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1 ARTS

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From: Rachel
Sent: 11 October 2004 14:14
To: Karen
Cc: info
Subject: FW: late response![Scanned]

Another submission, this is from Fiona Robertson of the Edinburgh Quartet, but she is also studying for a post grad on something to do with international culture.

Rachel

-----Original Message-----

From: Fiona Robertson [mailto:fiona@edinburghquartet.com]
Sent: 06 October 2004 12:39
To: Rachel
Subject: late response![Scanned]

Dear Rachel,

Very sorry for this late response, but have been bogged down in the opening of the concert season etc! I'm afraid that although I've been thinking about this alot, I don't really have time to write you something structured so it may be a bit all over the place. I hope it'll be understandable.

RIGHTS

Firstly as concerns rights, as I said during the meeting, I really don't think we should be re-inventing the wheel. I went on to the Unesco web site and got the following, as well as the 27th article from the Universal declaration of human rights:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27.

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

**Adopted by the 31st Session of UNESCO's General Conference, Paris, 2 November 2001.
Article 5**

Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent. The flourishing of creative diversity requires the full implementation of cultural rights as defined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Articles 13 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. All persons should therefore be able to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and all persons should be able to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Although the latter is more on cultural diversity, it does seem to resume three main points. Plus the cultural diversity aspect seems to be fairly applicable to Scotland. The three main points would thus be for me:

1. The right of Artists to be creative and make their work known;

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2. The right of citizens to take part in the cultural activities of their choice (which implies a wide variety!);
3. The right to education and training - for both children, adults and artists.

ENTITLEMENTS

1. Right of Artists: I believe there should be support systems for artists to help them evolve their art, whatever that may be. They should be financially secure enough to be able to be creative. There should also be support in promoting these artists abroad - promoting Scotland's culture (although not only in the limited, traditional sense).

2. Rights of citizens: a wide variety of cultural activities should be available at an affordable cost. Although citizens should not be forced into attending cultural events (!), I think we should be aiming at broadening people's horizons and developing their taste whenever possible. Ways should thus be found to encourage people to attend concerts/exhibitions/performances that they may perceive as too "high-brow" or not to their taste. E.g. Those interested in classical concerts should also be encouraged to discover traditional music and visa versa, as well as discovering contemporary art in all art-forms. We should be fighting against the dumbing-down syndrome that seems to be affecting Britain. It would be great if Scotland could break out of the mould! I also believe we should be offering people as high a quality of work as possible (this is very much dependant on the support given to Artists). This implies heightened support for venues as well as artists.

3. Education and training. Although in the above article from Unesco it's more about education respecting their cultural identity, I do believe it is important that arts are included in schools, that the possibility exists for adults to learn new art forms, and that training is available for artists to help them develop if they feel this is necessary. A huge amount of our cultural richness is dependant on children being made aware of the arts, and being able to participate and enjoy them. It really is an essential building block - which will lead to richer cultural life (more audiences, more artists etc...). Children should be in regular and continuous contact with the arts at school, being creative in music, dance, drama, visual arts etc. They should be allowed to experiment, and also to attend concerts/performances/exhibitions. As far as possible this should be FREE. E.g. There should be free musical tuition available in schools the whole way through a child's life (and not just for one year). Why do we all learn maths, chemistry, history, languages etc and not arts subjects?

The system needs to change also to encourage young people to think of artistic professions. There seems to be a lack of properly trained craftsmen, and this could also be encouraged. These professions should be valued - young people should not be pushed into studying "intellectual" subjects because they are "intelligent"!

GENERAL ISSUES

Obviously I'm writing this from my own professional experience - the Edinburgh Quartet and the Woodend Barn (Banchory). I've been back in Britain working since July 2003, and the experience I have had led me to the conclusion that funding is the most essential thing. The above is not possible if there are not sufficient means, and they are distributed creatively and sensibly. This whole exercise will have been a waste of time if there is insufficient funding at the end of the line. I know it's considered a bit idealistic to hope for increased funding, but to me it is a question of a country's priorities. I think well-being is generally increased if there is a quality way of life, and culture is part of this. It should have long-term knock-down effects on health, business, etc...

On a more practical level, it seems that funding is available for big institutions and tiny organisations in Scotland. If you are somewhere in the middle, it's not easy, especially if you're not obviously hitting the "deprived", "traditional" etc buttons. Both the Woodend Barn and the Quartet struggle constantly for money. Neither have core funding from the Arts Council:

Edinburgh Quartet

No core funding despite the fact that the Edinburgh Quartet is Scotland ONLY full-time professional quartet (orchestras get money, amateur musicians get money etc, but for some reason not us). They do a lot of educational work, they promote Scottish composers (contemporary and not), they commission new music, they tour to remote rural areas of Scotland, they promote their own series of concerts. Yet every day is a financial struggle, and lots of projects get shelved or don't advance because of funding. Our next 3 years touring in Scotland is under question - if we don't get funding, we can't do it. We almost just break even on our concert series in Edinburgh (and Glasgow this year). And they can barely afford to pay one person to work 20 hours a week, which isn't enough support for them. We can't even really think about sponsorship possibilities - the time and means to follow it through are just unavailable. But the Quartet performs enormously - probably more than a group like the Scottish Ensemble (who I think are fantastic, and this isn't against them, it's just a comparison!), and they have a proper full-time staff. So you end up in a spiral of not enough money breeding not

enough money! The four musicians have to rush off and teach/ do freelance work to earn enough money to survive. Less time to do really creative work.

I know this sounds like a moan (and it is partly!) but I'm sure we're not the only ones out there struggling. Not having guaranteed support kills creativity.

The Woodend Barn is a rural multi-cultural centre run largely by volunteers (4 part-time staff). Again no core funding. However, the Lemon Tree in Aberdeen gets a substantial amount of money - for over-programming in a city. Taking £5,000 of their £250,000 (something like that!) and giving it to the Barn would make huge amounts of difference to the accessibility of culture in this rural area. Effectively Banchory is a fairly well-off area, but not everybody is well-off on Deeside, and anyway in a rural area whether you are well-off or not, it is still difficult to access culture. There are extremely interesting educational projects waiting to be launched etc, but just not enough money to do them. And again the staff are paid a pittance for lots of hard-work, but not enough time to go after serious funding (as looking for funding is almost a full-time job nowadays).

If Scotland wants an exciting cultural life which it can be proud of, it really does have to think again not only about rights / entitlements but also about how to put these into practise. I get so fed up of writing permanent aims and objectives knowing that the money won't be forthcoming to make all those exciting projects work!

Moan over! It is however meant to be objective, because I do believe change is possible. Hope this is vaguely useful (got slightly off the point towards the end I'm afraid!). And if you need more information / clarification, don't hesitate to ask.

Oh, and last point (again money). Tickets etc have to be reasonably priced for those who don't have the money. There are people out there who would happily participate more but who can't afford to.

Thanks, Rachel. Will let you know if any interesting input on other countries cultural policies when I get back from Senegal!

Good luck with all this,

Fiona

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