



### 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.

<b>Artist/Company:</b>	Theatre Cryptic
<b>Venue:</b>	Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh
<b>Title of Event:</b>	Aldeburgh Festival opening concert
<b>Type of Event:</b>	Concert (staged/produced) performance (opera) World Premiere of <i>An Ocean of Rain</i>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	13 June 2008
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>5</b>
<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>	
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Scottish Arts Council Officer (Head of Music)	

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	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.	5	Cryptic's work exemplifies the vision and creativity of its artistic director, Cathie Boyd and is always challenging and innovative. <i>An Ocean of Rain</i> follows on from <i>Optical Identity</i> and is directed by Cathie Boyd in a joint international collaboration with the composer; Yannis Kyriakides (Greek/Anglo Cypriot) and Ensemble MAE from the Netherlands, librettist Daniel Dannis (Quebec), designer John Otto and lighting by Zerlina Hughes (both UK). <i>An Ocean of Rain</i> was jointly facilitated and promoted by the Aldeburgh festival and Almeida Opera, further underlining the importance of effective and creative partnerships. The work is of particular interest as there are few contemporary operas being commissioned and performed in the current climate in the arts. Also this work combines media-driven technology (lighting/visual imagery/film) with high quality contemporary music – often challenging but always accessible.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.  If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	5	This was a joint commission from the Aldeburgh festival, one of the UK's longest established arts festivals, founded by Benjamin Britten and Almeida Opera, which guarantees Cryptic exposure at the heart of London's arts market – so vitally important. The performance was difficult to stage in what is essentially a concert hall, but the designer and lighting direction was of the highest quality and really complimented and enhanced the live performance experience.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.  Education events – see <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	5	It was a world premiere, for which this festival is renowned. It attracted a diverse and interested audience and all the major critics from London.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	5	As detailed above, the performance and all its component parts were of the highest quality.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		

<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
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.		
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>	4/5	The technical presentation was complex but fully engaging and supporting the performance. There were obvious challenges in staging live performance, with performers/singers all on stage in front of effective staging that incorporated the visual elements of film and recorded sound. Dialogue was sometimes lost in the episodic nature of the music, but that was a minor quibble and will be sorted for the Almeida and for the Tramway in October.
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>		This was not an easy piece for all of the audience as there were some dissonances in the music, which the young singers handled brilliantly and the synopsis might have been difficult to follow at all times. Nevertheless, the response was warm and engaging.
All	<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.	5	There was a pre-concert presentation by the Festival Director with key members of the production team, including Cathie Boyd and the composer.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	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)?		N/A but there may be education related activities planned for the Scottish residency.

## 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	As already stated, this was a concert hall and not a theatre, but the technical provision still worked well.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Good material available.
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.	Excellent – festival brochure and Cryptic's website.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Aldeburgh is not an easy place to access, but this doesn't worry its many subscribers and visitors as it is also seen as a tourist centre for the region.
External signage and signposting	OK
Internal directional signage	OK
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Fully DDA compliant.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	8pm start and no interval.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Excellent.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Included in all Cryptic's promotional material, including electronic.

<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.

### 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.

#### Vision and imagination of work

John Otto, set and costume designer, is a New Zealander based in the Netherlands and not the UK.

#### Additional interpretative activity

In addition to the pre performance talk Cryptic commissioned the 'Making of' *An Ocean of Rain* DVD was played in the foyer of SNAPE prior to the show. This gives audiences an insight into the creation process of the work and background information and is played prior to all performances.