



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – MUSIC

Organisation/Venue: Scottish Opera/ Edinburgh International Festival at Edinburgh Festival Theatre

Title of Event: Death of Klinghoffer

Type of Event: Contemporary opera

Date of Visit: Monday 29th August

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)

4 - This was a bold presentation of a controversial and topical opera. While the production evoked mixed responses I felt that this was an interesting and good approach to reflecting the challenging subject matter. Some elements of production did disrupt the musical score and performance, and use of strobe lighting should have been clearly advertised in advance,

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.

Name: __Tamsin Mendelsohn__

Date: _07_/09_/05_

Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle the relevant title

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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)	4	<p>This was a production of John Adams' controversial contemporary opera, with its poignant and topical themes relating to terrorism, and political and religious tensions in the Middle East.</p> <p>It was a challenging work to present in view of current politics and world events (particularly the recent London bombings). Overall many of the themes were clearly placed in the score and libretto and the dramatic production was therefore particularly key to the successful presentation of these themes.</p> <p>As reflected in press reviews, Neilson's treatment of the production has stimulated much debate and mixed reaction, particularly over elements such as the recorded seabird sounds, 'terrorists' grabbing 'audience' members and the Klinghoffer 'home movie'. However, in a sense this mirrors the constant debate and philosophical thinking that is current in the media and our personal lives and I felt that in general the production successfully recreated this sense of uncertainty over the major issues that we face today.</p> <p>The only element of production that I felt was unsuccessful was the use of microphones, which sometimes overpowered the orchestral score, and also made it difficult to identify who was singing.</p>
Vision and imagination	5	See above.
Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	4	<p>All soloists were outstanding, giving poignant performances reflecting the different perspectives and circumstances of their characters.</p> <p>The chorus were shaky in the opening scenes of exiled Palestinians and Jews, but later gave a good sense of a victimised group throughout the rest of the production</p>

Quality of Presentation – was the professionally presented from a technical point of view	4	In general the staging and musical presentation was excellent, apart from microphones which sometimes overpowered the orchestra and made it difficult to identify who was singing.
Audience – assess the appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	3-4	This was a fairly full audience. While there was a general positive reaction, some people left at the interval.
Educational Value – comment where appropriate	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.

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Suitability of the venue for the event	5	This a regular venue for opera, with all facilities for music and staging
Information/ interpretive material at venue ¹	5	The programme was excellent with a good synopsis and interesting material to read after the event.
Publicity/ pre-publicity ²	5 1	Good publicity in festival programme and press previews. However, no advance warning of strobe lighting in the production which can be an issue of health and safety for some members of the public
Ease of booking and payment	5	I had no difficulty booking tickets through the festival phone-line
Location of venue	5	This is a well-known venue and was also given good directions on the festival website

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

External signage and signposting	5	Very clear
Internal directional signage	5	Clear, with helpful staff
Access and provision for disabled people	3-4	Good provision but difficult to find information on website in advance
Timing of the event	5	Start time of 7.15pm was suitable for long programme
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	5	Very helpful and I was also able to get a drink in the interval!
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ³	5	Clear in programme in list of supporters

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.