



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 Orchestra of Scotland

Venue: Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow

Title of Event: NYOS Summer Concert

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

Date of Visit: 1 August 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.)

Programme:

Britten, Sinfonia da Requiem; Bruch, Violin Concerto No 1; Shostakovich, Symphony No 6

Jennifer Pike, violin; Garry Walker, conductor

This concert was a considerable success for NYOS, who fielded the strongest group of players I have heard from them for some years. The general standard of playing was mature and well focussed. This is a difficult time of year to generate an audience, however, and it seemed a pity that there were so many empty seats. The NYOS marketing style is quite traditional, and perhaps this needs to be reassessed.

Name: Hugh Macdonald Date: 08/08/2008

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	A good programme that stretched the players without demanding too much. Britten and Shostakovich always combine well, and it was good to hear one of the less frequently played Shostakovich symphonies.
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.		
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	A good showcase for NYOS, demonstrating the high standard of orchestral ensemble that young players can achieve in a short time given a well-chosen programme and sympathetic conductor. It's hard, though, to create a real sense of occasion in the Royal Concert Hall when, as this time, it is not well filled. Perhaps some thought needs to be given to how to market such a concert during the summer holiday season. Not at all easy – but it's a pity when the orchestra's major events of the year play to fairly small houses.
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	A high standard of playing throughout. The string section was impressive and wind soloists were generally excellent. Perhaps some of the brass playing was not quite as good, but my impression was that the average age of the orchestra was higher than I have sometimes seen in the past and this showed in the discipline and focus of the playing. Garry Walker clearly had a good rapport with the orchestra, though the first movement of the Britten <i>Sinfonia</i> didn't hang together convincingly for me. The Shostakovich 6 th was given a stronger performance altogether, with excitingly executed detail in the two fast movements and a powerful build-up in the opening adagio. Jennifer Pike was the excellent soloist in the Bruch concerto.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		

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	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		
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	<p>The concert ran smoothly. Garry is a good communicator, and it would have been good to have a few words from him, perhaps before the unfamiliar Shostakovich. Conductors' podium speeches can be overdone, but there were clearly a lot of family and friends in the audience who probably wouldn't have known the music, and it would have been good to strike up a slightly less formal, more informative relationship with them. Concerts like this, where at least some of the audience are not regular concert-goers, offer a golden opportunity to break down barriers.</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>The hall was considerably less than half full, and this affected the atmosphere somewhat. However, the audience was enthusiastic and clearly enjoyed the concert.</p>
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>		

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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)?	3	As discussed under 'Presentation', it would be good to see NYOS experimenting with ways to inform its audience a little more about the repertoire before or during the concert.

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	The RCH lacks atmosphere unless well filled and is still acoustically indifferent, though it has been improved. However, it's the only hall in Glasgow big enough to accommodate such a big orchestra.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The programme contained all the necessary information, though the design was perhaps a little dull. However, programmes seemed only to be on sale at a single NYOS stall at the bottom of the main stairs and the many gallery patrons who missed it on the way up were having to run down stairs again to get a programme. Strange that there were not more outlets!
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.	No doubt NYOS marketing budgets are slim, but there is room for a more innovative approach here, both in marketing and PR terms, especially at a time of year when it's hard enough to sell tickets.
Ease of booking and payment	I booked online through the GRCH website. This is fine, but it's annoying that their website doesn't seem to allow for specific seat selection.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Excellent.
External signage and signposting	Fine.
Internal directional signage	OK.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	As far as I can see the hall is well equipped for disabled access.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	19.30 – fine.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	GRCH staff are well trained and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Yes.

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.

No comment received.