

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**  
**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - MUSIC**

**Organisation/Venue: Edinburgh International Festival 2003**

**Title of Events:**

- Opening Concert – 10 August
- Lohengrin – 15 August
- Paul Lewis – 18 August
- Andras Schiff – 22 August
- Rhinegold – 25 August
- Steven Osborne – 28 August

**Type of Event: Performances**

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 a Council Officer, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work, 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:**

**Very Poor** –standard falls well below what is acceptable

**Poor**- not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation

**Competent**– routine rather than especially interesting

**Good** –well conceived and executed.

**Excellent** –conceived and executed to a high standard.

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 ratings detailed above.

**1. Artistic Assessment**

Please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the event(s)

**1.1 Overall production** – was the event successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material, and stated aims and objectives)

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

Each of these events lived up to my expectations. My initial disappointment at the fact that Helene Grimaud was indisposed was quickly allayed by the substitution of **Stephen Osborne**, a pianist who deserves international recognition.

**1.2 Vision and Imagination.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

**Programming**  
In general, whilst the quality of the artists engaged cannot be faulted, I feel disappointed at the lack of challenge in the programming. It seemed to me that programmes featured standard repertoire with little or no educational value for the audiences. Whilst I do not go along with the idea of 'ghetto-ising' contemporary music, I believe that unfamiliar work can be introduced into programmes in a thematical or chronological context and that Edinburgh Festival, with its reputation for quality, is well placed to do so.

	<p>An exception was the <b>opening concert</b>– bold programming which paid off - a thrilling concert.</p> <p><b>Stephen Osborne's</b> programme was particularly interesting, introducing some of the composers whom he has championed - Alkan and Medtner – with works which worked mirrored well Mussorgsky's <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (a memorable performance), and ending with a perfect rendition of some Duke Ellington as an encore. This was good programming!</p> <p>Also, <b>Paul Lewis's</b> approach in running together Schubert's German Dances, Schoenberg's Six Little Pieces and Liszt's B minor sonata (I have never heard such a wonderful interpretation of the latter piece) was inspired.</p> <p><b>Beethoven string quartet weekend</b> Whilst on paper, this appeared to be an exciting idea, in practice I don't believe it worked. In general, I would be surprised if many people wanted to spend an entire day/weekend listening to Beethoven string quartets. For me, it would have made more sense to programme the quartets in an early evening slot (as was done with Haydn quartets a year or two ago), in this way encouraging return visits. I would particularly welcome the reintroduction of 6pm chamber music in the centre of town.</p> <p>Also, was this not an ideal opportunity to partner works by a contemporary composer?</p>
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**1.3 Standard of performance(s) - where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

Standard of performance was in all cases extremely high – of the level one has come to expect from the Edinburgh Festival.

A particular highlight was Scottish Opera's *Rhinegold*.

**1.4 Quality of presentation – please comment on whether the event was professionally presented from a technical point of view.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

Presentation was very traditional. I felt that more could have been made of the 'late night' Usher Hall slot – with some more subdued lighting perhaps.

**1.5 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

Yes

**1.6 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the event.**

In all cases, the venues appeared to be full, and the performances were well received by the audience.

**1.7 If appropriate, please comment on the educational value of the event**

Limited – see remarks under 'Programming'

## **2. Management of Event**

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

### **2.1 Was the venue suitable for the event?**

Yes – in all cases.

### **2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)**

- range, quantity and clarity.

More thought has surely to be given to the size of typeface used in Festival programmes. Even with good eyesight, it is very difficult to read the artists' biographical notes and the names of members of the orchestra/choir. Surely this breaches guidelines regarding interpretation and can be addressed quite simply by the Festival?

### **2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc)**

- range, content and when and where available. Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Please also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised. Comment on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information.

All very good.

### **2.4 Accessibility of the venue**

- ease of payment
- location
- external signposting

- internal directional signing
- access and provision for disabled people
- timing of event

All venues are making every effort to be accessible; I certainly had no particular difficulties in this connection, but it would be interesting to gauge the views of someone who is less familiar with Edinburgh and its venues.

## 2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering).

All satisfactory.

## 3. **Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding** (if applicable)

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 and 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, and computer programmes etc. “*

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

Logo reasonably prominent in programmes.

**Name: Helen Jamieson**

**Date: 30 October 2003**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer      x**

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