



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – MUSIC

Organisation/Venue: St Magnus Festival
Title of Event: St Magnus Festival (17 – 22 June 2005)
Type of Event: festival
Date of Visit: Sunday 19 June – Thursday 22 June 2005

Overall Rating (Please rate the production 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. NB: for multiple performances or festivals, or if you prefer please feel free to use headings for a more extensive commentary. Please note the artistic assessment according to the rating detailed below)

The St Magnus Festival does not really fit the standard evaluation format. After discussion with SAC officers, it was agreed that the format would be used as best as possible for the Festival as a whole, with short individual reports on events appended.

Name: _____ Carol Main _____ Date: 30/7/05
Advisor **X** 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 below. 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 may be made available to Scottish Arts Council Officers, Council and Committee members, and specialist advisors as appropriate. It will 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 Council to report on the overall performance of its Core 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, taking account of the following:

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Quality of production – was the event successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material)	5	Yes, the event was successful overall in relation to its stated aims. Described in the programme as a 'midsummer feast of music and the arts', the 3-4 days I spent there certainly had the feeling of feasting in that I enjoyed many excellent offerings from a wide and varied spread.
Vision and imagination	5	<p>The programme also stated two main themes, namely conflict and sea journeys. The weightiness of the conflict theme made it the dominant one. At times, it seemed too much so and too dark for a midsummer festival. But its ability to disturb, unsettle and make one think harder about and grapple more with these difficult issues became a real strength and, through music and the arts, pulled people into an intellectual arena which otherwise might have been left unexplored in their lives.</p> <p>The Festival programme could, no doubt, have presented less challenge, different challenge, easier to handle challenge, but it had chosen conflict and presented its choice with integrity. If part of the point of any festival is to present work in a concentrated span of time in such a way as to make audiences view the intangibles of life, as experienced through the arts, from a fresh perspective, the St Magnus Festival succeeded 100%.</p>
Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	5	<p>Extremely high quality professional performers were engaged for most of the performances. Young, mainly student, brass players were also excellent.* I heard one performance from the Kirkwall Brass Band, which was remarkably good in view of the modest population it draws from.</p> <p>See separate individual reports of events/performers for further comments on performers.</p> <p>*declaration of interest – many of these students are part of Live Music Now! Scotland, of which I am Director.</p>
Quality of Presentation – was the professionally presented from a technical point of view	4	<p>The St Magnus Festival has to work within the confines of the venues which are available to it, mainly within the small town of Kirkwall. Some were better than others.</p> <p>See separate individual reports of events/venues for further comments on quality of presentation</p>

<p>Audience – assess the appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction</p>		<p>Audiences generally reached venue capacity. People were extremely positive about what they heard and saw, with much goodwill towards the Festival. Locals and visitors integrated well in shared enthusiasm.</p> <p>It would be interesting to undertake audience research, especially with regard to age range of audiences, which appeared wide.</p> <p>See separate individual reports of events/audiences for further comments on audiences</p>
<p>Educational Value – comment where appropriate</p>	<p>3/4</p>	<p>School parties were well in evidence at daytime performance of the play Zlata's Diary. This introduced them to the book, written by a 10 year old girl caught up in the Bosnian war, and to what happened in the siege of Sarajevo.</p> <p>Conducting course – this was a specifically educational course running alongside the Festival. See separate report.</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.

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
<p>Suitability of the venue for the event</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="687 1182 1321 1249">1. Italian Chapel – Alexander Janiczek, William Conway and Merima Kljoco (Sun 19 June) <p data-bbox="735 1285 1347 1585">Venue is very small, so two consecutive performances were given in order to accommodate the audience. History of Chapel makes it an attractive and intriguing venue, and acoustically it is fine. Sight lines are not good. Chairs are not attached to each other, which may be a health and safety issue, depending on local authority conditions of performing licence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="687 1621 1315 1787">2. St Magnus Cathedral – Hebrides Ensemble/Dunedin Consort (Mon 20 June); Nash Ensemble (Mon 20 June); Mystery Quartet (Wed 21 June); Paragon Ensemble: The Armed Man (Wed 22 June) <p data-bbox="735 1823 1342 2049">Atmospheric concert venue with good cathedral acoustic, both at front and back of nave. Again, sight lines are not very good, but raised platform goes some way to addressing this. Seating – wood/wicker church chairs – is not comfortable. Chairs are not attached to each other, which may be a health and safety</p>

