



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.

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	Glasgow International Jazz Festival
<b>Venue:</b>	Old Fruitmarket, Glasgow
<b>Title of Event:</b>	Scottish National Jazz Orchestra present the John Coltrane Legacy Concert
<b>Type of Event:</b> (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	Jazz Concert
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	26 June 2007
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	4
<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>	
<p>The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra is a potentially important venture, involving many of Scotland's most exciting jazz musicians. The high proportion of younger players is an encouraging sign, and the quality of performance, both technically and creatively, at this concert was very high. The variable quality of the commissioned arrangements means that my rating is '4' rather than '5'.</p> <p>On a more general note, it appears that SNJO concert performances are now almost entirely built round arrangements of other musicians' work rather than showcasing a repertoire of wholly original compositions. This may be a commercial decision, but it means that the Orchestra could struggle to realise its full potential, and to develop its own distinctive creative identity – which has been the hallmark of all the truly great jazz big bands. This is not a criticism of this particular concert (and has not affected my rating), but it may be an issue for future consideration.</p>	
Name: Paul Bream	Date: 14/07/2007
Specialist Advisor	<del>Scottish Arts Council Officer</del> <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.	4	The concert consisted of 10 Coltrane compositions, each arranged by a different arranger. Inevitably the quality of the arrangements varied: some imaginatively reinterpreted the original works, others were less challenging. The rating of 4 is a median between the best (which warranted 5) and the most routine (scoring 3).
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.	4	The music itself was commissioned by the SNJO, with a Scottish Arts Council subsidy. The proposal for this particular project may have originated with the organisers of the Glasgow Jazz Festival, but this was not clear. I have already indicated my concerns about the 'tribute' format. However, on its own terms this was a well balanced programme, drawing on compositions from different stages of Coltrane's artistic development.
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	4	The event programme spoke of "honouring the memory" and "paying tribute" to Coltrane. In this it largely succeeded, although the quality of Coltrane's original compositions was better conveyed in some arrangements than others.
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	An extremely high quality Orchestra, all of whose members operate at an outstanding technical and imaginative level. Ensemble passages were crisp and polished, and solos were of a high quality. The Director, Tommy Smith, leads by example, both in his playing and in his verbal communication with the audience.
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).            Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang            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	<p>As the Old Fruitmarket was not designed as a performance space, it presents some acoustical problems. However, these have been largely overcome, and generally the sound was excellent, although some soloists were less audible than others.</p> <p>There was no dedicated lighting.</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>	5	<p>Cabaret style seating made it hard to calculate audiences numbers, but I would estimate a figure of 175-200.</p> <p>In general I sensed that the audience were acquainted with Coltrane's music, had a good idea of what to expect, and were not disappointed. Only the final piece, from Coltrane's late excursions into a much freer idiom, seemed rather too turbulent for some ears (needless to say, it was the piece I enjoyed most!).</p>
All	<p><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.</p>		N/A
All	<p><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)?</p>		N/A

## 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	A good venue for the event. The use of a cabaret-style seating layout created a relaxed atmosphere.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A useful programme listed the musicians and gave background to most of the arrangements.
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.	Both printed and online publicity for the Festival were well set out and easy to use. The printed programme appeared to be widely available in Glasgow, and had been posted out to mailing list members well in advance. The website was well designed, enabling information to be accessed by different approaches (date, artist). The level of information was generally good both in its description of each event, and organisational detail (time, venue, price, etc).
Ease of booking and payment	Good – ticket ordered by telephone, paid for by credit card, and delivered by post the following day. There was a booking/postage fee of 90p.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Fairly easy to find – a short walk from City Centre, and close to bus routes. But see 'External signage' below.
External signage and signposting	Poor. I could find nothing on the outside of the building that identified it as the Old Fruitmarket.
Internal directional signage	Once inside the building itself, directional signage was good, with all relevant spaces clearly identified.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Access and provision seemed fine. All areas of the audience space were wheelchair accessible, and sightlines are clear from all parts.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Start time of 7.30pm was fine. Two sets of c.45 minutes, with an interval of c.20 minutes, is around the 'norm' for jazz gigs. Finished in time to allow me to go on to another late 'fringe' gig (this kind of integrated scheduling is helpful in a Festival context).
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Generally very helpful and efficient, although, having been in the bar before the performance, I was at no stage asked to show my ticket!
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Scottish Arts Council logo appeared on both the overall Festival programme, and on the programme for this specific event.

<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

### 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.

It's interesting reading the views of someone from outside Scotland on SNJO. For instance, the point about SNJO's youth is one that was made here quite a long time ago, although it continues to be a very young orchestra with more and more young players coming through.

I disagree with Paul's assessment of the commissions being variable. I felt that they were varied, rather than variable, and showed some very different ideas on where Coltrane's music can go and what it can inspire. But we all hear things differently.

Paul's point about SNJO being a potentially important venture is valid because the orchestra still has lots of potential that it hasn't yet reached. This isn't a criticism of SNJO, more a case that limited funding delivers limited activity.

This leads neatly to the point about playing almost entirely arrangements of other musicians' work rather than wholly original compositions. I'm not sure that SNJO should be showcasing exclusively original works - I think there's a case for SNJO building/maintaining its audience through playing familiar material to some extent. But SNJO is an underused asset. With more funding it should be possible to strike a balance where the celebration of the big band repertoire and projects such as marking the 40th anniversary of Coltrane's death are complemented by a programme of new works such as the very fine Keith Tippett commission. In other words, double the current SNJO activity at least, introduce season tickets to try and get the more traditional audience to support new work, and get SNJO out gigging around Scotland and elsewhere more often. To date the SNJO has commissioned 50 completely original works and 30 commissioned re-arrangements.

Also, isn't the point about the big bands who played recognisably their own style of music that they were generally employed by the leader who gave the band its name? I see SNJO as a kind of jazz equivalent of RSNO - and they don't play much of their own stuff, although they do cover old standards as well as new pieces. Besides, SNJO's reputation has been built on high quality performances, whoever's dots are on the charts.

- Tommy Smith

I don't quite understand Paul's point. It would appear he hasn't followed the SNJO very closely over the years (maybe you didn't play in Newcastle often enough), or he would be aware that the orchestra has always operated on a mixed programme of repertoire concerts, commissioned material and self-composed work. Limiting your activities to just one of these would be a mistake, I feel. I would have thought a commercial decision would have been to play more Basie and Ellington, not challenging original arrangements, whatever the source.

Kenny Mathieson, (Scotsman Critic)

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programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

