



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:** Shetland Arts

**Venue:** Garrison Theatre

**Title of Event:** Fiery Sessions/Tunes & Tales From The Fireside

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)

**Date of Visit:** 29 January 2008

**Overall Rating:**

*(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.)*

Fiery Sessions – 3

Tunes & Tales - 3

Overall the concept and the ideas of both concerts were good and they provide visitors to Shetland for Up Helly Aa an interesting insight into Shetland music and song as well as tying into the festival itself. However the quality of the performances and the performers was not the highest.

The evening concert was overly long and had elements which did not work, but as a concept is a good one especially as it is hard for tourists to get into halls at Up Helly Aa, so this could provide a good alternative.

It is important to note that all of Shetland Arts Music Team had been at Celtic Connections where Shetland had a major showcase as part of the festival and they returned to Shetland at the same time as I travelled there, so perhaps there was less time for preparation than usual.

Name: Stuart Thomas

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Scottish Arts Council Officer

*Please circle the relevant title*

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.	3	<p>The two concerts are run on the day on Up Helly Aa in order to give visitors a taste of Shetland music and to showcase local talent to locals.</p> <p>Fiery Sessions the afternoon concert was better conceived than the Tunes &amp; Tales – however this is the first year the later concert has been run. There was an attempt to integrate storytelling and poetry into the event, which did not really work as conceived. The stories were more adjuncts to the performance and one could have been confused in thinking that the storyteller was the compere of the event.</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>	3	<p>The concept of a showcase(s) on Up Helly Aa day is a good one but I think that it could benefit from having some kind of musical director to the show and by using perhaps one of Shetland's more established musicians who can work with the performers prior to the event.</p> <p>While much of the concert consisted of traditional Shetland tunes, there were a number of original compositions, but there were also sections of covers of pop songs, which seemed out of place and were certainly not what I expected to hear.</p> <p>Overall I don't think that there was an overall logic to the selection of material and performers – the whole thing felt a little thrown together and this was impression was more striking in the evening show.</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 <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	<p>Sessions: 3 Tales:2</p>	<p>Fiery Sessions had a good mixture of young and older local performers: Tunester a schools and young people's band, the Junior Jarl Squad from Up Helly Aa, Mark Laurenson &amp; Friends and Fair Isle blood harmony group, Fridarey, who were my personal highlight of both concerts.</p> <p>The tales session did not work: it was hard to spot the 'tales' and there was a large section of pop covers; poetry which was not very original or imaginative and not well delivered. Storyteller Laurence Tulloch also compered the event but it was not obvious what his overall role was and he has a tendency for epicicism which overly extended the overall run.</p>

<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
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>	3	<p>There was a wide variation in range and ability, from the youth band Tunester, right through to more seasoned performers such as Fridarey. The concerts did give the opportunity for young musicians including Miriam Brett (Shetland's Young Fiddler of the Year) and Helen Witham a chance to perform, but it was clear that both events had not been rehearsed. I also felt that the young performers could have really benefitted from some time spent with more experienced professional performers, who could give them some tuition in stage presence, use of microphones, introductions and a boost of confidence. I would have liked to see the young performers taking more of a lead in the event.</p> <p>The daytime concert was compeered well by Davie Gardener (Atlantic Edge Music and former Music Development Officer); the evening concert by storyteller Laurence Tulloch – which was less successful.</p> <p>Overall I do think that the standard of performers could have been higher.</p>
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.		
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.		

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>	3	<p>Because of the number of performers there were lots of changes but I do feel that staging and change-overs could have been better considered: often there were moments when people were left on stage standing or sitting and watching one individual perform.</p> <p>There were a number of points when stage crew appeared to set up or clear during another artist's performance.</p> <p>I felt the lighting could have been used more effectively to help the change overs and a rehearsal would have ironed out many of the glitches.</p> <p>The education elements in terms of explaining tunes, sources of tunes and in giving an introduction to Shetland styles was very good.</p> <p>The evening performance could have benefitted from editing down, as well as a stage rehearsal.</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>	<p>Fiery Sessions: 4</p> <p>Tunes &amp; Tales: 3</p>	<p>Fiery Session had a mixed audience of locals and visitors of all ages and was fairly well attended, but not quite a sell-out.</p> <p>Tune &amp; Tales was less well attended, but it is the first year of such an event and needs better promotion and association.</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>	3	<p>Introductions/compeering from stage as well as explanations from the performers.</p>
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>		

## 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?*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Suitability of the venue for the event	Garrison theatre is ideal size and location. Acoustic of the venue is quite dead as it was designed for theatre but overall quite good.  Stage is small and there are natural limitations but I do feel more could have been done with what was available.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Good quality flyers were produced (enclosed), but they did not explain the logic of the event.
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.	This is impossible to assess as I arrived on the day before the concert and was accompanied by staff from Shetland Arts for the duration of my visit.
Ease of booking and payment	Tickets were arranged for me – therefore again impossible to comment.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Yes, central and easy to find.
External signage and signposting	
Internal directional signage	
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Auditorium is on street level and it appears that the event would be accessible to those with movement impairment, not sure if there were provisions for loop transmission.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Afternoon event ideal.  Evening event, perfect start-time but the event was too long and would have benefitted from some editing to make it shorter and better. Some of the audience left during the performance and overall it was a late finish.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very friendly, welcoming and helpful.

Criteria	Comment
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Logos were on printed material.

### 3. Right to Reply

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. The Right to Reply does not affect the ratings given in the evaluation. Please keep your response to max 500 words. The Scottish Arts Council will require your response back within 10 working days of your receipt of this evaluation. The evaluation including your response will be published on the Scottish Arts Council website (updated quarterly).

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<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.