

1 ARTS

Ian

From: Eddie Jackson [Eddie@borderlinetheatre.co.uk]
Sent: 24 September 2004 12:33
To: jamesboyle@culturalcommission.org.uk; James Boyle (E-mail 2)
Cc: info
Subject: Draft Cultural Commission submission from Federation of Scottish Theatre[Scanned]

FAO James Boyle

James

This is only a draft and our members have yet to see it, however I felt it important to get you something for your first deadline, regard this as the start of serial submissions from the Federation and its members .

[Eddie Jackson] All good wishes

Eddie Jackson
Chair
Federation of Scottish Theatre

24/09/2004

Cultural Commission Phase 1: September 2004

Submission from the Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST)

We believe that theatre is a shared experience conducted in a space, unlimited by preconception or precedent, that:

- supports and encourages mutual respect;
- facilitates the live exchange of views; and
- explores the human condition

Theatre has the capacity to engage the individual and place their emotional, physical and cognitive potential in a dynamic collective context.

As such, we envisage the development of a "Theatre of Opportunity" over the next two decades in Scotland, where theatre in its many aspects becomes fully integrated into the life of the Scottish community and brings all its experience, skills and passion to the task of creating a confident, successful Scotland.

Theatre would then be operating in many different ways.

As an artform theatre would enable artists practicing in a multitude of media to collaborate, share knowledge, skills and practice, with a single focus on creating a dynamic that will be shared and shaped by an audience

As a forum for creative and objective exploration theatre would be a space for artist, audience and community to engage on equal terms.

In the international setting theatre would present a confident, cultural voice that would articulate the full dynamic of our society, from individual aspiration to collective will. This would enable Scotland to engage in a dialogue informed by many cultures and many voices, guarding against homogenous cultural imperialism.

As entertainment theatre would offer thrills, catharsis, fulfilment, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, glamour and excitement.

As education theatre would offer a process that genuinely engages individuals and groups in learning through multiple intelligences and allows direct application of the knowledge and information gained. This approach treats all participants as equals and can be applied in a multitude of different contexts.

As an engine for change theatre could place vision at the forefront and bring together 'artists' and 'audience' in networks and forums in a dynamic that can genuinely explore ways to change the way we structure, share and conduct our lives and contribute to our society.

As enterprise theatre is already an important economic multiplier in its various communities. It is worth billions to the Scottish economy and is the testing ground for the media and creative industries. It can offer an established network for the development of local, national and international creative enterprise.

How do we see the future of theatre and our society in, say, 2030?

How Theatre Became the Voice and Engine for a Creative Scotland

The establishment of a national theatre threw into focus the poverty of resources in Scottish theatre. This was in direct contradiction to the wealth of talent, ambition and aspiration that theatre practitioners and audiences recognised as wealthy assets to the culture of Scotland. In reaching to realise the ambitions and aspirations of the theatre community and its audiences, the Federation of Scottish Theatre presented a road map for a future theatre that inspired a generation of theatre makers, audiences and creative communities.

It was in the presentation of this plan that the full untapped potential of the theatre infrastructure was discovered. As a result the road map was quickly adopted as a mechanism to deliver the rights and entitlements of the citizens and artists of creative Scotland.

The "Theatre of Opportunity" became a byword for raising expectation and aspiration of the nation by empowering its citizens and artists and, through innovative access to the full range of theatrical experience, created a means by which voices could be heard in an individual and collective contexts.

The World's Best Live Entertainment

Theatre brought stars within the reach of their audiences and created a vibrant entertainment that is now celebrated world-wide. Many of our young and senior citizens can now realistically aspire to be part of that industry. We now take for granted our local theatre company and artists, and find it difficult to imagine a Christmas, anniversary, or special occasion without a trip to the theatre, but it is not too long ago that local companies were only possible in a few cities.

We've grown to expect and appreciate the very best of casts and production, whether it is on our school stage, local venue or part of an area forum meeting. It is therefore surprising to think that only twenty years ago theatre was perceived in very narrow terms. It was populist or elitist, amateur or West End, educational or entertaining, ground-breaking artform or poor man's television. Thankfully we realised that it was all of these things and more, and that the very best practice can be achieved in all its variety, giving us the very best live entertainment in the world.

Who would have imagined that our theatre would be streaming into hand-held mobiles all over the world while the seats remain full, or that Scottish Theatre Awards would be the focus of world-wide media attention? Thanks to the film and media industry investing in and exploiting theatre as a training ground, we can now claim to produce some of the best actors, directors, writers, designers, technicians and producers in the world. It is gratifying to see the same stars on the red carpet in Cannes and Hollywood as in Cumbernauld and Holyrood and surprising to think that only two decades ago a movie star on stage could only be seen as part of a festival or in one of the London venues.

