



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 Orchestra of Scotland

Venue: Perth Concert Hall

Title of Event : NYOS Spring Concerts

Type of Event:

Performance from NCOS and NYJOS performing Music from the Americas

Date of Visit: 7th April 2009

Overall Rating: Very Good

Strengths

The Listening programme notes to NCOS.

The thematic material within the programme and the variation in the styles of music for each half of the concert added a lot of interest to the repertoire.

The playing from both orchestras showcased some of the best and wealth of talent in Scotland.

Weaknesses

I found it hard to read the NYJOS programme notes, and was pleased to have scanned over this during the break, as the programme became increasingly difficult to read after the lights went down during the concert, and I would recommend that future formatting for programmes might be more kind to the visually challenged.

Name: Petrea Cooney

Date: 19 April 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 	Excellent	<p>The programme for the first half of the concert was contemporary repertoire of North and South American influenced music, composed by N American composers performed by NCOS. Some of the pieces were incredibly challenging and I thought that the young orchestra (aged 8 -14) were brilliantly brave in their playing of such a demanding programme which the orchestra managed to play very well, with some great moments, which were warmly appreciated by the enthusiastic audience. The conductor Randal Swiggum held together the children's symphony orchestra comprising of over 120 young people. Randal Swiggum's own comments reinforce the challenges in the chosen repertoire, which he has also conducted with other youth orchestras around the world.</p> <p>NYJOS had a completely different vibe, stylistic of its repertoire under the batons of Malcolm Edmonstone and Andrew Bain, performed by an older ensemble of younger musicians aged 12-21.</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. 	Excellent	<p>The overall idea of bringing a programme together under the theme of 'Music from the Americas' was very catching, varied, enjoyable and quirky which also showcased the young and up and coming talents of Scotland.</p> <p>Hearing both NCOS and NYJOS at the same concert was very complimentary and each orchestra contributed towards a varied programme. NYJOS are NYOS' newest ensemble and auditions are held annually, allowing the orchestra to re-form each year offering players the option to aspire towards further performing, improvisational and solos skills, within the idiom of Jazz.</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 e.g. from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Excellent	<p>This diverse concert, as advertised on the web, delivered a varied programme of Music from the Americas.</p> <p>The programme notes for the first half of the concert were thoroughly enjoyable and informative to the listener which was written by the conductor Randal Swiggum. A few words from the conductor from the stage would have added a nice touch to the day.</p> <p>The programme notes for the second half were extremely difficult to read visually and I would recommend NYOS to be aware of this when</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

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>formatting future programmes.</p> <p>Annual auditions are held annually for each orchestra. NCOS aims are to provide music education and performance experience for Scotland's young musicians and offers courses and concert tours to complement the work of local authorities and instrumental teachers in Scotland. Many of those involved in NCOS go on to become members of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland.</p> <p>NCOS auditions take place in November and invitations are sent out to schools in Scotland in September each year.</p> <p>The selected children attend a preliminary residential training weekend held every February. The results of today's repertoire culminated from a residential week working with Randal Swiggum.</p> <p>NYJOS auditions young musicians for the NYOS Summer Jazz Course followed by public performances. NYJOS now has permanent Orchestra Directors, Malcolm Edmonstone and Andrew Bain. They perform at high profile venues on high profile tours with Jazz legends and they have recently released 2 CDs.</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>NCOS is a very large symphony orchestra made up of over 120 performers between the ages of 11 and 14.</p> <p>The first half of the concert displayed the young nurtured talent of Scotland. The Higdon piece was challenging rhythmically with some intonation problems from key instrumentalists. The percussion was strong mainly throughout this piece with some punchy brave brass sections followed by the string section driving us towards an emotional and passionate climax. The cellos played lightly and sensitively during accompanying solo dialogues and the ending, intensely silent.</p> <p>Copland's, Billy the Kid started off a bit loose rhythmically but the overall performance and tuning grew more confident as the orchestra warmed up. Great brass and woodwind sections were especially noticeable in the tutti sections with doubled up instruments in brass and woodwind. The string section was challenged at times in terms of sound and depth. Well done to the tuba player. Good 'Gun Battle' confidently</p>

