

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM THE WORK ROOM

About The Work Room

The Work Room (TWR) is an artist-led organisation, committed to supporting a sustainable environment for independent artists working in dance in Scotland. Our mission is to empower artists to lead in their practice, enabling them to make high quality, pioneering dance for diverse contexts at home and internationally.

TWR was established in 2008 by a group of artists in Glasgow who agitated for space and resource for dance in the city. We have a studio base within Tramway, which was created as part of Scottish Ballet's capital development. TWR is a membership organisation for artists who work in dance, movement and choreography. The priorities of our members inform the organisation's artistic programme and policies. We aim to foster a community of artists, encouraging our members to be active in the independent dance sector in Scotland. Our strength is that TWR is over 150 individuals; a powerful network of connections, experience and skills. These artists represent a multitude of artistic practices and are at different stages of their careers. We seek to build connections both through our membership, and connecting our membership with a wide range of partners to stoke the flames for a confident and vital dance culture in Scotland. The active involvement of artists within our activities and working groups feed a strong culture of grassroots leadership, helping to create a thriving dance sector.

TWR was awarded Creative Scotland regular funding for the first time in 2015/16 – 2017/18 and we were successful in our application for RFO 2018/19 – 2020/21 and have been awarded £465,000 for this three- year period. We are also supported by Glasgow City Council, through our base within Tramway and a small grant through their Integrated Grant funds.

We are a purposely small organisation and operate with low overhead costs to put as much of our available funds as possible directly into the hands of artists through bursaries and fees. Regular funding from Creative Scotland is central to the work we deliver for independent artists. It enables us to employ 2 members of staff (1.8FTE) to manage the organisation's programmes and provide a base from which to develop partnerships and fundraise from other sources. The funding also provides paid residencies and project opportunities for independent dance artists.

Funding for independent artists & companies:

The currently funding climate in Scotland puts substantial pressure on independent artists and companies. Currently independent artists are funded primarily on a short-term, project-to-project basis with a small number of companies which are vehicles for individual artists creative practice, funded on a longer-term basis through Creative Scotland Regular Funding. In dance there are now only three companies that were created to enable the work of a choreographer supported as RFOs – Barrowland Ballet (choreographer/ artistic director - Natasha Gilmore), Curious Seed (choreographer/ artistic director - Christine Devaney) and 21 Commons (co-lead artists Gary Gardiner & Lucy Gaizely). Two companies who were unsuccessful at the Creative Scotland RFO round in 2018 have since ceased operating; Plan B (choreographer/artistic director - Frank McConnell) and Janice Parker Projects.

We are concerned about how the short-term nature of project funding and the amount of unpaid work that goes into securing this contributes to unhealthy working lives for many independent dance artists and unrealistic juggling undertaken to try and sustain a living. Many artists want to play a more influential and dynamic role in Scotland's culture but often feel thwarted and that power is still too often held in the hands of a few.

The role of artists in society is recognized in the Scottish Government's draft Cultural Strategy & we were encouraged by the statements in this that advocate for:

- People who create have the right to earn a fair living from artistic and cultural professional pursuits.
- The imaginative role of artists, designers, creative practitioners, producers and businesses, cultural organisations, makers and places is central to shaping a democratic, diverse, open and innovative society.

Our Suggestions

We call for independent artist more involved and visible in arts funding decisions & policy, including:

- funding structures and process to recognize that being independent and freelance is to be unwaged and when artists seek to engage and influence change within our sectors they are frequently investing a great deal of their own time and resource to do so;
- approaches to enable independent artists to be more visible and influentially within our industry and place greater value on the leadership that comes through their practice.

We call for all organisations in receipt of long-term public funding:

- To be required to pay independent artists fairly for their work
- To have a mandate to open up their resources for independent artists; this could be on a sliding-scale model, with those in receipt of more funding taking on increasing responsibility for sharing resources.

Enquiry Questions:

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

A shift over the past 20 years means that Creative Scotland is now more or less the only funder for artists and arts activity in Scotland. Funds available through local authorities have significantly reduced as their budgets have come under pressure. As noted in the Committee's call for evidence, Creative Scotland's reliance on National Lottery funding for the majority of its funding support outwith RFO, is precarious. A sustainable model of funding will require the Scottish Government to allocate a higher percentage of its overall budget to the arts.

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

The majority of funding for artists and cultural freelancers is on a project-to-project basis which requires a huge amount of unpaid work in researching, developing and writing funding applications. Having the opportunity for independent artists to be supported on a longer-term basis, to develop and deliver number of projects. These challenges contribute to the barriers which currently prevent many people working in the arts. Addressing these would assist in enabling a cultural workforce more reflective of the population

It was very positive to see the value that the *'freelance cultural workforce'* is given within the Scottish Government's draft Cultural Strategy. The actions to nurture skills and improve the economic and social status along with the commitment to long-term approaches was really welcome. In addressing these challenges, we would advocate for:

- Healthy cultural ecology with artists at the heart and in positions of power & influence
- Independent artist more involved and visible in arts funding decisions & policy
- Universal income (therefore enabling artists to be more involved in advocacy, policy etc)

What measures could the Scottish Government take to ensure a sustainable level of funding for the arts? How could Scotland be innovative in attracting greater funding for the arts?

There are some innovative ideas contained within the Scottish Government's draft Cultural Strategy which around a Scottish National Investment Bank, devolved tax and legislative powers that have the potential to generate greater funding support for the arts.

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

Here are a couple of examples happening elsewhere of long-term support for artists:

- Norwegian model of artists scholarships
- Australia Council for Arts artists fellowship programme
- Paul Hamlyn Breakthrough funds