

SCOTTISH TRADITIONS OF DANCE TRUST
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**SUBMISSION FOR CONSIDERATION TO
THE CULTURAL COMMISSION**

JANUARY 2005

SCOTTISH TRADITIONS OF DANCE TRUST

CULTURAL COMMISSION SUBMISSION

Scottish Culture is both distinctive and diverse, as is its traditional dance.

For centuries the Scots have danced. When they celebrate they dance. It is a tradition which Scots take for granted for it is an indigenous part of their culture.

Just as one cannot separate traditional dance from its music, so the Scots cannot be separated from their native dance or their cultural right to it. If Scots are to benefit from this right then Scottish traditional dance must be made accessible and available to everyone.

The living tradition of Scottish dance is deep-rooted in Scottish culture and must be kept alive for the people of today and of the future, and not lost to the rock and pop culture which today sweeps the world.

*For nought can cheer the heart sae weel,
As can a canty Highland reel;
It even vivifies the heel
To skip and dance:
Lifeless is he wha canna feel
Its influence.*

The Daft Days - Robert Ferguson (1750-1774)

The above verse is as relevant today as it was over 200 years ago. The benefits of traditional Scottish dance are many, some of which are noted below.

- exhilarating experience for body and mind
- good form of exercise, develops muscle and stamina
- socially interactive
- improves manners and social behaviour
- improves posture
- improves self-confidence

- informs us of our dance heritage
- keeps our dance heritage alive
- links us with our forebears which enhances our sense of belonging
- all ages can participate
- fun experience

Traditional Scottish dancing is a positive experience; it makes Scots proud of their cultural inheritance and makes them feel good about being Scottish.

The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust was formed in 1995 (STDT) Since 1995 STDT have been actively involved in researching, conserving, fostering and promoting **all** of Scotland's dance traditions, including Ceilidh, Country, Early, Hebridean, Highland, Military, Old Time, Orkney, Shetland and Step.

Over the last few years STDT has carried out 4 major traditional dance development projects in Angus, Borders, Perth and Kinross and Glasgow. The work has involved taking dance to the people from primary school children to old people in community 'day-care' centres. A wide variety of dance promoting activities from dance workshops to festivals have been organised by STDT often in conjunction with other public and private organisations. The general public has benefited greatly with access to and information about Traditional dance. Through performances, demonstrations, workshops, talks, and Ceilidh, STDT have tried to keep the people informed of their culture and help to keep it alive and develop the heritage and culture of the future. What are contemporary today are the traditions of the future.

In 2004 our Director identified 19 out of 20 local authorities all desperate to have their own Traditional Dance Development Officer/s in place, the provision of which STDT is working towards. Our work has highlighted the great demand for Scottish traditional dance, and the more dance we provide the more the demand increases. STDT propose that meeting the demand require the involvement of the education sector in Scotland.

ROLE OF EDUCATION in meeting the demand for traditional dance in Scotland

* every child in Scotland should be taught traditional dance, introduced during the nursery years and continued in primary as part of the curriculum.

* traditional dance of Scotland should be available to pupils and students in secondary, further and tertiary education

* every school should have a Dance as it has music and physical education

* as traditional dance and its music cannot be separated, then traditional dance and traditional music teachers could work alongside each other

* regional centres of excellence for traditional dance require to be set up within existing buildings such as The Space at Dundee College.

* Appropriate training facilities and continued development programmes for traditional dance teachers and officers must be made available and national standards set which can be carried into any curriculum

* Scottish traditional dance should be part of the lifelong learning process.

Traditional dance is an art form which is evolving and co-operating with other arts forms. STDT finds that artists in other disciplines are inspired by traditional dance eg. music and drama students working with STDT Traditional Dance Development Officer in Glasgow, also choreographers and storytellers.

STDT believe that the importance of the Arts will only be recognised if the Cultural Minister's role is devolved from leisure and sport. We look to a Cultural Commission with input from artists on the ground to set the National Strategy for the Arts. STDT suggests that the distribution of the funds should be carried out by a body that is advised by those genuinely concerned with and interested in the arts. The strategic body should be separate from the body distributing the funds.

The Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust look forward to being part of the process involved in making traditional dance both accessible and available to the people of Scotland. We believe that if the people of Scotland are aware and taking part in their Scottish cultural heritage then we are looking to building a mentally and physically stronger, healthier nation who enjoy and are proud to be Scottish.

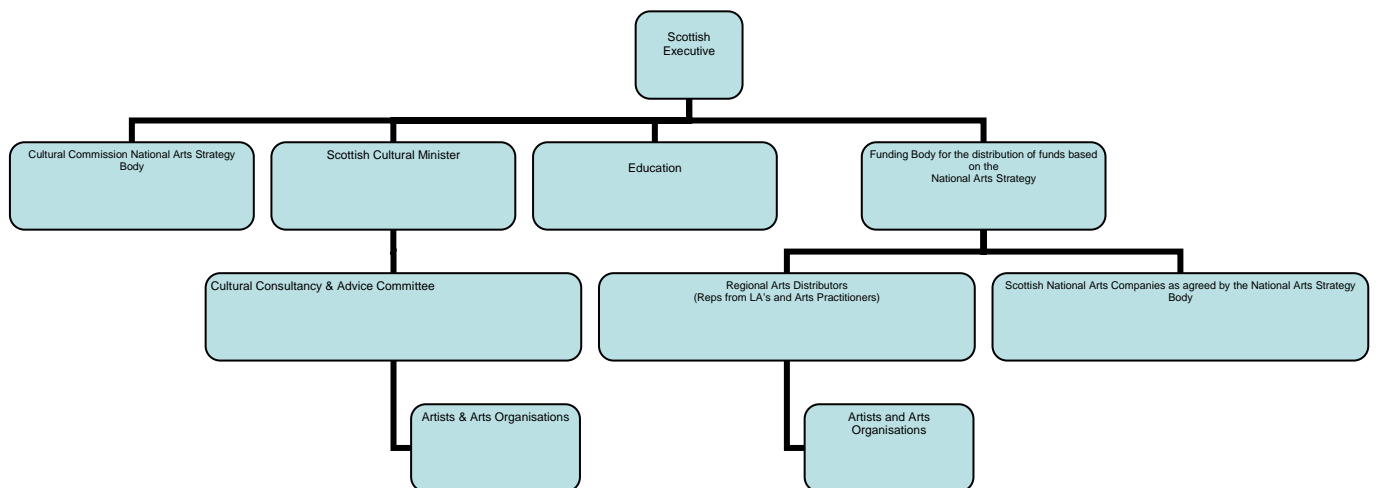
A Suggestion - The Structure - The Arts in Scotland.

Education is absolutely fundamental to the provision of and development of The Arts in all its forms. The Arts need to form a basic part of the school curriculum at all levels. We should be looking at the way we educate and the buildings in which we do it. I suggest that new schools should be built within complexes, similar to Universities that could also house performance studios, artist studios, art galleries and museums. This would enable the arts to be a Tutor for all subjects and would integrate the arts community with the young. If systems such as this were in place then children would grow up considering the arts to be part of life, and culture to be a right. Where new schools are not being built I would advocate better use of the school buildings that lie empty so much of the time. The arts could be brought into the schools and the schools be used in the evenings, weekends and during school holidays.

Artists should be brought into the schools as a basic element of the curriculum and training should be available throughout Scotland to empower the artist with additional skills.

Funding of the Arts needs to be in the first round of government funding as is Health and Education.

I suggest the following as a very basic structure for discussion.



Angela Dreyer-Larsen
 Director STDT January 2005