



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:	St Magnus Festival
Venue:	Various
Title of Event:	St Magnus Festival
Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)	International music festival
Date of Visit:	23 – 25 June 2007
Overall Rating:	4-5
<p><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> <p>Overall the festival vision and programme is excellent, with most performances I saw of the highest standard. The 'chemistry' of the festival was a successful mix of highbrow programming, bold new works and commissions, refreshing events in other artforms, integrated community involvement and best use of the venues and locations on Orkney to create a fully enjoyable, cerebral and satisfying experience.</p> <p>The lower rating is given for some areas of access and equalities outlined in the assessment.</p>	
Name: Tamsin Mendelsohn	Date: 17 October 2007
Specialist Adviser	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 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	<p>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.</p>	5	<p>The festival sets itself up as a '<i>unique combination of world-class performance, community participation of the highest quality and the magic of Orkney at midsummer</i>'.</p> <p>The programme was testament to this. This year it continued to feature predominantly classical music - including a healthy proportion of bold contemporary programming and commissions exclusive to the festival. BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists, established performers and composers and the BBC SSO were some of the highest class acts.</p> <p>Ambition remained high with a new community work <i>Tales from the Golden Slipper</i> created by Alan Plater and Peter Maxwell Davies.</p> <p>Compared to my previous visits, the broader programming of drama, dance, literature and the visual arts seemed to have increased, but did not dilute the focus of the events. This included a National Theatre of Scotland production – <i>Venus as a Boy</i>, and readings from Andrew Motion.</p> <p>Magfest is an addition I have not seen before – through the addition of the Spiegeltent, the festival was able to broaden its programme to appeal to more people – particularly local Orcadians.</p> <p>Alongside the festival ran the established Conductor's Course, and new partner Composer course – these added a high quality element of support for young professionals at the festival. Audiences could buy tickets to sit in and watch some of the tutoring sessions.</p> <p>With events taking place in the two main town centres of Orkney, as well as touring events to the islands and day trips to the surrounding areas, this was a festival that could appeal to the (contemporary) music afficianado, co-incident holiday-maker and local audience.</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>	5	See above.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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 ¹below for guidance</p>	5	<p>During the two days of events that I saw the programme was highly successful – although I have written an assessment on one performance that I felt was an exception.</p>
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>	5	<p>Technical skill and communication were consistently high for all the professional performances I saw – including Kreisler Ensemble, Alexie Ogrintchouk & Lidija Bizjak, Concerto Caladonia, Songs for Unsung Heroes, Alban Gerhardt & Steven Osborne, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Lisa Milne.</p> <p>A professional presentation of new work <i>Tales from the Golden Slipper</i> was also performed by the local amateur Orkney Arts Theatre to an appreciative (mainly) local audience.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>		
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>		
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.</p>		
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.</p>		
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.</p>		
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of</p>		

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
	<p>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>		
All	<p>Audience</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>In general all of the performances were well-attended if not sold out, with extremely positive responses from the audience.</p> <p>I met a mix of people who were specifically visiting Orkney for the festival, and many local people who were involved as volunteers. They described it as a positive experience to host professional performers in their homes, and there were several comments about the programme in the Spiegeltent.</p> <p>A general camaraderie between performers and audiences seemed to develop at performances and the festival club in the evening.</p>
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	4	<p>Although I did not attend these, there were opportunities in the overall programme to see talks by Andrew Motion and Peter Maxwell Davies, a BBC <i>Play it Again</i> event for all ages.</p>
All	<p>Outcomes of education activity – 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?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	<p>Venues were mixed between local authority venues such as town halls, theatres, and major venues including St Magnus Cathedral and the Pickaquoy Centre.</p> <p>The mixture of formal and more adapted venues is an integral part of the festival and imbeds it into the community.</p> <p>However, on occasion I had some concerns - while sight lines is sometimes a problem, access and ventilation were more of an issue, particularly in Stromness Town Hall (see below).</p> <p>Regarding travel between performances, it was helpful having buses laid on for the Sunday performances in Stromness. This would also be helpful on other days – I did miss a bus to a Stromness performance and discovered that doing the festival fully by public transport is not very easy.</p>
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	<p>The pre-publicity programme for booking events was very clear – pleasant colours, easy to identify different days and events.</p> <p>At the festival, most people bought the programme covering the whole event. At £5 this was good value.</p> <p>However, while the content of the programme was generally informative regarding performance content and artist biographies, and several issues that I outlined two years ago still stand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The layout of the programme is confusing. ▪ There is no contents page to indicate performer information and maps at the back ▪ It is difficult to differentiate between the days of the festival ▪ The font is small, in a difficult colour to read (purple) and often has printed picture over the information. <p>In general this did make the programme difficult to navigate and is not compliant with Equalities recommendations.</p>
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.	<p>Information on the programme was available several months on the website and through the brochures. In general this was all very clear, including information on the area, travel and accommodation.</p>

Criteria	Comment
Ease of booking and payment	This was easy by post or on the phone. It would be even more useful if online booking was available.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Most venues were easy to find and generally it was possible to find a crowd heading for a performance. However, the map in the programme was not clear (see below) and on occasion I found it difficult to find some venues.
External signage and signposting	More signage for some of the venues would be useful – such as bright banners or sandwich boards – I got a bit lost on a few occasions in the rush between performances.
Internal directional signage	Generally clear.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	I did not always see disabled access toilets. Most places had ramps but Stromness Town Hall in particular was very difficult to get into and negotiate around. This was not helped by a table with CD's being right by the entrance, blocking the flow of people in and out.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	There was no problem with timing of events. There was a good mix of lunchtime, afternoon, evening and late to suit different preferences. All of the performances I attended were of a good length – c.1hr 10mins – and ran to time. This was essential to allow audiences to travel to the next concert.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	All of the staff volunteers were extremely helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	On all publicity and programmes.

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.

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.

Online booking: we realise this would be desirable and are currently investigating ways and means of proceeding with this. We aim to have online booking in place before the '09 Festival.

Programme book: we accept that this has become somewhat cluttered as the Festival has expanded in scope. This year the programme book included details of the Conducting and Composers' courses and MagFest as well as the core programme. However, we do want to retain one programme for the whole Festival and will re-designing the layout and considering the size of the programme book for the '08 Festival.

Sightlines etc: many of our venues are not purpose-built concert halls (this maybe adds to the charm of the Festival) and this is pointed out to people in the brochure.

Stromness Town Hall: in many ways this venue is ideal for chamber recitals, as it has perhaps the best acoustic of any our venues. However, we appreciate its limitations in terms of audience comfort. There is now a management committee for the hall who are actively addressing these issues and some refurbishment has already been undertaken.

Signage: we recognise the desirability of Festival banners and this is something we will investigate during this year. However, production is likely to be expensive and our local authority is very sensitive about appearance and siting.

Festival transport: we have in the past laid on buses between Kirkwall and Stromness after the main evening events - but hardly anyone used them! We do however provide a free bus to and from Stromness on Festival Sunday and attempt to programme other Stromness events to coincide with the regular day-time bus service. Other 'out of town' performances are sold as Festival excursions with transport laid on.