



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: National Youth Choir of Scotland

Venue: Perth Concert Hall

Title of Event: Spring Concerts 2009 National Boys Choir

Type of Event: Choral

Date of Visit: 10th April 2009

Overall Rating: Very good

When one is welcomed by one hundred and twenty seven voices and sent homeward again by the National Boys Choir, one could only be amazed by their uniqueness and enthusiasm. The National Boys Choir in their various guises worked very hard and produced a very good concert. The commitment from each participant and their conductor was very obvious. It was a great afternoon's entertainment and I am extremely encouraged by the high standards in young male voices within each of NYCoS' choirs. I can see and hear the National Boys Choir, NBC Chamber Choir and NBC Changed Voices all reaching towards their potential as truly excellent choirs. The choirs' use of dynamics, diction and phrasing were excellent but need some further work on pitching and singing together in harmony. National Boys Choir, NBC Chamber Choir and NBC Changed Voices were directed and conducted by Christopher Bell.

Name: Petrea Cooney

Date: 8 May 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	Vision and imagination of work <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	This was my first time to hear the National Boys Choir, The National Boys Choir Chamber Choir and also the National Boys Choir Changed Voices. Today's concert was full of variety and diverse repertoire, which was sung with conviction, clarity and good diction.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection <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. 	Excellent	The National Boys Choir is made up of unchanged voices and sings up to three parts. The concert repertoire were the results and showcase from a residential week, which was held and organised by NYCoS, prior to the concert. The boys sang most of the repertoire from memory, which was very impressive.
All	Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance <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 e.g. from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? Education events – see ¹ below for definition		The repertoire which the boys performed was introduced in an informal and friendly manner by their director and conductor Christopher Bell. He introduced the background of the chosen repertoire which added further interest as the audience heard snippets about the choir's background, work and new compositions which were included in the concert's programme. The programme notes were also informative. The programme was well balanced and we heard repertoire ranging from Vivaldi, Dowland and Morley to contemporary composers/arrangers who were present at the concert and had just recently finished off their newly commissioned pieces for NYCoS. We heard songs from South Africa, which sat very comfortably within the repertoire and also songs from Scotland with a very Nationalist Scottish theme, which the boys sang with great pride. Some strong and pleasant solos were added to the repertoire and bell like diction throughout. 'Weeping' in L'Estrange's 'Song of a Rainbow' was nicely performed which included two boy sopranos. Searie's 'Pleasant Scents of Spring' was attractive rhythmically and was delivered with some good use of imitation and clear diction. Added to their repertoire were songs with humour and perfectly rounded 'OOs' in Phillips 'Limbo Dancer's Soundsong', which was a fun play on the words that accompanied it, demanding the boys' focus.

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
			<p>The witchy theme added a colourful dimension to the repertoire which was peppered with lots of challenging intervals in William's 'Double Trouble' from Harry Potter. We also had a flavour of Doric in 'The Witches Song' by Maxwell Geddes, which was performed appropriately in a cheeky manner, which was challenging harmonically.</p> <p>The National Boys Chamber Choir sang beautifully and delicately in Dowland's 'Come again'. The La las in Morley's 'Now is the month of Maying' were very precise vocally and rhythmically. The choir came across very confidently.</p> <p>The National Changed Voices Choir performed a number of songs including a set of Scottish Songs, a Croatian song and a rendition of the tongue twister 'Peter Piper', which was excellently executed, heartily applauded and appreciated by the audience.</p> <p>Overall, the boys sang very confidently and performed with gusto and enthusiasm. Occasionally there were slight intonation problems coming through from each of the choirs.</p>
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? 	Very good	<p>Overall, each of the choirs performed very well, with many moments of excellence shining through. The key person behind this was Christopher Bell. Christopher, NYCoS staff and team of helpers and accompanists have worked extremely hard to achieve very good standards with the choirs.</p> <p>The audience were made up of mainly family and friends and the choirs were warmly appreciated.</p> <p>The audience were spoilt for choice with three choirs. They all came together (127 young boys) towards the end of the concert to perform three pieces including 'Wayfaring Stranger' which filled the auditorium with much sensitivity and emotion through a relaxed folky feel. 'Erosion', was nicely arranged with an especially effective ending. The audience responded well to these. 'Take Flight' was well performed, very apt thematically, with some intonation problems and great use of dynamics. A good ending to a very good concert which was very heartfelt by participants and audience, alike!</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work original? • How was the space used? • How many dancers were there and how were they used? • How long was the piece? 		N/A

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Theatre	Script Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 		N/A
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 		N/A
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 		N/A
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (e.g. lighting and sound cues, etc). 		N/A
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production 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? Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led e.g. one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the 		This concert was targeted at friends of NYCoS, family and friends of the performers and to anyone who wished to hear the boys perform. The audience responded very well to their conductor. The boys worked very hard and gave a very good concert. The audience could only have been inspired by the boys and NYCoS’ very hard work in supporting the young boys.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>		

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 e.g. 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? 	Perth Concert hall was very suitable
<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>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>	Yes, this was appropriate

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

Criteria	Comment																
Ease of booking and payment	No problems, very easy.																
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? 	Very good timing all round.																
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? 	Yes, it's clear around the actual building.																
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 Please add in any additional comments below the table <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<table border="1" data-bbox="571 622 1490 1227"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="571 622 786 707"></th> <th data-bbox="786 622 863 707">Yes / No</th> <th data-bbox="863 622 1091 707"></th> <th data-bbox="1091 622 1490 707">Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 707 786 875">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="786 707 863 875">No</td> <td data-bbox="863 707 1091 875">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1091 707 1490 875">Both buildings are designed to be disabled-friendly and have infra-red enhanced hearing systems and staff who are trained to help.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 875 786 954">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="786 875 863 954"></td> <td data-bbox="863 875 1091 954">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1091 875 1490 954">Stair lifts, lifts.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="571 954 786 1227">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="786 954 863 1227">yes</td> <td data-bbox="863 954 1091 1227">Accessible marketing materials e.g. website or alternative formats e.g. large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1091 954 1490 1227">No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes / No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	Both buildings are designed to be disabled-friendly and have infra-red enhanced hearing systems and staff who are trained to help.	Captioning		Lift/ramp	Stair lifts, lifts.	Accessible toilets	yes	Accessible marketing materials e.g. website or alternative formats e.g. large print, Plain English	No
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Captioning		Lift/ramp	Stair lifts, lifts.														
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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? 	Very good																

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.