More surprising is the thought that the National Theatre of Scotland was only just managing to secure a regular slot in the Edinburgh International Festival. It's hard to think of any of the major world festivals without one of the Nationals commissions featuring in some shape or form.

Re-inventing the Artform

Artists and craftspeople practicing in a multitude of media were originally sceptical, even scathing, about the claims from the theatre sector that theatre, in all its various shapes and forms, was the one of the best forums for development of other artforms. However, once the artists found access to new audiences via the theatre buildings and networks they grew more enthusiastic, became more ambitious, demanding and innovative in their approaches. Sustainable careers and training were a natural evolution from this explosion of activity.

Once audiences and participants were able to appreciate, and, more importantly, articulate the value of the experience shared with the practitioners, it was an easy step to create the forums for exchange. The recognition that we are all of us artists and all of us audience, liberated our approach and allowed evolution of artforms in a wide range of contexts. Audiences and artists genuinely evolved in a symbiotic support system. However, the need to make the relationship sustainable was the greatest challenge of all.

The Executive showed great vision in their development of "The Creative Cycle." This innovative response to support career development and training in live situations, through structured funding, was the foundation from which grew a large community of new hybrid theatrical experiences. The "ArtsWork," "Fusion," "Designfor Life" and "Speakout" initiatives featured in the T in the Park and Garden festivals were just a few of the highlights supported by this approach. They continue to evolve, with our growing expectations of what is achievable in the widest application of theatrical practice. Some of our best theatre has, not surprisingly, been produced as a result of national strategy married to public social need and the demand for the best quality entertainment.

It is thanks to those early pioneers that our children no longer box themselves into one artform and are recognised as some of the most accomplished creatives in the world. It is no surprise that theatre consultants now advise on a wide range of policy and strategy in government, private and social sectors.

It is extremely gratifying to see our theatre practitioners working across a wide range of sectors, able to utilise their skills and knowledge in an atmosphere where it is safe to learn whilst still producing the best possible plays, productions and performance installations.

A New Artform at the Centre of a Creative Curriculum

Perhaps the most significant and dramatic application of the "Theatre of Opportunity" was within the creative curriculum.

Placing live and multi-media theatre practices at the heart of a new creative curriculum, built on co operative learning techniques, was initially seen by many to devalue the intrinsic value of education itself. Teachers remained resistant until they too felt the full benefit of "creative co-operative learning", which they experienced through the comprehensive training and re- training programmes led by theatre practitioners operating in the "creative cycle" initiative.

This was delivered in conjunction with Future Learning and Teaching and Learning and Teaching Scotland and helped to evolve what we now take for granted as our "Live Learning" tours and residencies . Congratulations to Cumbernauld Theatre on its fifth National Critics Award for their "Live Learning" production of "Big Picnic" which played to over 20,000 students studying first world war history.

A forum for change

Theatre became a central plank of every local authority's cultural strategy (although not exclusively funded by local authorities) and acted as a network for the nation to express its heritage, diversity, ambitions, creativity and aspirations across a multitude of sectors and artforms.

This quickly grew, through local creative communities being able to inform national social and cultural imperatives, to be the forum we all now recognise as part of our daily lives. "Theatre Matrix" productions are not only riveting television and a refreshing departure from the mind-numbing 'reality TV' shows that blighted our society during the early part of the new millennium, but can, and do, change the way we lead our lives, communicate across sectors, across real or perceived boundaries and share best practice, opinions, ideas and aspirations.

Whoever planned the calendar of events, exchanges and tours showed great insight, understanding both public-sector planning cycles and the demands being made on a 'work-rich, time-poor' society. The flexible approach to people engaging in the forums not only guards against missing out on vital development but also allows for input to what is recognised as probably the most dynamic forum for exchange on a plethora of subjects and life. It is just a pity that the virtual version cannot express the passion and visceral nature of the live exchanges, although it has come to be recognised by many a playwright and director as a treasure trove for a well-turned phrase or dramatic exchange of views.

Recognition has to go to SAC, whose early development of "The Network" recognised the human need to share and exchange on a national level. Without their initial impulse we would not have such a manageable matrix.

The investment from the marketing and lifestyle questionnaire networks should also be recognised, though more could be done to subsidise the cost of the tickets, even if the quality of Scottish theatre is amongst the best.

Theatre Matrix still has some evolving to do and possibly lays itself open to too many high-jackers; it would be good to see the artists have more of a say in the actual aesthetic outcomes, but it is a close reflection of life and an excellent way to change minds and feelings.

We watch with interest as the 'mini-Matrix' events grow in popularity across a wide sector: school assemblies, community forums and now Friends Re-united events are all following suit.

Creative Enterprise

It was James Boyle who first turned the phrase "Cultural Venture Capitalism" when describing what he thought the SAC's role should be. He subsequently demonstrated exactly what he meant when he led his Cultural Commission to persuade the Executive to invest millions in the physical, social, artistic, educational and leisure infrastructure of our cultural institutions.

