

Ian

From: Robert Stirling [R.Stirling@btopenworld.com]
Sent: 02 October 2004 14:32
To: info
Subject: Views on cultural provision in Scotland[Scanned]

I read your invitation in the *Glasgow East End Independent* newspaper and would like to make the following points:

1. The Citizens' Theatre seems a pale shadow of what it once was. I understand its subsidies have been reduced because of its failure to attract larger audiences. In view of its international reputation (somewhat diminished these days) for inventive productions based on traditional drama, its work should be strongly encouraged, compared for instance to that of the Lyceum in Edinburgh, whose style seems to be to trot out unadventurous matinee productions for middle class ladies taking a break from their shopping. Similarly Dundee Rep's high standards in recent years should be fostered.

2. I was shocked by the draconian measures meted out to Scottish Opera, evidently intended to bring their finances under control. This was a very bad decision, but it was no doubt politically easy to make because of the vicious anti-opera stance taken by populist tabloid newspapers. Like the Citizens' Theatre Scottish Opera has an international reputation for work of a high standard, though whether this will survive recent restrictions remains to be seen. Scotland, positioned on the edge of Europe, needs to work hard to avoid being seen as a provincial backwater; recent decisions won't have helped. The cuts in the chorus were especially upsetting: this was a superb body of men and women, whose contribution to recent productions (I think especially of "La Traviata" and "Aida") was as good as I've ever heard.

3. I got a leaflet today from the CCA in Glasgow. Most of what it contains not only doesn't interest me but can't by the wildest stretch of the imagination be likely to interest any but a small coterie of art enthusiasts. The same could be said of many of the productions at the Tramway. Perhaps there's a future Picasso or Samuel Beckett lurking in there somewhere, but I doubt it. The advantage is such work is cheap to subsidise, and looks impressive on paper. But is it really worth it?

4. I'll say this for the Scottish Executive: a government that makes Frank McAveety Minister of Culture at least has a sense of humour!

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