
Review of the Theatre Sector in Scotland for Creative Scotland:

Executive Summary

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Executive summary

Who we are and what we did

Christine Hamilton Consulting Ltd (CHC) was commissioned by Creative Scotland to undertake a review of theatre in Scotland. The review was undertaken from 1 October 2011 to 30 April 2012.

Christine Hamilton led the team to undertaking the interviews and focus groups and managing the website and Twitter feed. She was also responsible for managing the project and report writing. A full list of those consulted is included in Appendix 2.

The statistical report was prepared by Scottish Cultural Enterprise, specifically by Erika King and Fraser White who also administered the survey for data gathering for the relational mapping. They compiled data that provided an overview of the cultural ecology for theatre. A Digest of Statistics has been compiled and published in full as a companion document.

Dr Rachel Granger of Map Network Interactive undertook the mapping of assets and the relational mapping. Initial data were collated from Creative Scotland and partners and a first set of asset maps produced in December 2011. Further asset data were provided during January 2012, and a final set of asset maps were produced for this report.

The survey produced 895 responses of which 506 were complete. These 506 responses produced relational data (for the relational maps) for more than 1400 organisations/people, which has been aggregated to 812 complete sets of organisations/people (692 showing geographical location). This is used as the primary data for the different relational maps. A companion report on mapping has been produced.

Emilia Weber undertook a review of repertoire of Scottish theatre from September to November 1991, 2001, and 2011 to map what had changed in what was on offer to Scottish audiences. The principal data source was *The List* but this was augmented with data drawn from key organisations and agencies working outside the central belt – and not included in *The List*. This review has also been produced in full as a separate report.

What we found out

Six great things about Scottish theatre:

- New work is the lifeblood of Scottish theatre -- often, although not always, this starts with the playwright.
- Scottish theatre has an international reach -- again usually with new work.

- On average theatre workers have 17 years experience in the sector but there is a significant number of younger talent coming through. It is a flexible sector with people working in portfolio careers.
- It is a well-networked and mutually supportive sector. In economic terms, the sector is highly innovating and competitive, internationally renowned, and nationally specialised.
- After a recessionary dip audiences across Scotland are picking up again.
- There is a good geographic spread of venues, thanks in part to energetic (voluntary) promoters in rural areas.

Six not-so-great things:

- As a proportion of total spend, in Foundation theatres there is less money spent on work on the stage now than ten years ago.
- There is a dearth of touring shows for venues across Scotland which are well-equipped and desperate for good quality theatre.
- The mid-career theatre artist finds it hard to make a living in Scotland; there is an acute skills gap in theatre technicians; and a lack of succession planning at artistic director level.
- The much-lauded children's theatre sector relies on too few people and companies -- 'all icing and no cake'. Structural weaknesses also exist in other theatre strands—Gaelic, BME and Physical Performance (circus/physical and street theatre).
- Despite the good work of audience development agencies and marketing staff, theatre still plays to a narrow demographic and needs to extend and broaden its appeal. This is matched by weakness in marketing – especially in sharing box office intelligence.
- There is not enough debate about quality of work.

Our conclusions

Throughout our consultation, theatre in Scotland was on the one hand confident and ambitious, and on the other fearful of risk taking and sometimes felt under valued. It was described as being supportive and well networked but recognised failure to spread the good work enough around Scotland. It nurtures a huge wealth of talent but some were weary of struggling on low incomes and insufficient production budgets. In economic terms it is highly developed and functions well, but there is something wrong when there are great buildings but not the work to put in them.

Scottish theatre has its own distinctive voice and does not rely on work coming from England or elsewhere (although some import from time to time would be welcome). Similarly you don't have to go south or anywhere else to train or to get work—although it is always good to introduce some diversity. There is a lot of work going on in our two largest cities, but remarkably also in the Highlands and other (though not all) rural areas. Everyone agrees which theatres require some refurbishment but not one person consulted suggested that Scotland required more theatre venues. Scottish theatre does not rely on the work of the past but is enthralled with the 'now'. And when the cry goes up, 'we need to start with the schools', Scotland can point to the Curriculum for Excellence and the inclusion of creativity. All of these advances in developing new work, supporting rural development, establishing training and education, investing in infrastructure, producing generations of playwrights and actors who speak with a Scottish voice, and integration in education, came about through the vision of the artists/theatre makers and translated into reality by the policy makers.