		<p>issue, depending on local authority conditions of performing licence.</p> <p>One audience member wondered if central heating could be put off in such a way that the pipes don't clunk!</p> <p>3. Pickaquoy Centre – Orkney Conducting Course (Mon 20 June); Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Tue 21 June); From Jericho to Jazz (Wed 22 June); Fanfare and Final Flourish (Wed 22 June)</p> <p>Purpose built performance venue. Excellent sight lines and acoustic.</p> <p>Good interval facilities, especially room with lots of windows on mid-summer evening. Light was amazing. Wine better quality than most concert venues.</p> <p>4. Orkney Arts Theatre – Communicado: Zlata's Diary (Tue 21 June)</p> <p>Again, purpose built performance venue with good acoustic and sight-lines, although perhaps now in need of refurbishment. e.g. seating and paintwork are looking shabby, there are only two ladies toilets.</p> <p>5. King Street Halls – Meet the Composer: Sally Beamish (Mon 20 June); Cushion Concert: Slices of Time (Mon 20 June); From Sarajevo with Sorry (Tue 21 June); Meet the Composer: Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (Wed 22 June)</p> <p>Excellent flexible space, light and airy, created from church conversion. Comfortable chairs which were mainly linked together. 'Cushion' events are best being not too long as wooden floor is hard. Good acoustic.</p> <p>6. St Magnus Centre – Orkney Conducting Course (Wed 22 June)</p> <p>Excellent space for small seminars of this type.</p> <p>7. Festival Club – Wrigley Sisters (Sun 19 June); Strath-sevdah (Mon 20 June); Moishe's Bagel (Tue 21 June/Wed 22 June)</p> <p>Excellent hotel function space which, being partially separated from bar area, allowed those in bar to chat and those in performing</p>
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		<p>space to listen, dance, whatever without each fluctuating group feeling alienated from the other.</p> <p>It is a good space for people to meet and chat too, especially as the atmosphere makes for cutting across the usual boundaries – players spoke to managers, audiences spoke to composers, conductors spoke to agents. It was a great social leveller.</p>
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue¹</p>		<p>The main festival programme was highly informative, with well written programme notes. The layout follows its own logic, based on presenting events in chronological order, It is, however, somewhat unimaginative, and some information was difficult to find. Some biographical information appeared to be missing.</p> <p>It should make clear that photography is not allowed.</p> <p>Printwork in general could benefit from a review.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Italian Chapel – main programme. A leaflet on the chapel was available independently of the Festival 2. St Magnus Cathedral – as above 3. Pickaquooy Centre – not good for Conducting Course as no information was provided other than a list of names with short biographies, therefore no idea who was conducting when (apart from the one female participant) and had to rely on personal knowledge to identify pieces being rehearsed. <p>There was a separate programme for Fanfare and Final Flourish available on the night, which confused things as it had prominent biography and photo of John Wallace who had withdrawn from performing. However, the main programme, which was clearly available earlier in the Festival, was up to date.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Orkney Arts Centre – main programme plus Comunicado's programme from previous 2004 tour and 2 x A4 sheets, both with biographies on one side and different information on the other – confusing! It would have been better to have had only one additional, up to date, dedicated programme.

¹ These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

		<p>5. King Street Halls – main programme</p> <p>6. St Magnus Theatre – not offered anything for Conducting Course programming seminar, although my neighbour seemed to have a course leaflet/brochure.</p> <p>7. Festival Club – main programme. Further information not appropriate.</p>
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²		<p>There was some confusion over an error re one of the Conducting Course sessions – according to the broadsheet publicity, participation by the SCO was in the wrong date/time slot.</p> <p>Some of the concerts were recorded for broadcast on Radio 3.</p>
Ease of booking and payment		<p>The box office was fairly basic, but seemed to work. Online ticketing would be huge advantage, as would tickets going on sale earlier – mid-April seems late for a major mid-June festival.</p>
Location of venue		<p>All within easy reach of Kirkwall with bus laid on for Italian Chapel, which gave chance to see a little more of Orkney landscape.</p>
External signage and signposting		<p>The programme had a good and easy to understand map. Venues themselves were obvious.</p>
Internal directional signage		<p>All seemed reasonable. There did not seem to be a sign for the toilets in St Magnus Cathedral.</p>
Access and provision for disabled people		<p>This all seemed fine and there were wheelchair users at most performances.</p> <p>If people want to attend events back to back, they have to be physically fit as a bit of sprinting from one venue to another is often required.</p>
Timing of the event		<p>Second half of June is a good time, especially on Orkney as it takes in midsummer and the special light.</p> <p>Several performances over-ran on stated time in programme, which was seriously problematic if people had scheduled performances back-to-back or other commitments or were expecting an hour at lunchtime and had to go back to work before a performance finished.</p> <p>It was also a problem for BBC Radio 3 and their programming plans for broadcasting from the Festival.</p>

² Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the range, content, and when and where available. Be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised, commenting on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information

<p>Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)</p>		<p>Front of house volunteer stewards were plentiful, extremely helpful, polite and pleasant. They were also easily identifiable through their Festival polo shirts.</p> <p>The volunteer team, however, could possibly benefit from some training and perhaps an injection of sensitive formal development and recognition. I have offered to put the Chairman in touch with Voluntary Arts Scotland, who may be able to help suggest sources of appropriate support eg UVAF.</p> <p>Bar/catering:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Italian Chapel none 2. St Magnus Cathedral – none 3. Pickaquoy Centre – interval refreshments with good choice and well served in lovely west-facing room with large windows; service between late afternoon and evening performances on 21 June very stretched – long queues, poor selection of food. 4. Orkney Arts Centre – none 5. King Street Halls – none 6. St Magnus Centre – none, although there may have been coin-operated vending machines 7. Festival Club – excellent – staff plentiful, efficient and friendly, good range of drinks and food available
<p>Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding³</p>		<p>Logo and text prominent on printed programme There was a huge banner with colour logo in Pickaquoy Centre main auditorium</p>

³ The following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

“The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.”

Please comment on whether these conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.