



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: NYCoS

Venue: St Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh.

Title of Event : NYCoS Spring Concert 2009

Type of Event: Choral Concert performed by the National Girls Choir of Scotland

Date of Visit: 18th April 2009

Overall Rating: Excellent

(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.)

My overall rating for the concert is Excellent, and this is a result of the level of singing, performing and teamwork that I saw and heard at St Cuthbert's Church from the National Girl Choir.

I only have words of positivity and praise for the professionalism which I experienced on the day, which started from the warm reception I received from NYCoS' team, to the varied repertoire sung by the girls accompanied by Stephen Doughty, directed and conducted by Christopher Bell. It was a wonderful afternoons' entertainment where the girls' musicality soared and rang to the rooftop. The singing and performances were first class.

Overall the girls voices came across with a good mixture of sweet and mature singing with excellent diction which was confidently delivered with excellent intonation. The performances were flawless with beautifully sustained phrasing and breathing. The repertoire was demanding, colourful with excellent use of dynamics and expressions which also covered a great array of styles and genres from African, jazz, opera, Burns to contemporary Scottish.

The afternoon's entertainment was also filled in with lots of details about the programme with lots of added humour and wit from Christopher Bell. Christopher Bell is achieving his vision for excellent singing in Scotland and he is one of the greatest experts in training and directing young and senior voices and choirs. This was evidenced, once again at this concert which was under his direction and baton.

Name: Petrea Cooney

Date: 22 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	<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 	6	<p>I have previously heard NYCoS' National Boys Choir and their Changed Voices Choir.</p> <p>I was very impressed with the great range of repertoire that evolved from the National Girls Choir, 6 days of residential training.</p> <p>The girls choir reached a particular standard that deserves to be placed in the 'excellent' category, as their singing and repertoire carefully selected for them, showed them at their absolute best.</p>
All (if relevant)	<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. 	6	<p>The National Girls Choir, which is now in its third year and at the time of the performance had just completed an intensive six day residential course, made up of rehearsals, musicianship training and some recreation at Strathallan School in Perthshire. 90 girls were selected by audition from all over Scotland, by NYCoS. The concert at St Cuthbert's Church showcased the work that they had been working on over the period of the residential course.</p>
All	<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>	6	<p>The repertoire was wonderful in colour as well as entertaining and was beautifully sung.</p> <p>There were some minor changes to the programme as printed which initially was a bit confusing to follow.</p> <p>The opening was warm and welcoming with great shows of ability, technique and flair, which were confidently displayed with 'bell' like qualities!</p> <p>Sutton's 'Cat' was so pure added with excellent diction. Rhythmically, this piece was very interesting. Birds' Mazurka was fun to listen to which was brought across by the performers. 'Frog and the animals' was sung passionately with accuracy and preciseness in choral like heavenly voices. 'A Song of Life' was more challenging with dissonant harmonies which was sung very maturely and confidently.</p> <p>Dalby's 'Where the Green Grass Grows' was performed by a smaller choral ensemble which came across as rounded, free with united even sweet intonations and good use of dynamics. The breathing and phrasing were particularly notable in 'Skylark' which was consistently applied throughout this song and soared appropriately. The harmonies and phrasing in 'Mad Song' was challenging which</p>

