



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 - National Girls Choir 2008 Tour

Venue: Perth Concert Hall

Title of Event: NYCoS National Girls Choir 2008

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)

A concert by the National Girls Choir, part of NYCoS

Date of Visit: Tuesday 25 March, 2008

Overall Rating: 4

(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.)

This was an impressive concert featuring diverse choral works performed by a well-rehearsed and well-drilled choir under the expert baton of conductor Christopher Bell.

Name: Susan Nickalls Date: 07/04/2008

Specialist Advisor ~~Scottish Arts Council Officer~~ Please circle the relevant title

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 | Having just completed a residential course, the National Girls Choir were in top form and sang extremely well. It was evident the intensive focus on these works during the preceding week had paid dividends. The choir came across as being a well-drilled unit, singing together as an ensemble rather than as a group of individuals and the level of discipline was high. |
| 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 | There was an imaginative and interesting mix of repertoire in the programme which included: Mozart's <i>Regina Anglorum</i> , Richard Rodney Bennett's <i>Letters to Lindbergh</i> with piano duet accompaniment, William Sweeney's <i>Three Soutar Songs</i> , Faure's <i>Cantique de Jean Racine</i> , and works by Kodaly, Hatfield, Johnston, Rattray and Rutter. The material was well-chosen for the vocal abilities of the choir. |
| 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 | 4 | This concert was a complete success in terms of delivering what it set out to do. |
| 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 | Conductor Christopher Bell is highly entertaining with a good line in patter and is able to immediately engage the audience with his enthusiasm about the pieces. His introductions to each work immediately set the mood and tone as well as providing some information about what was to come given that there were no actual programme notes. He also demands and gets the absolute attention and respect of the choir and obviously has a very good rapport with them. The choir themselves delivered a highly accomplished performance suitably matched by accompanists Stuart Hope and Neil Metcalfe. |
| Dance, Theatre | Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc | | |
| Theatre | Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed. | | |

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. | | |
| 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> | 3 | The presentation in terms of lighting, etc. was nothing out of the ordinary and the same set-up was maintained throughout the concert ,ie house lights up throughout. |
| 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> | | For a Tuesday afternoon in Perth, the 250 - 300 turn out to hear the choir was impressive, although admittedly most of them were relatives or friends of the choir members. The concert was also recorded for a future broadcast which also expands the audience. |
| 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> | | There were no additional activities apart from the concert. However, this was the culmination of a residential week of rehearsals for the choir and is to be followed by concerts in April in Edinburgh and Helensburgh. |
| All | <p>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)?</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 | Perth Concert Hall is a fabulous venue for concerts and this one was very well-attended. |
| Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc. | There were leaflets for this concert and it was listed in the concert hall brochure prominently displayed in the venue itself. |
| 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 website had a lot of good information on the concert and the leaflets and brochures seemed to be plentiful at the concert venue. As to their distribution elsewhere, I'm unable to comment as I don't live in Perth, and I'm not sure how far afield publicity reached. |
| Ease of booking and payment | The Horsecross website is excellent although the day I looked up the net, booking was not available, so I purchased a ticket on the day which was straightforward as the concert had not sold out. |
| Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? | Perth Concert Hall is very easy to find and is centrally located in Perth. Public transport to and from Perth leaves a lot to be desired with train services woefully inadequate and journeys extremely lengthy, particularly from Edinburgh. |
| External signage and signposting | This is good. |
| Internal directional signage | This was also fine with everything clearly labeled and all facilities centrally located. |
| Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see? | As a new building, the concert hall has good provision for disabled people including a row at the back of the stalls specially designed for people in wheelchairs. |
| 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 3pm and finished around 5pm so this would appear to be appropriate not just for the audience, but also for the young performers. It's uncertain whether a higher turnout of local people not directly involved with the choir might have been achieved had the concert been held in the evening, ie around 7.30pm. |
| Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) | All areas of customer service at the hall were efficient, helpful and friendly. |
| Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ² | The Scottish Arts Council logo was included on the programme and in the concert hall brochure for Jan – April, but was in such small print, it was easy to miss. |

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.

Thank you for the Artistic Evaluation of the National Girls Choir concert held in Perth on 25 March 2008. We are very pleased with the glowing report but are disappointed and somewhat surprised with the overall rating of 4.

The comment on the front page states that 'this was an impressive concert featuring diverse choral works performed by a well-rehearsed and well-drilled choir under the expert baton of conductor Christopher Bell'. The comments throughout the report are all very positive with 'top form' and 'sang extremely well' used with no explanation of what could have been improved. The ratings criteria states that a 4 is well conceived and executed and a 5 is conceived and executed to a high standard. I therefore believe that the comments included in the report surely should have rated the concert with an overall 5.

It should also be pointed out that the audience numbered 340 which is far in excess of the 250-300 mentioned.

Joan Gibson
Chief Executive of NYCoS