



## 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:** Artlink Central / Scottish Ensemble

**Venue:** Blair Drummond Safari Park

**Title of Event:** **Carnival!**

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 23 May 2008

**Overall Rating:** 5 - Excellent

*(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 had many fears before attending this event, mainly in terms of how the two groups, with their vastly differing technical expertise, could co-present a concert without it appearing patronising. The event succeeded, to a great extent, in avoiding this danger, and I left feeling that I had experienced a concert of high artistic quality which, to put it simply, I enjoyed very much.

The artistic excellence of the Scottish Ensemble is unquestionable and provided many moving moments throughout the concert. While the Artlink group were not as technically advanced (their experience is much less as is their access to formal training), their artistic input was equally moving. An indicative fact of my enjoyment is the desire to hear a recording of the event.

I do however feel that there is room for development, as there always is. I'd be very interested in what lessons were learned from this process, particularly in terms of how to create a better sense of inclusion between the two groups. I'd also be interested in comments from the Artlink and Scottish Ensemble participants indicating their feelings about the process and what difficulties they had. I feel that this work could be a model of best practice if it is developed in the future.

Name: Robert Softley – Equalities Officer (Art & Disability)

Date: 26/05/2008

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

*Please circle the relevant title*

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.	Good	This is a beautiful idea that managed to avoid many obvious dangers. By asking adults with learning impairments to play songs about animals, the work could have appeared child-like and patronising. However, in the context of Saint-Saens' work, this felt very appropriate and brought new life to the familiar music.
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.	Good	Exciting fusion of Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals with newly developed work from the Artlink Central Music Group. The Saint-Saëns pieces were beautifully executed by the Scottish Ensemble – their skill is unquestionable. The new pieces were also well written and felt appropriate for the Artlink group – for future development a way of including the Artlink group in the traditional pieces would increase the sense of inclusion exponentially.
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 <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	Good	A clear aim of this event must have been to co-produce an accessible and inclusive concert and to this end it was successful. As mentioned, there were a few moments when the disparity between the groups was too obvious, and it'd be desirable to develop ways of minimising this, but overall the concert appeared to succeed in bringing together the groups in a cohesive way.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	Excellent	The performance skills of the Scottish Ensemble are outstanding, and this could have potentially highlighted a large disparity with the Artlink group who had been rehearsing for only one week. However, this issue did not prevail and, in particular, the solo pieces sung by members of the Artlink group were deeply moving if not technically perfect.  The skills of the tutors involved had clearly been developed over some time, with the use of visual prompts and other mechanisms for developing the skills of the musicians with learning impairments.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		

<sup>1</sup> 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, 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><b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b></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>	Good	<p>The concert was slickly presented. The input of the Artlink Music Group had clearly been well rehearsed and was well executed.</p> <p>I particularly appreciated the fact that a number of the Scottish Ensemble team took turns in directing the Artlink group, thus sharing the learning they had gained. I also applaud the way in which the actions of the Artlink group, which could sometimes be deemed as inappropriate for a classical concert, were not stifled but accepted as part of the event.</p>
All	<p><b>Audience</b></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>		Full house – audience of invited guests including the local Lord Provost. Audition reaction was extremely positive with a palpable buzz after the concert.
All	<b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.	Good	Not interpretative as such but the introduction and commentary given by Paul Rissmann allowed for a real understanding of the process involved, and of its inclusive nature – which was key to this project.
All	<b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – 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)?	Excellent	<p>Clearly the Artlink group learned much from the experience of working with such skilled musicians. They also were exposed to the wonderful music of Saint-Saëns.</p> <p>However, some crucial learning occurred for the Scottish Ensemble members, namely in how to work with an inclusive group and, I hope, how to develop their practice in future to make the process even more inclusive.</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
Suitability of the venue for the event	EXCELLENT venue considering the subject matter. Congratulations on securing it.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Appropriate programme
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.	n/a – invited audience. Newsletter made people aware of concert. No apparent mention on either Artlink or Scottish Ensemble's websites.
Ease of booking and payment	n/a
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Possibly difficult to reach without a car.
External signage and signposting	Good signposting to the park - once inside, the actual venue was a little harder to find.
Internal directional signage	n/a
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Very good, wheelchair access was pointed out to me.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Ideal length and time of day
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Good
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Yes, on programme

<sup>2</sup> 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.