This was a bold and brave move on the part of the Executive, although it had been anticipated in the wake of the then First Minister's St Andrew's Day promises in 2003. By far the most enlightened, and quite unexpected, aspect of the Cultural Commission's advice was the recommendation to develop "Creative Enterprise" as a central responsibility of Enterprise Scotland. Not only did this allow for the millions that were invested to be secured, but it liberated the approach to investing in, and developing, enterprise and the economy.

Creative Enterprise determined to:

- Place theatre at the cutting edge of developing creativity, confidence and entrepreneurial flair.
- Place theatre and the theatre network at the heart of cultural tourism
- Create direct funding from enterprise to invest in creativity via theatre practice.
- Create clear routes of articulation and exchange between theatre, new media and broadcast
- Create new ways of supporting arts entrepreneurs
- Place theatre and the theatre network at the heart of social economy development.

The results are evident. Television, film, screen and hand-held video media all rely heavily on the route of development from theatre to the multi media industries.

Cultural tourism has now overtaken golf as the most quoted reason for visiting Scotland. No surprise really, as cultural tourism has always done better than golf in terms of attracting visitors. (What is surprising is the thought that golf had so many millions invested in it by public and private sector for so long.)

The most significant outcome of this type of venture capitalism is that the confidence and entrepreneurial flair for which we have always been known has been re-discovered and expressed with such success.

Just as literacy drove the Scottish Enlightenment, creativity is driving our present success. Access to this creativity is now open to all the citizens of Scotland through our local and national theatre networks.

One example of the success of adopting the theatre practice to support the need for creative enterprise is in the "Determined to Succeed" initiative. The Executive had struggled for years to encourage entrepreneurs in schools and SMEs. It was not until the "Determined to Succeed" initiative teamed up with theatre practitioners that the prototypes of the many local enterprise initiatives now flourishing were developed. The full range of products emerging from these initiatives not only subsidise the productions and performance installations, but are regarded as valuable entertainment and educational tools in their own right.

Granted, the initial investment to establish these practices was substantial, but thanks to generous business sponsorship, creative enterprise through theatre practice flourished across all age ranges. We are now one of the richest nations in terms of intellectual property. Our children genuinely aspire to be entrepreneurs and do not just consider it a big idea that only the privileged can achieve. Theatre was at the route of this shift in perception, so it is only fitting that the perception of theatre as a 'subsidy junkie' has finally been laid to rest.

It was this innovative 'out-of-the-box' thinking and recognition of the contribution theatre made to the economy that highlighted the actual value of pure theatre in terms of an economic multiplier. The resultant investment has not only sustained a generation in engagement with the best live entertainment, but has also kept millions of baby sitters in pocket money as well as restaurants, taxis and bars in business.

There is much still to be done in terms of developing Creative Enterprise but it is heartening to see Creative Scotland engage with the public and private sectors to continue to develop a methodology to inspire creative approaches that will help brand a confident culture of achievement. The placement of a theatre consultant to advise on corporate social strategy and the internal and external marketing of brands in the

social and private sector is now a norm. This should not be so surprising when one considers that global exploitation of the products of theatre methodologies now generates billions for the economy of Scotland.

A Confident International Voice

Scotland's music, whisky, tartan, accents and stories have travelled well. The Scottish diaspora was the vanguard of the Enlightenment. We have always been famed for our imagination, creativity, inventiveness and practical approaches to making things work.

To rediscover the expression of this confidence in our heritage and our contribution to the future was a truly liberating force for all who lived and worked within our nation but by far the most noticeable explosion of expression was in our diaspora.

Scotland's diaspora was bolstered by the distinctive and confident voice of a nation expressing its achievements and aspirations through a collaborative medium that was outward looking, open to learn from the world and ready to contribute on an equal footing. The resultant explosion in all things Scottish, the inward investment and the routes for connecting our future to a welcoming world are only now being fully realised. It is due to the collaborative and creative endeavour of the citizens and artists who embraced the "Theatre of Opportunity" and faced up to the challenge of shaping our future through this medium that we have achieved so much.

So how was this achieved in such a short space of time ?

Creative Scotland

The most significant achievement in the past decade is undoubtedly the creation of Creative Scotland. While many may reminisce about the old institutions like Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen and Scottish Enterprise, everyone agrees that the new body is much better equipped to respond to the opportunities for investment in individuals, companies, organisations and networks as the need arises and as strategic demands emerge. (In any case, the new legislation dictated that the current cultural bodies had to be re constituted.)

