

## **Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee**

### **Creative Scotland – Regular Funding 2018-21**

#### **Written submission from Catherine Wheels**

##### **Background**

Catherine Wheels was one of the five organisations whose regular funding was cut in January, and was then reinstated. We create award-winning work for young audiences, which we tour nationally and internationally to theatres, community centres and into schools.

Catherine Wheels is a celebrated and internationally renowned company, vital to the development of Scottish theatre. Scotland is viewed by countries across the globe as an example of a highly successful children's theatre sector, and this needs to be reflected in how Creative Scotland funds the sector.

##### **Leadership & sector development**

- We are a key international ambassadors for Scottish theatre
- We support and produce emerging and established artists, helping them to create world class work. Including internationally acclaimed artists Shona Reppe and Andy Manley
- Theatre in Schools Scotland, the pioneering strategy to develop work in schools, was initiated at Catherine Wheels and we are a key partner in its success
- Catherine Wheels acts like the NTS for children's theatre in Scotland. Our infrastructure is unique. There is no other non-building based RFO (Regular Funded Organisations) organisation that has the infrastructure and resources we have. We have a rehearsal space, a workshop, props store and extensive technical equipment. We have this because it allows us to do the amount of work we create and produce, but it is also a vital resource for other theatre companies and artists in Scotland. In the past year our resources have been used by organisations Starcatchers, Frozen Charlotte, Theatre in Schools Scotland, and many individual artists
- