

**Education and Culture Committee**  
**Scotland's Educational and Cultural Future**  
**National Theatre of Scotland**

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*National Theatre of Scotland*

Since its launch in February 2006, the National Theatre of Scotland has been involved in creating over 200 productions in 174 different locations. With no building of its own, the Company takes theatre all over Scotland and beyond, working with existing and new venues and companies to create and tour theatre of the highest quality. It takes place in the great theatre buildings of Scotland, but also in site-specific locations, airports and tower blocks, community halls and drill halls, ferries and forests. The Company has performed to over 1,000,000 people across four continents.

In 2014 the National Theatre of Scotland is presenting a varied and stimulating programme of work, both nationally and internationally, under the banner of *Dear Scotland*. This year of theatre, debate and celebration includes:

- *The Tin Forest*. As part of Festival 2014, the Commonwealth Games-time Glasgow based strand of the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme, the National Theatre of Scotland's *Tin Forest* at the South Rotunda will play host to an immersive puppet experience, a large scale visual art installation, live music and an international theatre festival featuring youth companies from Scotland, England, Jamaica, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Malta and India.
- *The James Plays*: the first-ever co-production by the National Theatre of Scotland, National Theatre of Great Britain and Edinburgh International Festival, this epic historical trilogy by Rona Munro on the lives of James I, II and III of Scotland will premiere in August during the Edinburgh International Festival and transfer to the National Theatre in London in Autumn 2014
- *Dear Scotland*: In a unique collaboration with the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, the National Theatre of Scotland invites 20 of the country's most celebrated writers to send a living postcard from someone featured in the Gallery's collection, to be performed by actors in the Portrait Gallery space.
- *The Great Yes, No, Don't Know, Five Minute Theatre Show*: there is the opportunity for theatre-makers to create their own response to the question of independence with *The Great Yes, No, Don't Know, Five Minute Theatre Show*, curated by Davids Greig and MacLennan
- *Blabbermouth*: a one-off event in Edinburgh on the eve of the referendum celebrates the written and spoken word from Scotland's past.

## *Background*

The importance of culture to Scotland and the UK cannot be over-estimated. The Scottish Government already accepts the case for the role of government in supporting the cultural sector. Fiona Hyslop, the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs said in a speech in Edinburgh in June 2013 "We actively support the case for public subsidy of the arts. We understand that culture and heritage have a value in and of themselves." This is not to say that culture in Scotland does not also play a crucial role in education, economic regeneration, well-being, business and tourism.

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Committee on Education and Culture is an effective signal of the increasing importance of culture to the national debate; the Group's agreement to carry out an Inquiry into Scotland's potential educational and cultural future following the Referendum is further evidence of the significance of the contribution made by these sectors to Scotland.

The National Theatre of Scotland therefore welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Education and Culture Committee Inquiry into Scotland's Educational and Cultural future and submits the following into written evidence.

## **Theme 2 - EARLY YEARS, CHILDCARE AND EMPLOYABILITY**

Scotland's Future proposes a 'Youth Guarantee' to establish the opportunity of education, training or employment to young people as a constitutional right. It also proposes to bring together job matching, employability training and career guidance.

The National Theatre of Scotland endorses this type of approach to learning and opportunity. Participating in cultural life and the arts is fundamental to children and young people's quality of life and it is a child's right as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The benefit of young people's engagement with the arts is well-documented. The Cultural Learning Alliance, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, has conducted wide-ranging research on the instrumental outcomes of cultural learning. They have grouped the research into five key research findings:

1. *Learning through arts and culture improves attainment in all subjects*
2. *Participation in structured arts activities increases cognitive abilities*
3. *Students from low income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree*
4. *Employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment*
5. *Students who engage in the arts at school are twice as likely to volunteer and are 20% more likely to vote as young adults.*

In considering the future of education and culture, the National Theatre of Scotland wishes to recommend the creation of a National Schools' Touring Network. This network would be supplementary to, and inclusive of, the wealth of cultural education provision already in place

throughout the country. It would not displace current activity but, rather, would build on the work of the now defunct Cultural Co-ordinators across local authority areas. The proposal from National Theatre of Scotland is:

#### A NATIONAL SCHOOLS' TOURING NETWORK FOR SCOTLAND

*Created by the National Theatre of Scotland, Catherine Wheels Theatre Company, Imagine, Visible Fictions, MacRobert Arts Centre and Starcatchers.*

The vision is to advance Scottish children's creative, emotional and social development through sustained engagement with the performing arts. The proposal is for the creation of a National Schools' Touring Network For Scotland to guarantee that every child (aged 0 – 18 years) receives, at their school/nursery, a minimum of one high quality performing arts production per year as a core part of their education.

