



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:	Glasgow City Hall
Title of Event:	Bluegrass Across the Water
Type of Event:	Concert Performance
Date of Visit:	13 March 2008
Overall Rating:	5
Name:	Ian Smith
Date:	14/3/08
Scottish Arts Council Officer (Head of Music)	

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 Scottish Ensemble perform at a consistently high standard and this performance, even without their artistic director and leader; Jonathan Morton, was no exception. The guest leader Laurent Quenelle introduced the programme, which was created deliberately around the compositional and performance skills of the extraordinarily gifted bass virtuoso, Edgar Meyer. This idea had arisen from a member of the Ensemble who met Meyer at the Banff Festival and followed up by the artistic director, a long-time admirer of Meyer's work.
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 programme mixed two works performed by the Ensemble (Diamond's Rounds for String Orchestra) and a Gershwin Lullaby arrangement. There were two works composed by Meyer, complimenting the Bottesini Concerto for Bass & Strings. Additionally Meyer performed two solo pieces of his own demonstrating his jazz, blues and improvisatory skills; Pickles and Please Don't Shoot the Bear. If this reviewer were able to award more than the allowed 5 points, he would as Meyer's playing is absolutely breathtaking in both its technical expertise and musical mastery. Superlatives would be, of necessity too numerous to fully appreciate Meyer's virtuosic skills and the excellent accompaniment of the Ensemble.
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	5	The audience contained a significantly large number of bass players from every discipline, rock, pop, jazz, folk and classical, thus demonstrating the draw of Meyer. The scene shifting in the second half of the programme was unnecessary and somewhat distracting, but nothing could detract from the genius that is Meyer. Programme order would also have benefitted from placing the trio last.
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	All said above.
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	As stated earlier there were some considerable stage changes made in front of the audience that were wholly unnecessary and distracting and the programme order, in my view, could have been changed in the second half, but in comparison to the performance, these are minor irritants.
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 applauded every movement of the Bottesini, which amply demonstrated the wide range of the audience and their appreciation of Meyer's performance, particularly since a healthy number of them were professional bassists.
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>	5	Edgar Meyer introduced his own compositions in an engaging and amusing manner that was really appreciated by the audience.

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)?	5	Anyone in the room, musician or music lover, could not fail to have been inspired by the musicianship and consummate professionalism of Meyer. To the many bass players in the audience, a night to remember would be a gross understatement.

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	Excellent.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A comprehensive programme, albeit without a programme agenda.
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.	Good.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Excellent.
External signage and signposting	Good.
Internal directional signage	Good.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Fully compliant as a comparatively new venue.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Good.
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	Excellent on all posters and 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.