

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Dunedin Concerts Trust	
Application Reference number:	G201001032	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£500,125	£213,915
Officer's recommendation		
<p>Summarise the key points of your assessment and draw out the strengths and weaknesses of the application taken together with any comments you have received from source evidence (portfolio of evidence/ internal / external consultation). Highlight any specific risks <i>Note: The amount of information you provide here should be sufficient for the decision maker to reach a decision. As with all previous commentary boxes please do not exceed 250 words</i></p>		
Comments:		
<p>Following its recent recording success and award, the artistic plans and vision of the company are high and include some very exiting proposals – in particular a range of recording projects, the development of a baroque orchestra and training orchestra, as well as a major new commission around the opera <i>Dido and Aeneus</i>.</p> <p>However, while it is positive that the company has high ambitions to raise its profile in Scotland, the UK and internationally, details of timelines, roles of responsibility and risk analysis are needed to ensure the viability of the activity.</p> <p>Areas outlined for development include a fuller and more considered equalities policy, marketing and education plans, to include development of partnerships to benefit these aims.</p> <p>Overall, the rating for the proposal is low due to the extremely large budget increases which are not clearly broken down – and the levels of request are totally unrealistic.</p> <p>I would not recommend this proposal for support from this fund, but would recommend that the company consider applying to an alternate fund with their proposals to create a Baroque orchestra for Scotland and a new contemporary adaptation and commission for the opera <i>Dido and Aeneus</i>.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		LOW
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Tamsin Mendelsohn	

Stage 2: Heads of Departments prioritise applications with advice from Specialist Advisors

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the application identified by the Specialist Advisors? Please summarise their comments below. What were their ratings of the importance of the application in being supported?

The panel consisted of Murray Buchanan, Paul Bream, Jim Gaitens, Rachel Nelken and Susan Nickalls, with ratings received from Marie Fielding by email.

Comments:

- The panel acknowledged the high artistic standards of the Dunedin Consort as evidenced by the available assessments, media coverage and knowledge of this organisation.
- The panel felt that the amount of funding requested by Dunedin Concerts Trust was not backed up with a solid business plan.
- The panel found the idea of a Baroque Youth Orchestra interesting, but felt that it was perhaps a more appropriate candidate for project funding. The proposed Dido and Aeneas project was not deemed by the panel to be visionary enough for the level of funding requested, and took a very one-off potentially project-based approach. The panel felt that the organisation had demonstrated a lack of thought about what this Flexible fund was for.
- The panel felt that Dunedin Concerts Trust were basing huge aspirations on the single success of their Messiah recording, and the Trust were not capitalising on this success with marketing and audience research. The marketing section of the Business Plan consisted of only two short paragraphs, and the panel identified this as a weakness of the application.
- The panel felt that the organisation was content with its current level of achievement, with no real desire to develop or change its modus operandi other than the individual and potentially overtly costly large project proposals included in the application.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **Medium**.

2. Summarise the role of the organisation within the infrastructure of the sector. Assess to what extent the organisation's vision will contribute to the department's and to Scottish Arts Council's aims: (to fulfil artists' potential, to increase participation, to place creativity at the heart of learning)

Comments:

There is no doubt that following the success of their Dublin Messiah recording the profile of the Dunedin Consort has literally rocketed. I also have no doubt that the forthcoming release of the St Mathew Passion, scheduled for March will also receive high critical acclaim as the same artistic and production team are involved with that recording.

The strategic importance of the Consort within the chamber music forum is high and alongside Cappella Nova, they have successfully exploited the choral repertoire, specialising in the baroque era, led by one of its acknowledged world scholars and interpreters; John Butt. They also want to develop the Dunedin Players into a high quality baroque orchestra under the tutelage and direction of John Butt, which might develop even further into a relationship with NYOS. Dunedin are also known for their more contemporary repertoire and commissions.

The Dunedin Consort have developed young singers and successfully exploited the early music repertoire that requires a totally different vocal style, technique and delivery. Education and outreach work includes plans for a new Baroque youth/training orchestra, possibly in association with NYOS and workshop activities in baroque musical styles, which could also incorporate proposals for amateur singers to participate. This might lead to the production of a DVD to evidence that experience.