### Theme 3 - BROADCASTING AND CULTURE

1. *How new powers over the economy and an overseas diplomatic and trade network could encourage the Scottish cultural and creative sectors*

The National Theatre of Scotland has been in the fortunate position that, in the eight years of its existence, key elements of its programme have been delivered in different territories overseas. Those works include *Black Watch*, *The Wolves in the Walls*, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*, *Yellow Moon/The Monster in The Hall* and, very shortly, *Dunsinane*. As well as the benefits that derive to the Company from such international engagements, the advantages to Scotland are many. They range from cultural diplomacy to high-level networking opportunities for key figures – including Ministers – to the development of commercially advantageous corporate relationships. The offering to overseas audiences and stakeholders of a vision that highlights contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland through its performing arts is of enormous value internationally. This vision also reflects back on home ground in terms of engendering pride and satisfaction.

An overseas diplomatic network for Scotland would be productive for such visits by the National Theatre of Scotland insofar as teams "on-the-ground" internationally can assist with contacts, practicalities and support. It would remain essential that such a diplomatic network for Scotland worked in partnership with the existing British Council, and with other international cultural agencies, to ensure that, for example during an overseas Festival, the UK companies and artists were working in a complementary way with each other and not competitively.

The opportunity for Scottish and Scottish-based artists to be actively encouraged to work internationally via the existence of a diplomatic network would also be advantageous. At present, companies and artists working overseas can often struggle to build relationships and develop networks; an in-situ Scottish diplomatic agency for culture could facilitate many aspects of overseas performing arts touring work.

2. *How Scottish cultural bodies currently work together with their counterpart bodies in the rest of the UK, and whether this relationship may change*

The National Theatre of Scotland works in close partnership with many cultural organisations across the whole of the UK and indeed beyond. As a “theatre without walls” the Company’s mission is to create work with and by Scottish and Scottish-based artists and to provide the widest-possible access to that work in venues, in schools, in workshop locations and online. The National Theatre of Scotland has toured work in partnership with venues and companies to all four of the nations in the UK. The Company has now successfully appeared in London on many occasions and is now engaged in its first-ever partnership with the National Theatre of Great Britain to produce The James Plays in Autumn 2014. The nature of theatre-making, and of theatre-makers, is such that boundaries are constantly and joyously transgressed, whether they are physical boundaries, emotional boundaries or national boundaries.

Given the ever-increasing globalisation of the performing arts, and the benefits that ensue when artists from myriad different backgrounds collaborate, the National Theatre of Scotland believes that it will be to the Company’s enormous gain to continue to work with artists from across the UK and beyond. The Company believes that any structures that emerged in the event of independence would be best placed to prioritise continuance of this cross-boundary approach to contribute to the health and diversity of the performing arts landscape in Scotland.

The same principle applies to those agencies, organisations, venues and companies that work across boundaries; the National Theatre of Scotland does not envisage this national and international exchange diminishing in the event of Scotland becoming independent.

In an international context, the same would apply: the National Theatre of Scotland would seek to maintain ongoing relationships with UK overseas cultural agencies and organisations whose remit is complementary to the Company’s work and outlook. At present, the National Theatre of Scotland often works in close contact with the British Council when touring overseas. The Company’s forthcoming tour of *Dunsinane* to China (April 2014) is an excellent case in point. Very productive collaborative partnerships exist with British Council colleagues who provide practical, diplomatic, cultural and, often, financial support with visits.

3. *The likely future role for UK bodies that have some cultural or creative function in Scotland.*

The National Theatre of Scotland is mindful of the many UK bodies whose remit impacts on Scotland and with whom the Company has either an official relationship or ongoing informal partnerships. At present, for example, the performing arts unions (Equity, BECTU and the Musicians’ Union) negotiate rates and conditions with Employers’ bodies across the UK to arrive at UK-wide settlements for members.

The National Theatre of Scotland prides itself on adhering to these agreements and, in many cases, superceding them. In the event of Scotland’s independence, consideration will require to be given to the re-negotiation of such agreements to recognise any Scotland or RUK-

specific issues and to ensure that Scottish performing arts workers are not disadvantaged.

There are other examples of UK bodies – trusts and foundations, corporate sponsors, media and press organisations – whose current operations across the whole of the UK impact on the National Theatre of Scotland. It is to be hoped that UK bodies with cultural and/or creative functions which currently have operations that impact in Scotland would remain either in place in the event of an independent Scotland or would be prepared to negotiate a positive approach to continuity.