

**Definitions** (Using a variety of internet sources)

**Artistic Merit** - Artistic merit is a term that is used in relation to cultural products when referring to the judgment of their perceived quality or value as works of art.

**Instrumental Value/Outcomes** - The value or worth of objects that provide a means to some desirable end, that satisfy some human needs and wants. For example, participation in a theatre performance increases the health and social inclusion of the participants, or a theatre performance increases tourism and the revenue of the local economy.

**Intrinsic/Inherent Value** - Ethical values or rights that exist as an intrinsic characteristic of a particular thing or class of things simply because of their existence, they are a logical aspect of the way we confront the world rather than an empirical question to be decided. Intrinsic values are simply how we value the world. We deem these things worth holding onto. It's the scaffolding we hold in place to make sense of things. For example, for most people in the arts, the value of the arts does not need to be explained, the arts *themselves* are a measure of value. The arts are worthy in their own right. The arts have intrinsic value. They do not need to be justified.

**Validity** - Is the meaning of a performance piece and how the audience and participants relate to it. If a work of art speaks to somebody and evokes feelings the work is valid, at least to that somebody. For example, Pablo Picasso and his 'Cubism' are validated widely by art critics and experts, however, most of his paintings are not to my own and many other people's tastes. The validity of any art piece to each of us is whether or not we relate to it in any measurable way.

**Introduction**

Bispham CastAways realise that artistic merit is highly subjective, with the particular tastes and beliefs of each participant, audience member and the wider public impacting on the validity of each piece. The area of assessing artistic merit, including levels of instrumental and intrinsic value, has started to gain research grants and there is more and more data to aid our trustees in their attempts to ensure that all productions and events have artistic merit.

***At all points, the trustees will ensure that any decision on artistic merit (and so a decision on whether to go ahead with a performance) will be in line with fulfilling our charitable purposes as written in the Constitution.***

Bispham CastAways will endeavour to produce a season each year which includes a broad range of productions, including one that will be a family friendly event. This is to attempt to produce art that is valid to the majority of the public.

## Criteria

The trustees may use one, some or all of the following criteria to decide whether a proposed piece or event has artistic merit:

*Is the piece...*

- Creative
- Educational
- Thought-provoking
- Of Historical importance
- Well written
- Giving a voice to a disadvantaged group of society
- Beautiful
- Full of well drawn characters
- Innovative
- Distinctive
- Fostering new connections
- Bringing fresh insights of the arts to the general public
- Relevant to the locality or heritage
- Inclusive
- Sufficiently accessible

Weight will also be given to any awards or acclaim the piece has gained, as well as the strength of previous work from the same author.

The trustees will look for projects that may engender widespread public interest or debate, as well as those which have the potential to reach underserved, underrepresented and disadvantaged populations within Bispham, Blackpool and the surrounding areas.

Instrumental value from a project will be considered alongside intrinsic value, so that the art in itself can be a reason for a performance, not just what the art causes in economic, health, societal, etc. benefits.

A risk assessment will be considered by trustees and decisions on projects taken (*and minuted*) at a trustee meeting. These decisions will not be delegated.

## Other Considerations

- Is it likely to be offensive to the majority of the general public?
- Are the rights available?
- Is the production castable? Does it provide a variety of roles, both on- and off-stage, that will interest a broad range of participants? Are there sufficient actors of an appropriate skill level, age, gender and ethnicity available?
- Is it affordable? Does it make good use of the available resources?
- Are the technical considerations of set, props, sound, lighting, costumes, makeup, etc. achievable?
- Is the project marketable? Would you/your family/friends etc. pay to see it?

The trustees will have overall control of all creative productions but will use technical crews who will make most of the day-to-day decisions needed to achieve a performance of artistic merit. A technical crew may include a director, co-director, assistant director, producer, backstage manager, sound technician, light technician, set designer, wardrobe coordinator, promotion coordinator, etc.

***To ensure high levels of artistic merit in each performance, if a first time director wishes to take control of a production they must employ an assistant director or co-director who has some past experience. If they cannot find a volunteer themselves, one will be assigned by the trustees.***

## Evaluation

Part of the requirement of Bispham CastAways to ensure projects are of a high artistic merit, necessarily means that each needs to be evaluated to see where our strengths in a particular project were and where we have room to improve. This means that, during each project, methods for evaluating it (*including at different points if it is a large scale, long term one*) should be discussed and produced. We recognise that evaluating the merits of art can be very difficult and extremely personal. Trustees will endeavour to keep up to date with current research in this area and share any good practice.

Methods to evaluate projects might include one, some or all of:

- Online surveys of audience members a few days after attendance
- Hard copy surveys of audience members when leaving a performance
- Online or hard copy surveys of participants
- Surveys of general public
- Pictures and video evidence of engagement
- Financial reports
- Audience statistics
- Testimonials from audience members and participants
- Reports from external groups who have been working with Bispham CastAways

## **Audience Complaints Procedure**

We know that artistic merit is very subjective and personal, so the likelihood of causing offence is always present. Due to this, we have a clear procedure for dealing with audience complaints.

- Audience complaints should be made in writing to the trustees and either emailed to [bispham.castaways@gmail.com](mailto:bispham.castaways@gmail.com) or posted to Susan Hope, Bispham CastAways, Business Manager (Trustee), 40 Cavendish Road, Bispham, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY2 9JR.
- A written reply to acknowledge that a complaint has been received and how it will be investigated shall be sent to the complainant within 14 days.
- The trustees will appoint two of their team to investigate the complaint (*one from the viewpoint of the audience member and the other from the view of the director*). If it is concluded that there is not a trustee who can be sufficiently unbiased in the investigation of the complaint, then a completely neutral member, supporter or expert will be appointed to take the viewpoint of the complainant or the group. The written reply to the audience member who complained will contain the names of the trustees/people who are investigating their claim.
- An investigation will concentrate on the following points as a minimum:

- Participants involved in any complaint and their responsibilities

■ Content of the script used	■ Character interpretation
■ Emphasis in Direction	■ Utilisation of Language
■ Marketing content	■ Artistic merit and validity of the piece
■ Financial and quantitative figures of participation, access and engagement	■ Survey results from hard copy and online surveys of participants, supporters and the general public

- After the investigation is concluded, a meeting of the trustees will be called immediately to allow the implications of the investigation to be considered.
- Within 30 days of the original complaint being received by the trustees, a resolution/outcome will be decided upon and communicated in writing to the complainant.

**Date of policy (last amended):** 13th September 2018