

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**

**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - MUSIC**

**Organisation/Venue:** National Youth Choir of Scotland – Edinburgh Children's Choir

**Title of Event:** Christmas Presentation

**Type of Event:** (e.g. performance, work in progress, opens rehearsal etc) Performance

**Date of Visit:** Saturday 13 December 2003

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>	

*Entitled 'Christmas Presentation', the event was an interesting, well varied and well selected programme of familiar and less familiar seasonal music. Clear diction throughout was particularly impressive. Tuning in unaccompanied Kyrie (German 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century) was excellent. This was the only piece in which the singers used music – everything else was from memory, a remarkable feat.*

*The concert was presented by the Choir Director – Elizabeth McColl.*

**1.2 Vision and Imagination.**

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

*The choice of repertoire was perfect for this group, stretching and challenging, but never impossible. In a wide range of styles, Britten's Ceremony of Carols provided 'meatiness', while more contemporary songs such as Hosanna Rock by Sheila Wilson and Bob Chilcott's Midwinter, provided lighter contrast.*

*Giving the Boys Changing Voices group their own slot was inspirational, enlightening and encouraging. Hearing teenage boys being so committed to and enthusiastic about choral singing was a joy! – particularly as I recognised one as the lead singer of the winning band from a rock band competition attended just a few weeks previously.*

**1.3 Standard of performance(s) - where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> <i>Tuning and diction were consistently excellent throughout. The singers are young (age 11 – 13) but are very well disciplined and the standard of performance is extremely high.</i>  <i>The voices blend well together and the children sing together – no ragged phrase endings or hesitant beginnings in this choir.</i>  <i>The choristers also displayed a wide range of dynamic control and the conductor chose tempi which suited the music, the children and the acoustic.</i>  <i>They are clearly thoroughly rehearsed and regular attendance at rehearsals is clearly a requirement and feature of NYCoS</i>  <i>As accompanist, Lynda Cochrane is excellent, simultaneously sympathetic and supportive, as well as technically and musically completely assured.</i>
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

**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)		<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> <i>Presentation generally (technical n/a) - Although the Choir Director was natural and familiar in her spoken introductions to the pieces, it may be that there is opportunity to build on this important aspect of such events with perhaps professional guest presenters, which would have the added advantage of not giving the Director yet another responsibility. Funding is no doubt an issue in this regard.</i>  <i>The children were wondrously competent and polished, but did not always look as if they were enjoying themselves and sometimes gave the impression – totally unnecessarily – of being scared. It was especially apparent when fun Christmas songs such as It's Wintertime by Lynn Hinds were presented with rather glum faces.</i>  <i>The Boys Changing Voices group, however, looked as if they really enjoyed what they were doing.</i>
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
Excellent		

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

*Yes, many of the audience were parents/family.*

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

*Approx 500 – they loved it!*

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

*NYCoS is fulfilling a vital and absolutely invaluable role in giving children from the widest possible wide cross-section of the community the opportunity to discover the potential of their individual musicality and singing voice in the company of their peers and in the context of a focussed and positive learning experience. The age range of the choir heard on this occasion was 11 – 13.*

*The Boys Changing Voices is an especially interesting and essential educational initiative.*

**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?**

*Central Hall is acoustically excellent and has plenty of space and adequate toilet/changing facilities for large numbers of young performers and their mainly family audiences. However, it does not have its own public liability insurance nor entertainment licence from the local authority and this may prove an additional burden to groups such as NYCoS.*

*There is no permanent café facility, but, with the help of volunteers, adequate and welcome refreshments were available at the interval. The venue is no-smoking and no alcohol.*

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

- range, quantity and clarity.

*Programmes were available and listed every child's name, as well as the names and composers of the music being performed and acknowledgement of those who had helped and assisted with NYCoS Edinburgh Children's Choir.*

### 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.

*Did not see any posters or leaflets. Website is easily navigated and informative.*

### 2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment – *I think that it was by donation,*
- location – *very central, on bus routes, on-street parking nearby*
- external signposting - *none*
- internal directional signing – *very clear*
- access and provision for disabled people – *lift and then choice of main auditorium or gallery; wheelchair spaces available at both levels. Disabled toilet on auditorium level.*
- timing of event – *early evening, which is most suitable for young performers and their family audiences*

### 2.5 Customer service

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

*Informal, but friendly and efficient*

## 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.

*No acknowledgement of SAC support on printed programme, although there is mention of The City of Edinburgh Council, Registers of Scotland (for printing/photocopying), parents, St George's School for Girls.*

*Scottish Arts Council logo very prominent, in colour, front page of NYCoS website.*

**Name:** Carol Main

**Date:** 10 January 2004

**Advisor**

**X**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

**?**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*