

## **CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

### **ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY**

#### **SUBMISSION FROM IMAGINATE**

Imagine is Scotland's national organisation that promotes and develops theatre and dance for children and young people. Now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, Imagine produces the annual Edinburgh International Children's Festival, and runs a year-round programme of developmental support for artists, freelancers, teachers and pupils. Imagine's year-round programme means we have a close connection and understanding of individual artists and cultural freelancers because we work with them directly on a regular basis.

Imagine also holds regular meetings with the children and young people's theatre and dance sector, which is mainly made up of individual artists, creative freelancers and micro-organisations. The last sector meeting was at Tramway on March 27<sup>th</sup> 2019; this submission is informed by discussions on the inquiry questions at that meeting.

Theatre and dance for children and young people is one of Scotland's success stories, but still does not receive the recognition, support and funding it deserves. Scottish theatre and dance for children and young people is in demand internationally and plays to packed houses around the world – next year alone seven Scottish children's theatre and dance productions will be presented in across China. Despite a growth in international reputation over the last 20 years, public funding has significantly declined. Our European neighbours recognise the vital importance of funding theatre and dance for young audiences – Denmark has over 70 full time companies – but Scotland continues to lag behind, despite the fact that the work here is recognised as some of the best in the world.

#### **What are the major threats to sustainable funding of the arts in Scotland?**

**ACTION:** Implement 5 and 10 year funding agreements

The three-year cycle is a threat to sustainable funding. So much time and effort goes into applications to Creative Scotland, which could be usefully spent by arts organisations identifying other routes for funding, developing other income streams and supporting individual artists and freelancers. Whilst this directly affects Regularly Funded Organisations the knock-on effect to individual artists and freelancers is severe. We are all connected and freelancers and artists need a commitment from organisations, which they are unable to give when the funding is basically put on hold.

**ACTION:** Facilitate partnerships with arts organisations and relevant third sector organisations.

Demands on arts organisations to deliver above and beyond artistic excellence is a threat. Better partnership working to deliver outcomes such as environmental sustainability, education, equality and diversity would see arts organisations delivering more on these outcomes and having more of their funding available to creating works of art which have more chance to become world-class.

**What are the main challenges for artists and cultural freelancers in obtaining funding in Scotland?**

ACTION: Support individual artists to make applications

Currently Imagineate gives individual artists one to one support in application writing, as do other organisations, like Starcatchers. The complexity of application writing combined with the time and skill needed to write the applications is a major challenge.

ACTION: Develop an easy to navigate route through the wide range of opportunities and funding in Scotland.

There are a wide range of funding and developmental opportunities for artists across Scotland, but they are not joined up and can be difficult to navigate for artists.

ACTION: More substantial, longer term residencies, bursaries and research and development funding

Piece-meal offerings – such as small commission fees, micro-residencies and tiny amounts of funding for research and development – create a vicious cycle for artists of constantly chasing crumbs of funding and not having time to make meaningful work.

**What measures could the Scottish Government take to ensure a sustainable level of funding for the arts?**

ACTION: Do more to place value on the arts – especially on art for art's sake.

When we go down a route of demonstrating public value for the arts, we often get side tracked into evaluating and monitoring the instrumental value – when the only way to have a sustainable and dynamic cultural sector is to have a vibrant arts community that takes risks, pushes boundaries and is valued by society.

**How could Scotland be innovative in attracting greater funding for the arts?**

ACTION: Create more opportunities for better international showcasing.

Theatre and dance for children and young people already has an international reputation and if this reputation was built on to create a way of supporting Scottish artist to present their work international in countries where they would be able to

generate a new income stream, this could be a genuine step-change for the sector. If this is true in theatre and dance for young audiences, it must be true in other sectors.

**ACTION:** Create a new mechanism for businesses to support the arts.

Whilst headline sponsorship of major events is a business transaction, and Corporate Social Responsibility sees some funding going to the arts, could there be a mechanism to encourage all businesses to contribute to a fund that supports innovative ideas from individual artists?

**How should public money be made available to support artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland, including any relevant international examples of best practice?**

**ACTION:** Introduce special benefits for artists - support between paid work, or an annual stipend to be an artist.

**ACTION:** Create a National Producing Network

Artists will no longer be expected to create all of the infrastructure around bringing an artistic idea to fruition. The wheel is constantly being reinvented in Scotland and ideas such as “resource sharing” and “producing hubs” have been toyed with over the years, but have never been properly resourced for success.

**ACTION:** A National Culture Marketing and PR Network

This must be solely tasked with developing and delivering a marketing and audience development strategy for culture in Scotland so individual artists and freelancers are no longer expected to create the art and create a marketing campaign. In no other industry would the inventor or developer of a product be expected to create a marketing campaign.

**What factors should be considered and how should decisions be made about which artists or cultural freelancers should obtain public funding in Scotland?**

Devolution of funds to organisations that are closer to the artists, so decisions are being made by individuals who genuinely know the artist and their work.

Peer appraisal must be part of the decision making process.

A staged, lighter touch application process. Currently Creative Scotland applications seem to put a tiny emphasis on the actual idea for the artwork, and a huge amount of emphasis on management, marketing, public benefit and equality issues. Surely the first stage should be just about the artwork, then if successful, all the other questions can be answered – ideally by the National Producing Network and the National Marketing Network.