This is the opportunity for the Creative Scotland to work with the sector to develop the next stage. There are good reasons why change has to happen. On a basic level we know overall there will continue to be less money from the public purse, while Lottery funds continue to grow at the end of the Olympics. Creative Scotland has already made the decision to look at ways of investing lottery money to help the sector to remain sustainable. There is less money for people to spend on theatre tickets and more competition for that money. Digital technologies continue to have an impact on how we communicate and create. There is a lot of good practice across theatre, but a need to better integrate and share.

On the other hand there is no lack of things for theatre to talk about. Whatever happens in the independence referendum, people in Scotland are facing the biggest political and constitutional decision of their lives and already we can see evidence of theatre makers working through the issues of statehood and nation building beyond the simplicity of the 'yes/no' arguments. The artist, whether in theatre or another form, will have a really important role to play in the months and years ahead.

Issue	Creative Scotland Objective/theme	Findings and Conclusion (page numbers in brackets).	Suggestions <i>for Creative Scotland unless indicated</i>
Talent Development	To invest in talent	<p>On average theatre workers have 17 years experience in the sector but there is a significant number of younger talent coming through. It is a flexible sector with people working in portfolio careers. (20-21, 41)</p> <p>It is a well-networked and mutually supportive sector. In economic terms, the sector is highly innovating and competitive, internationally renowned, and nationally specialised. (21-25)</p> <p>The mid-career theatre artist finds it hard to make a living in Scotland; there is an acute skills gap in theatre technicians; and a lack of succession planning at artistic director level. (40-43)</p>	<p>Establish the role of Foundation organisations as the source of training and talent development especially in directing design and technical. (40-43)</p> <p>Monitor the practices of funded projects/theatres in following industry agreements particularly with regard to commissioning. (40)</p> <p>Fund two or three annual bursaries for theatre directors and designers. (40)</p> <p>Invest in technical training, in partnership with other agencies with an interest, HE/FE, Creative and Cultural Skills and the sector itself. (42)</p> <p>Review Continuous Professional Development funds and how these are managed with a view to having a 'lighter touch' process which responds to need. (41)</p> <p>Develop leadership talent from within Scotland as well as working to retain talented through programme for both boards and senior managers. (42)</p> <p>For the sector:</p> <p>Collectively, theatre companies (including Foundation, building and non-building based) take the lead on</p>

			<p>developing a plan for the training and development of directors, designers and technicians reflecting the resources (in terms of expertise, space, opportunities) each can invest. (40-43)</p> <p>The Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) continue to play a key role in ensuring the training developed via Creative and Cultural Skills, the FE and HE sectors are relevant to the needs of the industry. (41-42)</p>
Quality	To invest in quality artistic production	<p>New work is the lifeblood of Scottish theatre- often, although not always, this starts with the playwright. (27, 33-35)</p> <p>There is not enough debate about quality of work. (44)</p>	<p>Invest in new areas where there is a clear artistic vision and leadership. An example of this is the area of Physical Performance. (48-49)</p> <p>Support the development of Gaelic theatre by working with other agencies specifically Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Pròiseact nan Ealan, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the National Theatre of Scotland, on a five year development plan. Specifically we recommend that Creative Scotland's contribution be to support the development of Gaelic artists through placements, mentoring and encouraging links with existing theatre companies and, as above, invest in a clear artistic vision and leadership. (46-48)</p> <p>Develop with the sector (and other art forms) an agreed process for assessing quality which embraces artistic vision and imagination, quality of process and execution, relationship with the audience, project management and</p>

