



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – MUSIC

Organisation/Venue:	Orkney Main Island
Title of Event:	St Magnus Festival
Type of Event:	International Contemporary Music Festival
Date of Visit:	Sunday 19th June – Thursday 23rd 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)	
2-5.1 In general this was a very high quality and successful event, deserving of its status as an international festival. Of particular merit was the excellent performance and mixed media programming. Most people seemed to thoroughly enjoy their experience at this unique festival.	
However, I felt that the festival could have taken more of a role in nurturing new Scottish/non-Scottish composer/artist relationships, in order to set up potential developments for the future and also support Scottish artists raise their profile out of Scotland.	
Aspects of time-management, accessible and consistent programme notes also need addressing for the future.	
Name: <u> Tamsin Mendelsohn </u>	Date: <u> 08 </u> / <u>09</u> / <u>05</u>
Advisor	Scottish Arts Council Officer <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 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	I attended a variety of professional and community concert performances, composer talks, related arts events (theatre & poetry), festival club and conductor's course. The overall festival had a theme of peace and conflict, and this generally worked well, with different elements of the festival leading into and complimenting each other. Having said this, the theme was not overly invading and concerts also held their own themes in their own right. While there was an interesting mixture of non-musical events, they complimented and did not dilute the overall music festival.
Vision and imagination	5	<p>Individual concerts I saw (Hebrides Ensemble, Paragon Ensemble, Nash Quartet, SCO, Final Fanfare) were extremely well programmed, often including contemporary or more challenging works. Good accompanying notes helped to bind these programmes together.</p> <p>Clarence Adoo performing with John Kenny, RSAMD Brass, Kirkwall and Orkney Schools Brass Bands was a bold gesture for the final concert and was very well received by the audience.</p> <p>Part of the festival's attraction is the variety of venues, and concerts were programmed in Stromness as well as the Italian Chapel.</p> <p>As stated above, the theme of the festival did bind together the mixture of musical/non-musical elements and I found that events such as Zlata's Diary and From Sarajevo with Sorrow were very interesting, both complimenting and clearing the palate of the intense music programme.</p>
	3	As outlined below, this year was very much (although not exclusively) a showcase of Scottish composers and performers who worked well together. I felt that the vision could be taken further by enabling Scottish and non-Scottish composers/artists to work with each other, in a sense helping to broker new international relationships and support the development of Scottish talent outwith Scottish boundaries.

Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	5	This year the festival showcased some of Scotland’s best talents, including composers (Beamish & Osborne), chamber groups (Paragon Ensemble & Hebrides Ensemble), orchestras (SCO) and conductors (Garry Walker). Along with other performances I saw, including the final flourish with student and community ensembles were performed to the highest level. It is a testament to the high standards of the festival that the BBC were involved with some broadcasts.
Quality of Presentation – was the professionally presented from a technical point of view	1-5	<p>While individual concerts were well staged, programmes almost always over-ran. This meant that there was not always enough time to eat or get to the next concert in time. This put the audience under some stress, as well as some artists performing in different ensembles. I did hear both artists and audience members discussing this regularly.</p> <p>One of the times and venues for the conductor’s course was misprinted in the festival leaflet and not explained to booking customers in advance</p> <p>Furthermore, the SCO had a busy performing schedule as well as playing for the conductor’s course. At times they looked tired and several players expressed that this was too much to do and maintain high standards of playing.</p>
Audience – assess the appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	5	In general, concerts were very well attended, with what seemed a mixture of locals and visitors. While there was contemporary music programmed in all concerts, I overheard audience members saying that while they did not like it all, they did not mind hearing it.
Educational Value – comment where appropriate	5 2	<p>Part of the festival includes the conducting course, aimed at postgraduate level conductors. This has been very successful over past years and has brought internationally renowned conductors to the festival.</p> <p>The only downside to this was the intense schedule that the SCO were required to maintain with the course and their own performances (see comments above).</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
Suitability of the venue for the event	5	In general all venues worked well, including the Italian Chapel.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ¹	2-5	All programme notes were together in one booklet and in general were very informative and interesting. However, while having one booklet was practical and useful as it could be kept for the whole festival, the inlay of the programme was fairly confusing and inconsistent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Small font with pictures over some information made the programme difficult to read ○ Programme notes often referred to notes in other performances which were difficult to find. ○ Composer biographies were not always all given in programme notes for each concert making it confusing and difficult to find the information ○ A performer/sound engineer was also missed out of the credits in one performance
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²	2	As stated above, some mistakes in original publicity were not pointed out to me when booking (times/venue of conducting course)
Ease of booking and payment	5	No difficulties with the festival booking office
Location of venue	2	A map in the programme was very hard to find – needs to be made clearer or given out separately
External signage and signposting	5	Generally clear
Internal directional signage	5	Generally clear with very helpful ushers
Access and provision for disabled people	5	Clearly outlined in web information
Timing of the event	2	As stated above, concerts generally over-ran making it difficult for audiences to eat or get to following performances. This was commented on by audience members and performers alike
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	5	All very helpful
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ³	5	Clear in all publicity

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

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

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.