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 girls choir managed to overcome very well. Excellent pitch and warm sounds were produced by the singers especially on the top line which all came together in a fabulous ending which was neat, tidy, clear, light and precise.</p> <p>Overall the programme was very varied in terms of repertoire and Bizet's Habanera and Gypsies Chorus added to this mix which followed on from Kodaly, previously heard. The girls enjoyed singing Bizet and the audience received them well.</p> <p>Chilcotts' 'Little Jazz Mass' followed an introduction by Chirstopher Bell. This jazzy choice of work and placement within the repertoire also added a nice dimension stylistically to the programme. The Mass was well sung with free and relaxed singing and sung from memory. The arrangement of this piece was very suitable and a clear hit with the girls and with the audience. There was so much attention to detail. The girls followed their conductor's instructions keeping a steely eye on his communications and directions. Every performer committed themselves to every note, expression, word and diction in this piece.</p> <p>Johnston's 'Bonie Wee Thing' was sung with some melting moments and the choir left some phrases floating in mid air. Christopher Bell had worked some of his magic into these pieces and performers followed suit to achieve this. The performers clearly respond well to his direction. The whistling in 'O Whistle and I'll come Tae Ye' was entertaining and the singing was fabulous...some whistling lessons would be advised for their next performance of this piece at the Proms!</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? 	6	<p>The choir was a success because of the excellent direction of Christopher Bell. He is a great personality and his honest wit appeals to both the choirs and the audiences who attend NYCoS' choral performances.</p> <p>The audiences were informed as to the details of the programming and the choir's developments.</p> <p>The performers highly respect their Director/conductor and follow his precise directions which came across very strongly throughout the concert.</p> <p>Both the audiences and the choir respond well to Christopher whose commitment and long term plans for singing in Scotland are inspirational, realistic and first class.</p> <p>Parents waved proudly at their young singers and all around there was a great buzz at the concert. Everybody who attended and performed were</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			enthusiastic and there was a great sense of energy, before, during and after the concert.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography <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
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? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). 		N/A
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <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? 	6	<p>Yes, the audience mainly comprised of parents, friends, staff and supporters of NYCoS and their young performers.</p> <p>The programming was very appropriate for the audiences as well as challenging which was pitched correctly at their keen participants. The audiences showed their warm appreciation and encouragement to the young performers, who were keen and eager to work as a team and entertain their audiences. Both the audiences and participants were inspired by the programming. The girls responded very well to Stephen Doughty's piano accompaniments and it was evident that they enjoyed working with him. Stephen's accompaniments were sensitively played and added just the right amounts of support for the young performers.</p> <p>The concert showcased the previous six days of intensive training and rehearsals at NYCoS' training week for the girls choir at Strathallan School.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<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>		

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>Very suitable – nice venue, Although I did move from the gallery to the main part of the church downstairs, as I could not get a good view of the whole choir.</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>Some changes to the programming from the printed programme.</p> <p>NYCoS could possibly consider adding a live link to the address of concert venues on their concerts page contained in their 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 	<p>Yes, all appropriately advertised</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																
<p>produced?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>																	
Ease of booking and payment																	
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? Was the length appropriate? 	Yes, all appropriately timed.																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <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, this was appropriately signposted.																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <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"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="566 965 823 1032"></th> <th data-bbox="828 965 916 1032">Yes/ No</th> <th data-bbox="920 965 1107 1032"></th> <th data-bbox="1112 965 1501 1032">Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="566 1039 823 1117">BSL interpretation</td> <td data-bbox="828 1039 916 1117">No</td> <td data-bbox="920 1039 1107 1117">Audio description of performances</td> <td data-bbox="1112 1039 1501 1117">Yes, in part</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="566 1124 823 1357">Captioning</td> <td data-bbox="828 1124 916 1357"></td> <td data-bbox="920 1124 1107 1357">Lift/ramp</td> <td data-bbox="1112 1124 1501 1357">There is a ramp for wheelchair access at the steps to the main door. There is a lift to the first floor.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="566 1364 823 1662">Accessible toilets</td> <td data-bbox="828 1364 916 1662">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="920 1364 1107 1662">Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td data-bbox="1112 1364 1501 1662">Yes, average and could look at ways at helping to make the website more interactive, with possible sound bites of the choirs, games with a possible voice over reader to read out the main parts of the text?</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	Yes, in part	Captioning		Lift/ramp	There is a ramp for wheelchair access at the steps to the main door. There is a lift to the first floor.	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	Yes, average and could look at ways at helping to make the website more interactive, with possible sound bites of the choirs, games with a possible voice over reader to read out the main parts of the text?
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<p>Customer service</p> <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? 	Excellent																

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.