



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:	Bonar Hall, Dundee
Title of Event:	Alex Smoke vrs Scottish Ensemble
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Performance
Date of Visit:	13 February 2008
Overall Rating:	Excellent (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>	
This was a very interesting commission, making exceptional use of two very visionary artists/ensembles (Alex Smoke and the Scottish Ensemble). The commission and resulting performance were both of an exceptionally high standard and instigated some valuable outcomes for new music in Scotland (partnerships, new audiences, cross-genre work).	
Name: Caroline Winn	Date: 27/03/2008
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	<p>This was a commission of Alex Menzies (aka Alex Smoke), who is traditionally a techno producer, to write a contemporary classical piece of music for the Scottish Ensemble. The vision for this commission was very strong, and the Scottish Ensemble and Alex Smoke collaboration made for a boundary-pushing piece of music and performance.</p> <p>Both Alex and the Scottish Ensemble are very forward-looking artists and the partnership appeared to be a very worthy one indeed with an extremely successful fusion of contemporary classical piece with inspiration rooted in electronic music.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	5	<p>The work was commissioned to be part of the Designs For Life festival. Alex Smoke was commissioned to be the composer in order to explore new boundaries between classical and electronic music. This was a first experience composing for full string orchestra for Alex.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>	5	<p>Against the stated aims of the commissioning Alex Smoke to write a contemporary classical piece to be performed by the Scottish Ensemble, this was achieved to a very high standard. The piece was engaging, interesting and performed to exceptional standards.</p> <p>Against the aims of the concert; another excellent and forward-looking and appealing performance by the Scottish Ensemble.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	5	<p>The performers of the Scottish Ensemble are of the highest technical standard. For this particular concert and audience, they related extremely well to a younger/mixed crowd and were dressed informally, which added to the relaxed atmosphere.</p> <p>The programme was introduced very well by Alex Smoke and throughout the short performance Jonathan Morton talked engagingly about the cross-over between electronic music and contemporary classical music, which was very engaging.</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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	n/a	
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	n/a	
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	n/a	
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	n/a	
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.	n/a	
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 auditorium was quite intimate and the hall was suitably lit and setting arranged comfortably. This created a relaxed atmosphere where the audience could fully engage with the players and the music.
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>This commission was an excellent exercise in cross fertilisation of audiences. Alex Smoke's name attracted a younger audience that would traditionally not go to a classical concert and similarly those who were there drawn by the Scottish Ensemble were introduced to a very talented young producer/composer.</p> <p>The atmosphere at the concert was fairly informal and fitting for the composition and the pieces that were played.</p> <p>The hall was full (approx 300); a superb achievement for the commissioner (Dundee City), the ensemble and the composer.</p>

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	<p>The composer introduced the piece, with some insight into his background and the collaboration with the Scottish Ensemble. He also briefly mentioned the positive outcomes of the partnership with himself and the Ensemble.</p> <p>There were interesting visuals alongside the performance.</p> <p>Two further pieces were played in addition to the original composition; an electronic piece performed live on laptop by Alex and a piece also inspired by techno music by Australian composer Matthew Hindson. All very complimentary to the commission and which also made for an invigorating and insightful programme.</p>
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)?	n/a	The commission was part of a science festival, but other than that there was no educational activity associated with it or the performance.

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 actually very suitable and the lighting and seating created an intimate setting.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A short programme explained the background to the new commission and also gave brief and accessible insights into the performers and artists involved.
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.	I saw posters on my way to the venue that were in the style of a club night 'Alex Smoke vrs The Scottish Ensemble', which would have been effective in attracting the young and diverse audience that were in attendance.
Ease of booking and payment	n/a
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	It was central and easy to find.
External signage and signposting	Appropriate for the performance.
Internal directional signage	Appropriate for the performance.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Appropriate.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The actual length of the performance was short and there were only 3 pieces in total played. Some of the audience were keen to hear more, as was I. There was an informal DJ set in the bar afterwards, which was well received.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very friendly and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The Scottish Arts Council was acknowledged by the composer, performers, in marketing that I saw and in the programme.

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.