



Scottish **Arts** Council

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:	Pròiseact nan Ealan
Venue:	Grampian Television Studios, Stornoway
Title of Event:	St Kilda
Type of Event:	Live music theatre/drama with accompanying live location input from St Kilda and simultaneous performances/live video streaming from 5 other European locations performing the same work.
Date of Visit:	22 June 2007
Overall Rating:	4
Name: Ian Smith	Date: 23/8/07
Specialist Advisor:	Scottish Arts Council Officer ✓

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.	5	The vision to stage, simultaneously perform and broadcast (from St Kilda) in multiple European venues was absolutely incredible in its realisation. It also demonstrated that the performance, not only given entirely through the medium of Gaelic, but also celebrating the historic tradition of psalm singing, was extremely moving. The use of the television studio as a performance space had certain limitations, but the audience were actually part of the performance process and that was both an engaging and inspiring experience. As a non Gaelic speaker, the drama and pathos of the history of the de-population of St Kilda was very clearly evident and the need to maintain support for our more remote island communities in Scotland was really driven home forcibly.
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.	5	The St Kilda project had been formally launched in Brussels on 1 March by representatives from the Scottish Executive and Scottish Trade Mission to the EC. The aerial ballet had by that stage been filmed from St Kilda and was shown to the audience. Additional support, supplementing that of the SAC was also announced at that launch. The international collaborators and directors were all present and I was fortunate enough also to attend, so got a real feel of the enormity of the project and how successful it would be if fully realised (see above).
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	4/5	The project was successful and combined dance and drama with music in an innovative and engaging manner.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	4/5	The technical standard in terms of live streaming, simultaneous live/studio broadcasts and the physical performances in different European venues worked brilliantly. The performers were a mix of local (Western Isles) and Scottish-based Gaelic speakers, actors and musicians from both a professional and amateur/community background. The Gaelic psalm singing embodied all that was best in the music.

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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	5	Dance was mostly restricted to the aerial ballet provided by a specialist dance troupe based in Paris and was absolutely spectacular.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	4/5	The Gaelic dialogue was extremely powerful and appreciated by everyone who attended the live performance, whether native Gaelic speakers or not.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	4/5	A real tour de force considering the complexities of technical provision and location.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	4/5	The live music was written and directed by Andy Thorburn and the small ensemble who performed at Stornoway were of a very high standard, in particular the cellist. The music created the right atmosphere and was complimented by the singing.
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.	3/4	Difficult to judge properly in the Stornoway studio, but the overall standard of production was high.
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>	4/5	I have provided enough evidence already to demonstrate that this was a very special production.
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>		The audience was both live and virtual as the engagement with this production was both. The streaming from St Kilda was very effective and fortunately, the weather was kind.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	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.	4	A great deal of material had been distributed prior to the performance runs, all of a high quality and most informative.
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)?	3/4	There will be an educational benefit from the St Kilda experience which is still to be determined.

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 venue was in many ways a compromise, but the only alternative An Lanntair would not have allowed the technical provision essential.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Satisfactory.
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.	As already evidenced the quality of material was good, but there may have been a wider distribution. The BBC publicised the streaming on line.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Yes.
External signage and signposting	N/A
Internal directional signage	A studio!
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Good-ramped access and a dedicated viewing area set aside for full disabled access.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Yes
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Excellent
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Yes-fully evidenced on all source and publicity material and on line.

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.