



Response to The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee of Scottish Government:

FUNDING FOR CULTURE

08 September 2021

1. Introduction

The National Performing Companies (NPC) – Scottish Ballet, National Theatre of Scotland, Scottish Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Scottish Chamber Orchestra – welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee regarding the Scottish Government’s budget planning process for 2022/23. Culture and the performing arts in Scotland make a vital contribution to the identity and wellbeing of the nation, as well as offering meaningful engagement and employment opportunities for our country and its people, needed even more so during unprecedented times such as these.

The challenges the sector is facing have never been greater, but with the expertise, technical capabilities, and world-class talent of those working within the performing arts and cultural industries more generally, coupled with the commitment to our artforms and high level of audience engagement, the will to overcome obstacles has never been as strong.

Collectively, the NPCs are a unique asset to Scotland and our flexible models are celebrated worldwide. The tours and educational programmes we undertake engage and inspire audiences and participants the length and breadth of the country. We are also proud to represent Scotland’s cultural excellence on the international stage.

The NPCs have been galvanised as a group, maintaining activity and audience engagement throughout the pandemic. Likewise, we have been amongst the first to reengage with live audiences once restrictions were eased. Our appetite to serve the Scottish people and provide

employment to the sector has been impacted by the reality of standstill funding (due to lack of indexation) for our organisations since 2012, creating a cut in real terms.

2. Priorities

- *What should be the Scottish Government's immediate priorities in supporting the culture sector's recovery through Budget 2022-23?*

The pandemic and subsequent loss of the ability to play to live audiences for almost 18 months has had a devastating impact on the performing arts. The support that the Scottish Government has offered the sector has been crucial to its survival and is greatly appreciated. The creative performing arts sector desperately needs this support to continue as we come out of the pandemic and into a 'new reality'.

Previously healthy organisations have run down reserves and even financially resilient organisations such as the NPCs will need support as we regrow our audience base, many of whom are likely to be hesitant to return in-person initially. The sector, like the economy at large, is struggling to attract and retain talent, many of whom have left the industry entirely. Additional support is required to re-start capital works and major development plans paused because of the pandemic, to both maintain and develop Scotland's leading cultural facilities.

Support will also be needed across performing arts and independent cinemas to account for lower audiences until consumer confidence returns, and resources to attract the top international talent that will fuel the growth of the industry and deliver the high calibre programmes the NPCs are renowned for.

The lack of any box office income for 18 months and anticipated lower initial take-up from audiences is being exacerbated by the impact of Brexit. Like other sectors, the performing arts is being hit by extraordinarily-rising costs of materials required in set-building and costume making coming from Europe, and the loss of access to the EU bloc for talent attraction with significant visa costs now in play.

This support required needs to come from both a national and also a local level, an area that has been eroded in recent years – but where our local community involvement has doubled and trebled as we have taken up the slack as arts education and training has been wound down in

schools. The National Performing companies would support relevant and appropriate cultural planning and engagement with local authorities.

3. Rethinking support

- A crisis can also trigger new ways of thinking – should the Scottish Government rethink how it supports the culture sector?

Longer-term planning and strategic thinking are required from all, including the Scottish Government, as is ambition for the creative industries. The NPCs currently only receive single year grant funding, making long term planning difficult. A **three-year planning cycle** that allows for CPI increases would be a significant and valued improvement.

Critically, the NPCs are a **lifeline to thousands of freelancers** who rely on the continuing strength of the NPCs. Addendum A provides specific data regarding the levels of freelance employment the NPC's support. Each organisation employs hundreds of creative and stage freelancers through their production cycles, in addition to their full-time employees, creating substantial employment opportunities and career pathways for young people across the country. This longer-term financial stability we support calls for would significantly benefit the cultural offering and employment prospects each company delivers nationally.

4. Strategy/ NPF

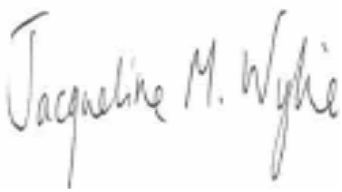
- Specifically, are there opportunities to develop a more strategic approach through, for example, the medium-term financial strategy, a multi-year spending review and the National Performance Framework

Acknowledging the limited resources and capacity each organisation has presently to address this meaningfully, access to funds and expertise within economic and skills development agencies could greatly help plan for the long-term financial viability of the sector, taking account of wider priorities in the economy while fully integrating planning with the NPF.

Scotland's ability to create a more successful country, while meeting the purpose of the NPF, can be met by bold long-term funding commitments now as furlough is wound-up, audience anxiety about indoor events initially increases and each company navigates the significant challenges that remain as the sector recovers from the double-edged trauma of covid and Brexit.

It is our collective belief the outcomes we seek are reflective of the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland. It's not just our own data that tells us this, it is also the Scottish Government's own Growth Sector Statistics and agency surveys that affirm the country can be innovative, globally competitive and have a thriving creative sector.

To get there, we seek your continued support and commitment to investment that aligns with a longer-term planning cycle, investment nationally and locally, and critically investment that reflects the rising costs of inflation, Brexit and covid-resilience moving forward.



Jackie Wylie (CEO/ Artistic Director, National Theatre of Scotland)

Jackie.Wylie@nationaltheatrescotland.com



Brenna Hobson (Executive Director, National Theatre of Scotland)

brenna.hobson@nationaltheatrescotland.com



Christopher Hampson (CEO/Artistic Director, Scottish Ballet)

chris.hampson@scottishballet.co.uk



Steven Roth (Executive Director, Scottish Ballet)

steven.roth@scottishballet.co.uk



Alistair Mackie (CEO of RSNO)

alistair.mackie@rsno.org.uk

Handwritten signature of Alistair Mackie, consisting of the letters 'A' and 'M' in a stylized, cursive script.

Gavin Reid (Chief Executive, Scottish Chamber Orchestra)

Gavin.Reid@sco.org.uk

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Alex Reedijk (General Director, Scottish Opera)

Alex.reedijk@scottishopera.org.uk

ADDENDUM A

National Performing Company's freelancer employment data

In further support of this submission, the NPCs submit the following data gathered documenting the average number of freelance employments generated in a financial year.

Note: The data is pre-pandemic in 'normal' times with productions running at full capacity.

Scottish Ballet – more than **200** freelance staff across Orchestra, creative teams, touring and education.

RSNO – up to **350** freelance orchestral musicians p.a. with additional **10** in digital.

SCO – more than **320** freelance musicians, education, and stage support.

Scottish Opera – up to **270** freelancers across creative, casual and education outputs.

National Theatre of Scotland – more than **650** freelancers across creative outputs, additional **269** support, technical and acting staff.

Average total – 2000+