



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – MUSIC

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

**Title of Event:** L'Amour Masqué – Opéra de Tours

**Type of Event:** Opera - staged

**Date of Visit:** Thursday 1 September 2005

**Overall Rating** 3

This was a curiosity rather than a sensation in a festival where the only other staged opera was challenging for the audience. The company performed adequately but did not compare favourably with Scottish Opera (the local international opera company). Whilst I think I understand the reasons for such programming I am concerned that audience members who have to book their visits to the Edinburgh International Festival before the programme is announced might not re-book on the basis of this year's programming. It was an entertaining evening but not, I think, great value for money at £58 top price compared to the *The Death of Klinghoffer*.

Name: David W. S. Todd Date: 23/09/2005

Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

*Please circle the relevant title*

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.

## 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)	3	This production from Opéra de Tours was small in scale, the singers were adequate, the direction was, I believe, authentic but not dazzling, the orchestra was very good but on the whole I do not think that this was “international” opera for an international festival. It was billed as a “sparkling musical comedy” but was, in effect, the only other staged opera in the Festival apart from a Church Parable at the Lyceum.
Vision and imagination	4	Taken together with <i>The Death of Klinghoffer</i> the Edinburgh International Festival’s staged opera offering was not one to immediately attract return visits from those coming from far afield to an international festival. <i>L’Amour Masqué</i> is a piece that is never (or hardly ever) performed and to that extent was a curiosity rather than a sensation. It was done authentically with no attempt to update or correct the (current) political incorrectness of the piece. The concert performances of opera were, I think, more sensational (particularly <i>La Clemenza di Tito</i> and <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> ) than the staged performances. If Edinburgh is to compete in the international festival market I believe that there needs to be greater investment in the staged opera. The “opera house” is there, the audience is there – I suspect it’s simply a question of budgetary constraints.
Performers – where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments	3	The singers were adequate andn worked hard – probably the best was Sophie Haudebourg who replaced Caroline Mutel. I felt that the other solo voices were on the whole not strong enough. The chorus were not as slick with their choreography as one would have liked. The orchestra – the Northern Sinfonia - performed extremely well but there were problems with balance on the night I attended.
Quality of Presentation – was the professionally presented from a technical point of view	3	There were some problems with the synchronisation of the opening “introductions” which I understand were corrected on subsequent nights. The set looked a little small on the Festival Theatre stage though it was interesting and clever enough. The costumes worked well.
Audience – assess the appropriateness of the production for the audience, estimate the size and reaction	3	There were just over 1,000 people in the audience (c.60%) and they were warm in their applause until we were given five reprises of the last chorus which left the audience somewhat nonplussed. I believe that had I paid £58 of my own money for this performance I would have felt disappointed.

Educational Value – comment where appropriate		Not appropriate
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## 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	3	This might have been better at the King's Theatre or the Royal Lyceum Theatre in terms of scale.
Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>1</sup>	5	All good and clear
Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>2</sup>	5	All good and clear
Ease of booking and payment	5	Booked online without any problems
Location of venue	5	Central
External signage and signposting	5	Good
Internal directional signage	5	I am too familiar with this to comment
Access and provision for disabled people	5	Excellent
Timing of the event	5	7.15pm – normal time for opera – lasted 2hrs 20mins which was good for dinner reservations
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	4	Excellent. Sadly because of the small audience not all the bars were open which always makes the foyers feel slightly unwanted.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding <sup>3</sup>	4	The SAC was acknowledged on all the material I saw apart from the posters at the Festival Theatre.

<sup>1</sup> These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> The following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

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“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.