



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:	Scottish Ensemble
Venue:	Queen's Hall Edinburgh
Title of Event:	Passionate Romantics: Chausson Finzi Walton
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Concert
Date of Visit:	5 October 2007
Overall Rating:	5
<i>(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.)</i>	
A wonderfully conceived programme with the right balance of something new and surprising combined with music that was more familiar. All the pieces were played with superb musicianship, energy and commitment.	
Name: Susan Nickalls	Date: 10/10/2007
Specialist Advisor	Scottish Arts Council Officer <i>Please circle the relevant title</i>

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	This was an imaginatively thought out programme that centred around a rarely performed <i>Concert for violin piano and strings</i> by Chausson with the original part for string quartet added to and expanded on by Jonathan Morton, music director and violinist with the ensemble. It was wonderful to hear this neglected work in this new arrangement which complimented Finzi's <i>Romance</i> and offered a complete contrast to Walton's highly rhythmic <i>Sonata for Strings</i> - his own arrangement of one of his string quartets.
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 mixture of the more familiar repertoire - ie the Finzi and to a certain extent Walton's music would also be familiar although perhaps not this particular piece - with the lesser known Chausson, is typical of the excellent programming for which the ensemble has a well-established reputation. Not only is it interesting repertoire, but it takes material which plays to the strengths of the ensemble or that can be adapted to suit.
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	With the music in the concert both highly passionate and romantic, the material certainly delivered on the title of the programme. In terms of how this concept was communicated to a potential audience, obviously a key ingredient, this is not so clear given that there were barely 200 people at the concert which was very disappointing indeed.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	5	Technically, this performance was superb, with all the players individually demonstrating wonderful techniques as well as a combined sense of style. Pianist Andrew West, the soloist in the Chausson, delivered a remarkable performance considering he had at least ten times as many notes as anyone else and played throughout the nearly hour long work. Jonathan Morton gave an engaging talk before the Chausson which explained the thinking behind the programme, his reasons for selecting the piece and expanding it and included some wonderful anecdotes about Chausson which really brought to life the composer behind the piece and added a personal touch.
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>	4	The presentation of the concert was very good, although the projected logo of the Scottish Ensemble name onto the wall looked rather out of place as it didn't quite fit the wall space. Although this does give name/brand recognition/awareness, it was perhaps not appropriate at this venue in that format.
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>		Given the impressive programming and performance by the ensemble it was extremely disappointing that barely 200 people turned out for this concert. Those that were there thoroughly enjoyed the concert but it was a shame for the performers' sake there were not more people.
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.		N/A

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)?		

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	At the moment the Queen's Hall is practically the only venue suitable for this type concert in Edinburgh although its dated facilities are woefully inadequate compared to concert halls in say Glasgow or Perth.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	There is brochure information about forthcoming concerts available at the entrance and a small space in the bar area for selling CDs.
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.	Pre-publicity is available in the form of a general season brochure for the ensemble which was sent to me and I also received email information from one of their publicity firms. I personally didn't see any fliers or leaflets advertising this particular concert. The ensemble's own website is extremely good and has a lot of information about forthcoming concerts and music excerpts.
Ease of booking and payment	For some reason on-line booking at the Queen's Hall website was not available for this concert. I booked tickets by telephone which was reasonably easy to do but less convenient than on-line booking as it wasn't possible to see what seats were available.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	
External signage and signposting	The Queen's Hall is a well-established venue in Edinburgh and the prominent banners outside make it easy to find.
Internal directional signage	As this is a relatively small venue, everything is easy to find and the signage is adequate.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Disabled people are able to access the downstairs facilities only at the Queen's Hall. There are no lifts available to the upstairs seating or bar area.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The 7.45pm start is rather at odds with traditional concerts times which are usually 7.30pm. This makes for a later finish which may influence potential audiences in the older age brackets, particularly in the dark winter months. It also goes against the trend for even earlier concerts - ie the SCO and RSNO's 6pm concerts.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The service in all areas of the Queen's Hall is always friendly and efficient. Because of the low audience numbers, it was quicker than normal to order drinks at interval.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The Scottish Arts Council logo was displayed on the cover of the programmes and is also displayed prominently on the ensemble's website.

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.