



Scottish **Arts** Council

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: Scottish Youth Music Theatre

Venue: Macrobert

Title of Event: Scottish Youth Music theatre - Oliver

Type of Event: youth theatre performance

Date of Visit: 09.08.07

Overall Rating: good

The open access policy of SYMT is laudable and they did a very job with their young cast in a very short time period. Enthusiasm and energy were there in abundance, and chorus work in particular was very good. The whole was soundly produced if not strictly in the 'exciting' category, and was thoroughly enjoyed by an enthusiastic audience. It was clear that a lot had been learned by the young performers, whose enjoyment was obvious.

Name: SYLVIA DOW _____ Date: 27 / 08 / 07 _____

Specialist Advisor
relevant title

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle the

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.	GOOD	The choice of Oliver, and its fairly traditional production, could not in any sense be called visionary or unusually imaginative, but it was a sound choice in that: the opportunities to sing and dance, and the plethora of roles, many of which are 'characters' or children makes it ideal for a youth group learning music theatre techniques and stagecraft; the music is surprisingly challenging and stretching; it can accommodate a very large cast.
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.	N/A	
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 ¹ below for guidance	GOOD	The website of SYMT states that it offers 'popular participatory choices for young people in the performing arts. Access is open for musicians, singers, dancers, actors and those interested in back stage work' and further '...the opportunities for work with high production values are readily available. A company dedicated to this work with young people across Scotland will deliver exciting, vibrant and positive opportunities for all young people in venues that are on their doorstep whilst developing from, and feeding back into formal school education.' These aims were fulfilled for the most part with a popular choice of musical and open access – no auditions – for all, and a professional first class theatre venue local to them. In terms of artistic themes, I was not sure that the young people had a clear grasp of the provenance of Oliver or of its themes of poverty and identity but perhaps that's too much to ask of a – however intensive – 2 week rehearsal period.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	excellent	This was a group of over 80 young people of a wide variety of ages and abilities. I felt they had learned quite a bit about stagecraft in general, and certainly they engaged well with the audience. Several of the young actors were very good indeed, and one, the young actor playing Fagin, was outstanding in his grasp of character and his stage presence. There was a definite feeling of enthusiasm and enjoyment from the cast – it is clear that they had really enjoyed their Summer school.

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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	excellent	More stage movement than choreography, this was done very well with chorus with the challenge of such a varied cast and such large numbers.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	good	This was a somewhat truncated version of the original which kept it to neat length but missed some of the subtleties of what is quite a literate libretto. However it also had the merit of less words to learn!
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	good	Direction was always competent, and excellent in the handling of chorus – somewhat less so in acting scenes, duets and ensembles where the young actors didn't always have enough of interest to do to enable good stage pictures and bringing out of character.
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	good	A small band in the pit worked with a cut down score altered in some regards to fit the shortened version. Oliver's orchestration is quite rich and I missed that richness, but the band was good and coped manfully with the score.
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.	good	The set was good rather than exciting, but very workable, and entirely suitable for the numbers onstage. There was minimal stage dressing or props, which made for a rather blank stage area when chorus was not on.
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 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>	competent	I was unsure whether the lighting was designed and worked by children or the professional team, but in any case it was pretty basic with unwanted shadows and no dynamic or subtlety to it. It did light the cast however, so it did the job, but at a very basic level.
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>		GOOD – totally appropriate for a 'friends and family' mixed age audience. House was around 70% of capacity. All seemed to enjoy the performance very much. There was a good buzz in the interval and warm applause for each act.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	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.	excellent	Not sure where to put the following comment, but I think it should be said somewhere how clearly valuable this experience was for the young people involved, and how very good it is to see an open access policy.
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	

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	Perfect for a large young cast and an appreciative family audience
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	A free programme gave minimal information – cast, crew, production staff etc.
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.	Publicised on the macrobert website and printed programme of events. Clear information on both of these about ticket prices, dates and times etc.
Ease of booking and payment	Easy – friendly staff and quick amiable service
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	A well known venue well signposted and located just on the edge of Stirling on the University campus.
External signage and signposting	All excellent and clear, attractive and well designed
Internal directional signage	As above.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Excellent in terms of access to venue and box office, toilets and café, and all the theatre spaces
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The piece was cut to fit a neat family friendly time slot – started and finished on time.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Excellent all round – top class FOH, very well managed.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Everywhere appropriate within venue and on main programme but not on individual programmes for this performance.

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.