

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

**ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY**

**SUBMISSION FROM BARROWLAND BALLET**

Barrowland Ballet is one of Scotland's most successful contemporary dance companies, built around the artistic work of choreographer Natasha Gilmore. We are currently in receipt of Regular Funding from Creative Scotland and have previously been funded through open project funding.

Barrowland Ballet produces high quality, accessible dance theatre performances which tour nationally and internationally to small and mid-scale venues. The work's themes are delivered with wit and humour, and the insightful observations of human behaviour are rooted in personal stories. Alongside the company's professional work, Barrowland Ballet produce exceptional participatory performance projects; the two are interdependent with each inspiring the other. The company continues to gain critical international acclaim; to date our work has been performed in festivals across Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Chile, Egypt, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Poland, South Africa, the UK, the USA and The Netherlands.

Now on our second iteration of 3-year regular funding, we are in a position of understanding the positive impact that consistent funding can bring. It allows more robust strategic planning, increases a sense of job-security to our staff and ultimately creates a context which allows us to produce more creatively ambitious and ground-breaking work

Regular Funding from Creative Scotland makes up around 55% of our annual turnover and as such we are reliant on making applications to a number of other bodies, in addition to touring fees, to provide us with the resource we need to deliver our programme of work.

We welcome the Committee's inquiry into funding for the arts in Scotland and the potential for a more flexible, innovative approach to arts funding to evolve.

**Dance-Theatre for young audiences in Scotland:**

Several our most successful recent productions have been created for children and young audiences. Theatre and dance for children and young people is one of Scotland's success stories, but still does not receive the recognition, support and investment it deserves. Scottish dance-theatre for children and young people is in demand internationally and plays to packed houses internationally. This year alone four of our productions *Poggle* (6months – 5 years), *Tiger Tale* (ages 7+), *Playful Tiger* (profoundly autistic children 7+) and *Whiteout* (re-developed for ages 7+) have been booked to tour internationally to Ireland, Norway & China; with *Poggle* visiting China for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row and spending 7 weeks on tour.

However, the sector still struggles to find an audience in Scotland. 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 would a sustainable model of funding look like?**

A longer-term funding model would allow artists and companies greater opportunity to develop strategically; to build and nurture deeper relationships with audiences, artists and partners; and to create artistically rigorous and ambitious work.

### **How should that funding be made available to artists?**

- With knowledge and understanding of how the funding will meet the [evolving and intersectional] strategic aims of the specific artform/s and sector/s within Scotland.
- Through a transparent, clearly defined process where there is input from experts within the sector; and one which is sympathetic to the limited capacity of individual artists and smaller organisations.
- With ongoing assessment and monitoring that prioritises support and development.

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

- The current three-year cycle of regular funding due to the onerous application process that absorbs significant organisational capacity – particularly as there is no guaranteed outcome-; and with a timescale that inhibits long-term strategic planning
- Diminishing local authority commitment to the arts that can be evidenced in a reduction of provision within education and community contexts, reduction or removal of arts development teams, and cuts to cultural funding

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

- The capacity required to identify, apply to and, if successful, communicate with and report to numerous funding bodies, meeting extensive and varying criteria
- Increasing requirements of the arts to focus on evidencing delivery against criteria above and beyond artistic excellence. For example, contexts where artists and arts organisations are set in direct competition for vital resources against other sectors in terms of who can best evidence, they will deliver specific social impacts

- Where there are lengthy timescales between application and outcome, which impedes planning and impacts the ability to secure creative collaborators, venues and other resources

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

- Regularly and emphatically recognise and celebrate the extensive impact of Scotland's arts and culture sector
- Embed arts and culture within local and national planning aligned to the goal of supporting artistic excellence
- Compel and support local authorities to protect local cultural provision, and support artists and organisations working within their area
- Accept that bureaucratic approaches to arts funding with extensive application and reporting is not conducive to supporting a vibrant arts sector achieve excellence

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

- By supporting high-quality international showcasing which increases the profile of artists and work from Scotland; and increases the touring of Scottish work which provides an income stream for artists and organisations

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

Public money is best invested with long-term commitment

- more likely to support development of artists and work that achieves artistic excellence
- where artists and organisations have greater security and the ability to commit to longer planning cycles, they will be able to make longer-term commitments with other artists and cultural freelancers

Public money should support artists and cultural freelancers from a diversity of backgrounds, and the current precarious financial landscape may present barrier to this. A benefit package which provided support for artists and creative professionals between intermittent contracts, similar to the French model, could make a positive impact.

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

- Support for strategic development of sector and artform should be provided, and this should be in addition to specific funding available to artists and organisations
- Peer-appraisal and review should inform all decisions
- A multi-stage application process with an early focus on the creative idea and the artistic approach