It was this responsive and pro active approach that allowed for:

- Development of the physical infrastructure which already existed but had been neglected for some years .
- Support and development of networks needing consolidation of resources to support clear organisation and sustainable long term planning.
- Increased access and opportunity to creative activity by accessing local activity and using it as a portal to national and international experiences.
- Evolution of theatre practice to meet 21st century imperatives. These methodologies and practices supported expression and development of all artforms and media.
- Fully costed and extremely cost-effective business planning that responded to, but was not a slave of, community planning.
- Integration of theatre practice in development of the creative curriculum and the social sector.
- Sustainability of careers in Scotland for the best practitioners and producers.

The creation of the theatre network, along with the development of 20 local companies resident in existing venues, formed the foundation from which grew the many opportunities mentioned above.

Much of what was set out as ambition and aspiration by the Cultural Commission was achieved through the relatively small initial investment of £10million per year. This secured the infrastructure to give local communities access to theatre, within twenty minutes from most homes.

Furthermore, the network formed by these companies supported all the entitlement and aspiration of a nation that was finding its voice. The network supported sustainable training and career development through best practice seminars and engagement with the "creative cycle" initiative.

This investment in turn generated such a demand and explosion of activity that the subsequent consolidation of the infrastructure and investment in the buildings, training, enterprise initiatives, international aspects and educational imperatives was money well spent.

The current total of £25 million per year has not only ensured Scotland's future as a global player in creative industry, owner of intellectual property and provider of educational specialists, but has established a means by which our population and our diaspora can celebrate their place in history and ability to contribute to a future world that is capable of enlightenment.

In reply to the questions specifically posed by the Cultural Commission, we would offer the following thoughts.

1. Education: How do we develop artistic, cultural and social skills and provide cultural knowledge?

We do this by engaging the pupil, student or participant in two ways:

- Identifying their creative ideas through innovative approaches to learning, both formal and informal
- Placing those creative ideas at the heart of all learning, formal or informal.

By doing so, we empower the learner, we ask them to take ownership of their own development, and we facilitate the discovery of the role of creativity in every aspect of our lives. Thus, the individual (citizen) and the group (society) recognise that their ideas have value, that their opinions matter and that they are people of worth. We cannot impose, from government down, knowledge. This disempowers the individual and makes them feel they are being 'done to'. If we work from the individual up, people feel instead 'listened to'.

Society needs confident, innovative, flexible, collaborative team players. This has to start with early education and pervade the entire educational process.

So, as an 'entitlement' we must start with every citizen's right to have a creative 'voice'. To choose what they do in terms of cultural attendance, not to have it imposed on them. To express their ideas for the world.

2. The institutional infrastructure: How best to organise and support the cultural sector in Scotland to deliver the maximum value in the most effective manner?

By valuing arts for art's sake and not by trying to apply quantitative measures, when in fact *qualitative* experience is what matters. We all know the arts matter and make a difference to our quality of life and articulation of our thoughts and feelings.

By identifying funds, via legislation.

By consulting the sector in creative ways.

3. The delivery of services and access to them: How best to provide cultural facilities and ensure the widest access?

Funding via legislation applied to a strategic view of what exists already and therefore what gaps there are.

Subsidy for transport to cultural events, available from all local authorities.

Subsidy for cultural activity at an increased level. Perhaps an additional Culture Tax on individuals and companies, just like National Insurance funds the Health Service? Another 0.25 pence per pound per person, added to a corporate Culture Tax level would make a lot of difference.

Also, a move away from the central belt, a concerted and strategic effort to take cultural activity to the regions. Serious investment in mobile auditoria and galleries.

4. Marketing and promotion: How to increase and broaden the profile of the audience and the public engaging with cultural activity in Scotland?

Again, empower the audience and make them feel listened to.

Find ways to make tickets for cultural activities available in supermarkets, garden centres, sports centres, health clubs.

Recognise that audience development is a long-term process, requiring long-term investment in people and time as well as money.

And see above re: subsidy

5. Encouraging creativity: What is the best way to maximise the creative potential of the people of Scotland?

See section 1. Ask them, shape their environment to enable creativity, seek their entrepreneurial ideas. Not just via this consultation but by placing local Creativity Leaders in communities across the country. These must be genuinely creative individuals, properly trained to put creative tools in place.

6. The concept of 'cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community',

Every schoolchild should have access to at least one positive arts experience per term.

Every citizen should have access to professional guidance in the development of their creative and aesthetic appreciation and practice.

Every artist should have the right to training and career development.

Again, the means by which the concept is put into practice will be a problem if it is 'done to' people.

7. Please identify the key issues as you see them for you/your organisation and list the main priorities you feel that you have to address.

Funding for theatre: for appropriate buildings and other informal spaces, for creative teams, for experimentation, for marketing and education work, for export.

Devising suitable mechanisms for soliciting creative ideas from communities.

Overcoming suspicion on the part of practitioners and audiences of government intentions and commitment.

Training staff to be genuinely innovative in their thinking.