



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

Artist/Company:	St Magnus Festival
Venue:	Various, Orkney Islands
Title of Event :	St Magnus Festival 2009
Type of Event:	Annual festival
Date of Visit:	19-22 June 2009
Overall Rating:	Excellent
<i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – ie 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 is a unique and high quality event in Scotland's festival and musical calendar.	
Name: Clare Hewitt	Date: 25 August 2009
Scottish Arts Council Officer	Specialist Advisor

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 on 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 future 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:

- Very poor**- standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- Poor** - not well conceived and executed
- Satisfactory**
- Good** - well conceived and executed
- Very Good** – well conceived and executed to a very good standard
- Excellent** – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally 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	<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of ideas if you have seen other work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Excellent	<p>The Festival presents the widest programme possible using the musical resources available through its invitations and residencies. This gives the event a strong appeal and interest to potential audience members.</p> <p>The introduction in recent years of the conducting and composition courses and the utilisation of all the resources available through the programme for these courses is highly commendable.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Excellent	<p>Using the ensembles and artistes invited to the event, the St Magnus Festival is able to programme unique and high quality collaborations.</p> <p>The theme of lighthouses in the 2009 programme was subtle yet provided a cohesive element to the overall programme, from public performances to community events.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims of project and/or performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? How well did it communicate the artistic themes? How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Excellent	<p>The programme promised ‘memorable performances in a programme that embraces music, theatre, literature and visual arts’, and delivered on this promise very well.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the expertise of the performers? Where performers are amateur, please reflect this in your comments. How successfully did the performer(s) communicate with and engage the audience? In your view, was an artist as a tutor key to the success of the workshop? 	Excellent	<p>The artists and ensembles performing at the festival were all of an extremely high quality, and the festival is one which groups and artists find desirable to play at.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the work original? How was the space used? How many dancers were there and how were they used? How long was the piece? 		

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 Please comment on this for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new work • second productions • classics where the original has been substantially changed 		
Theatre, Dance	Direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the work well interpreted? • Was it well cast? • Was it well presented? 		
Dance, Theatre	Use of music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the music/ sound used enhance the production? • Is it live or recorded? 		
Dance, Theatre	Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were the costumes, set and lighting? • How did it work in the venue? • Was it technically proficient? (eg lighting and sound cues, etc). 		
All	Quality of Public Engagement Performing Arts/Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the production/event targeted at a particular audience? • Was the production /event appropriate for the audience/participants? • Were you/ engaged/inspired? • Did the audience/ participants appear to be engaged/inspired? • What was their response? • Approximately how many people were there? • Did there appear to be a broad mix of people – age, cultural diversity or disabled? • Are BSL/captioned/audio described performances offered as part of the run/tour/? If so how many? • What activities or supporting materials were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? • Were these targeted at specific age groups? Education/learning events: In addition, please provide comments on the following (if appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it taught/led eg one to one, group, child centred? • What was the composition of the participant group – age range, gender mix? • Is it strategically linked to the curriculum or national policy areas e.g. Early Years, Community Learning & Development • What learning/skills development took place? • What was the quality of the art 	Very good	For the most part, public engagement is very good – the look of the festival through its marketing is light and fresh, reflecting the midsummer setting of the event; there is a diverse array of performances on offer in a variety of settings; and the community engagement element is a real strength of the organisation. Some elements could be further explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The souvenir brochure is available at a cost of £6, which is no doubt a good source of income for the festival, and it is something special for festival-goers to have and take away with them. I would suggest that the Festival revisit the differences between the small (free) brochure and the souvenir one to ensure that vital information is still included in the small guide (eg: disabled access information), as it is likely that all audience members will use the small guide at some point, but fewer may choose to buy the large programme. It would be interesting to know what percentage of festival-goers buy the souvenir guide. • Engagement with those who have disabilities could perhaps be foregrounded in the brochures and on the website. It was not apparent to me if, for example, the website was available in alternative formats. • The website itself could be improved in terms of how easy it is to follow through to other sections with the links provided. I didn't always find it easy to go back to previous pages I had viewed without clicking the 'back' key a number of times. • I understand that online booking is something that the festival is aware it requires, and from an end-user point of view I would certainly welcome that development.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<p>produced by the participants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the workshop tutor have a teaching plan for the session and/or project? • How were participants recruited? • Did participants' views and choices help inform the structure and content of the project? <p>Crafts/Visual Arts Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang?</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
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it easy to find? • Is it on a main transport route? • Are the spaces clean? • What were the sight lines like? • How big was it? 	<p>The festival venues were easy to find by means of the map in the souvenir brochure, and by following other festival-goers.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? • Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>There was good interpretive material contained in the souvenir brochure, but as the booklet cost £6 some audience members may have missed out on this if they chose not to buy the brochure.</p>
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? • What publicity materials are produced? • Is it easy to understand? • Where can you get the information? • Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²? <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>The St Magnus Festival had a visible presence in Edinburgh in the months leading up to the festival, in the form of its marketing (flyers and brochures). The website is comprehensive, if a little stilted-looking. Navigating between pages of information isn't always flowing, but it does what is required in terms of providing information about the festival.</p> <p>Funding from the Scottish Arts Council is acknowledged in printed material, but I could not find any mention of funders on the website, which needs to be addressed in some way by the Festival.</p>
<p>Ease of booking and payment</p>	<p>The festival office was very helpful and efficient in ensuring that I had the tickets and bookings I required for my visit. I note that the festival does not have online booking facilities, which may frustrate or even deter some festival-goers.</p>

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.

Criteria	Comment																
<p>Timing of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? • Was the length appropriate? 	<p>The festival takes place over the mid-summer days and nights, which adds a sense of magic to the event.</p> <p>Running times for performances are stated in the small and souvenir brochures, allowing visitors to plan their festival activities easily.</p>																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the entrance clearly marked? • Is there clear internal directional signage? • Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	<p>The festival office is very close to the centre of Kirkwall, and is easy to find by the prominent logo on a shop-sign outside the office.</p>																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many BSL/captioned/audio described performances are there at the venue? 	<p>I was not immediately aware of what provision was available for those with disabilities. The souvenir festival brochure states that 'if you require help with access to Festival venues, please contact the Festival Administrator'. However, one has to have bought this programme to know this. I could not find anything to this effect on the website or in the small free brochure. Perhaps this information could be brought to the foreground in future years, and could include details of what access facilities are available throughout the festival.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="571 969 1257 1487"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td>?</td> <td>Audio description of performances</td> <td>?</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>?</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>?</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>?</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>?</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	?	Audio description of performances	?	Captioning	?	Lift/ramp	?	Accessible toilets	?	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	?
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<p>Customer service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) • If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p>The Festival's customer service, both at the box office and front of house, was very good.</p>																

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.