1. Fit with FXO criteria: In part.

1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists: Dunedin are certainly leaders in the field of early music, particularly that of the baroque era and under the direction of John Butt and two recent recordings, this reputation and leadership role will be enhanced.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public: Dunedin's main output is central belt and predominantly Glasgow and Edinburgh. There are plans to perform more widely and these must be encouraged.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management: Governance is good with a supportive board. There are changes in administration to come, but the key personnel are the three creative directors.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access: This has to be a development area for Dunedin.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%: On their core activity yes, but there is significant inherent risk attached to their unrealistically high more project-based request connected to Dido and Aeneas.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities: Exemplary in their sector and in the quality of performance. A vital organisation for input to the Chamber Music Forum.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims: Yes-Dunedin's creativity in performance is why they are leaders in their field and the approach to the Baroque repertoire contributes significantly to the learning agenda, for both participant and those who access the education programmes.

3. Based on the lead officer's assessment and the subsequent meeting with Specialist advisors, please rate the application (High, medium, low) summarise your reasons for assessing the application as you have (drawing out the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and highlighting any specific risks)

Comments: As evidenced above, the artistic profile of the Dunedin Consort has never been higher and they will need to maintain that profile post-Messiah to which they have understandably attached significant importance in their application and planning.

The assessing officer's comments have highlighted the huge gap between quantitative and qualitative, especially when examining the incredibly high level of funding requested set against their core activity, to date. There is no doubt that in the FXO process, many organisations will be seeking substantial increases in funding, but those increases must be clearly evidenced, both in terms of their artistic excellence, but as importantly in terms of budget and sustainability. There is an opportunity presented by this process for the Dunedin to concentrate on its ability to market and promote what is a high quality product and top seek to develop audiences. I am unsure whether that has been fully achieved, or indeed appropriately outlined in this application.

The inclusion of the Dido and Aeneas proposal in this funding application shows a certain naivety on

the part of the applicant. The budget is not clear enough to assess the value of that proposal on merit other than on artistic grounds. The leap to £500,125 and £213,915 is unsustainable in the current climate of funding and is simply unrealistic in view of the product/project delivery. The business case is unconvincing as is the plan and I agree with the comments of the assessing officer regarding an equalities policy, marketing and education.

The proposals to create a young Baroque Orchestra in partnership with NYOS and to develop their own Dunedin Players under the tutelage of their eminent music director is far more realistic and would have received a much more positive response. This is also supported by the comments made by our panel of Specialist Advisors.

Strategically, the work of the Dunedin Consort must continue, of that there is no doubt, but this application is unrealistic within this process and perhaps project funding would prove to be a better route for them at this time. I reiterate that the music department would still wish to support the Dunedin Consort, but not at the level of funding sought.

1.1 Application rating: Medium

The assessing officer marked the application low on the basis of the extraordinary high financial request that was inappropriate to this application. I certainly concur with most of her comments and with those of the Specialist Advisors in assessing the application as medium on the strength of Dunedin's high quality output.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating: As above and in my commentary.

1.3 Strengths of application: The high quality artistic profile of Dunedin and specialism, now representing an even stronger marketing profile under John Butt.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications: The inappropriate use of this process.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application: Such a high request for funding can simply not be substantiated in fact.

1.6 Development areas identified: Expanding their performance portfolio and equalities brief.

1.7 Recommended level of support: £40,000 per annum to maintain core activity.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place? Dunedin cites 15 of Scotland's local authorities as recipients of their performances, but their core activities are in the central belt.

1.2 Where will the audience come from? Dunedin's audiences are growing along with their repute from the success of recent recordings. They tend to be fans of choral music from the baroque era, but there is now a larger number of young people engaging with Dunedin since the appointment of John Butt and his close association with the HE sector.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Head of Department's signature:		Date: 12 February 2008 Revised 21 March 2008
Print name:	Ian Smith	

Stage 3: Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) make recommendations to Directors (Acting Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive and Co-Directors of Arts)		
1. Summarise the reasons why the final rating has been made.		
Comments: Good overall fit with FXO criteria. The amount reflects development areas identified, the competitive funding context and assessment recommendation. Support of £40,000 annually is proposed.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		
Chair of Meeting signature:		Date: 2 April 2008
Print name:	Iain Munro	

Stage 4: Directors make recommendations to Joint Board (strategic fit)		
Record the Directors' recommendation and confirm the suggested level of support. If the recommendation differs from Stage 3, please summarise the reasons why.		
Comments: Agree with Stage 3 recommendation. Support of £40,000 annually is proposed.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		Strong Medium
Acting Chief Executive signature:		Date: 10 April 2008
Print name:	Jim Tough	

Stage 5: Joint Board's decisions		
Record the Joint Board's recommendation. If the recommendation differs from Stage 4, please summarise the reasons why.		
Comments: The Joint Board accepts the Stage 4 recommendation.		
Joint Board Final Decision		APPROVE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£40,000

End of Assessment