		<p>As a proportion of total spend, in Foundation theatres there is less money spent on work on the stage now than ten years ago. (29-32)</p>	<p>strategic context. (44)</p> <p>For the theatre sector: Take responsibility for assessing quality through self-assessment, peer review and audience feedback. (44)</p> <p>Identify the sector's role in developing new areas of work through collaboration, mentoring, and co-production. (34-35)</p>
Audiences	To invest in audiences, access and participation	<p>After a recessionary dip audiences across Scotland are picking up again. (50)</p> <p>Despite the good work of audience development agencies and marketing staff, theatre still plays to a narrow demographic and needs to extend and broaden its appeal. This is matched by weakness in marketing – especially in sharing box office intelligence. (52)</p>	<p>Continue to invest in audience data management/intelligence and the training of marketing staff across theatre in Scotland. (54)</p> <p>Establish protocols and procedures for collecting and sharing data across theatre in Scotland using the example of the Source Project. We suggest that this applies not just to audience data but also to data captured from the Annual Returns submitted by funded organisations. This will provide an analysis of how the sector is performing as a whole which can be used as a planning tool by all companies. We also recommend that there is an agreement with local authorities about capturing data on the impact of their spend on theatre (and the arts in general). (14, 53-54)</p>

<p>Touring and distribution</p>	<p>To invest in places and their contribution to a creative Scotland</p>	<p>There is a good geographic spread of venues, thanks in part to energetic (voluntary) promoters in rural areas. (18, 20)</p> <p>There is a dearth of touring shows for venues across Scotland which are well-equipped and desperate for good quality theatre. (58)</p>	<p>Review project funding for touring to take account of overhead costs of touring companies. (57, 62)</p> <p>Encourage the development of rural touring networks in the south of Scotland using similar models to the Highlands and North East while continuing to support the development of NEAT and PAN. (19-20, 61-62)</p> <p>Launch a pilot project for touring at mid-scale which will bring together the producers and promoters to develop work to tour. (61-62)</p> <p>Ensure all bureaucratic barriers to cross border touring are removed and encourage Scottish companies to look at sustaining their work by tours to England and beyond. (57)</p> <p>Continue support for large-scale works to tour but review this in light of commercial opportunities suggested by the John Stalker report. (59)</p> <p>Explore the potential for digital technology for creating greater access and improve distribution of work, including digital broadcasting. (63-64)</p> <p>For the sector:</p> <p>Foundation funded theatres consider their role in touring, commercial transfers and co-production to prolong the life of their productions, build new audiences and sustain their</p>
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Children's theatre and education	Education and a commitment to a generational change in cultural opportunity	The much-lauded children's theatre sector relies on too few people and companies -- 'all icing and no cake'. Structural weaknesses also exist in other theatre strands—Gaelic, BME, and the circus/street/physical theatre area. (48-49, 65-67, 78-79)	<p>Invest in more work in the children's sector. (65-67)</p> <p>Work with the Scottish Government, local authorities, and schools to develop a process for assessing quality of work for children in schools. (66)</p> <p>Develop with the Scottish and local government a plan to address the cost of travel to theatres (and other arts events). (64- 67)</p>
International	International partnership to reflect Scotland's global outlook	Scottish theatre has an international reach—again usually with new work.	<p>Outgoing work:</p> <p>Develop advice and brokering support in partnership with the British Council and Scottish Government. (72-73)</p> <p>Improve the capturing of data about the international links of theatre companies. (73)</p> <p>Incoming:</p> <p>In addition to the support given to the festivals, fund incoming international work. (75)</p>

Equalities	Equalities in all areas of our work	There is a lack of monitoring of equal opportunities in CS funded companies. (76-77)	<p>Address the issue of compliance with Equal Opportunities policy and practice across the organisations it funds to cover employment, marketing, audience development, programming and casting. (76-77)</p> <p>Consider engaging disability and black and minority ethnic (BME) theatre organisations to offer training and support to arts organisations. (77-79)</p> <p>Create a development plan for BME theatre along the same lines as the recommendation for Gaelic theatre. (79)</p>

A full version of the *Review of Theatre for Creative Scotland*, along with the *Digest of Statistics*, *Theatre Mapping Report* and *Changes in Repertoire in Scottish Theatre* can be found on the Creative Scotland website, <http://www.creativescotland.com/about/sector-reviews/theatre-sector-review>