resourced and attractive, and acts as an excellent information point for pre-publicity for events. The event was very well attended, and many of those present had been alerted to it through specific targeting (emails to local authorities, etc.).
Ease of booking and payment	The application form is attractively produced, well laid out and informative. Costs are accessible, and many of the delegates would have enjoyed the benefit of financial support from their employers.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Schools located within a large housing scheme are never adequately sign posted or easy to find! This might have been problematic to delegates not familiar with the area.
External signage and signposting	See above.
Internal directional signage	Very good.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	As a public building, the venue had full disabled access.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Yes
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	This was excellent. NYCoS staff were very visible, and went out of their way to be helpful and were eager to inform.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Very prominent on the NYCoS website and in the pre-publicity material, the application form, and on all relevant background information.

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.