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>played by each of the sections and hats off to the percussion section with pianist, which was very confidently delivered. 'Celebration' was uplifting sections and 'Billy's Death' displayed a focused and united conversation between the string, brass and percussion sections bringing Billy's Death across in an emotionally persuasive abrupt close.</p> <p>Moncayo's, Huapango allowed for the concert harps to be heard more clearly. This piece was very engaging, colourful and exciting. The orchestra shone its youthful rays throughout this piece. The woodwind section came across as strong. Some breaking of notes in the brass section with excellent dialogues between the trumpets and trombones. Some lovely throw away arpeggios added to the colourful arrangement and timbre of this piece concluding with an excellent ending.</p> <p>The Second half of the concert performed by NYJOS set an entirely different mood to a programme of Jazz music.</p> <p>NYJOS took us through a chronological and geographic journey of jazz, made up of an ensemble of 18 talented musicians, most of whom performed improvised solos a number of times through the pieces.</p> <p>Their programme opened up with the music of George and Ira Gershwin in Strike up the Band. The ensemble opened up with a big band sound which was rich, sonorous and confidently performed. Excellent trumpet playing with good balanced sections between the saxophones, piano and drums. Excellent drumming throughout the entire programme.</p> <p>The conductor introduced Yardbird by clapping the basic beat. The audience who were jazz aware appreciated the solos throughout. Nice electric guitar and steady double bass with drums. Sax and trumpet solos were excellent along with balanced ensemble playing. Some excellent dynamics throughout.</p> <p>A very atmospheric intro on the side drum, bass and the pianist accompanied appropriately at just the right volume in a 'Lush Life'. Relaxed trombone playing. This was piece of 'heaven' with a smooth overall performance with some melting moments.</p> <p>Moving onwards, our jazz journey took us into the 1960s Free Jazz Movement with African Blue, which opened with a percussive opening. Good trombone quartet playing and dialogues with the percussion section. Some excellent solo</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>improvisations some lesser so.</p> <p>Davis' 'Boplicity' followed and displayed some excellent ensemble playing and sax solos, which were warmly appreciated by the audience.</p> <p>NYJOS were keeping their best to the end and played by ear Malcolm Edmonstone's arrangement of Pat Metheny's, 'Song for Bilbao'. There was a real sense of unity with the ensemble, with evidence of each of them tuning into each other's music and solos with equally sympathetic band accompaniments through solos and sections. 1st trumpeter performed a really good solo as did the 1st saxophonist. Very nice electric guitar solo. Great sensitivity towards dynamics throughout. Good double Forte ending to end the whole concert!</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
Theatre	<p>Script</p> <p>Please comment on this for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 		N/A
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 		N/A
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 		N/A
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design</p> <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	<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts/Education -</p> <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 	Very good	<p>The audience comprised of parents, family, friends of the young players, NYOS Board and all those interested in classical music and jazz development within the youth sector.</p> <p>The programming was very appropriate for the participants and the audience. I felt that the programme for NCOS was very ambitious and at times tenuously played. The overall support was evident from the warm audience's reaction and appreciation of both orchestras.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>engaged/inspired?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? <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>		<p>The audience was made up of a broad mix of age groups and the middle section of the Perth Concert Hall and balcony showed a healthy attendance.</p> <p>I thought that the additional programme notes with a ‘listening plan’ for NCOS added a very special touch to the day. There were no additional enhancements to the programme beyond this.</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
Location and suitability of the venue for the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy to find? 	The venue was very suitable.

Criteria	Comment																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it on a main transport route? Are the spaces clean? What were the sight lines like? How big was it? 																	
Information/ interpretive material at venue– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	There was a programme available to purchase with an additional 'Listening Plan' for NCOS' programme. The information on the website was also very useful.																
Publicity/ pre-publicity – <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>	Both the publicity and the acknowledgement for Scottish Arts Council funding were adequate.																
Ease of booking and payment	N/A																
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? 	The timing and the length of the event was appropriate for a central belt local audience. However, I would suggest that a mid week event would impact on the potential audience numbers compared to a concert planned towards the end of a week or over a weekend, especially for those who might like to attend from further afield?																
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? 	All appropriate																
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 <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></th> <th>Yes/ No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/ No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>No</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>No</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials e.g. website or alternative formats e.g.</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/ No		Yes/ No	BSL interpretation	No	Audio description of performances	No	Captioning	No	Lift/ramp	Yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials e.g. website or alternative formats e.g.	No
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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			
			large print, Plain English	
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.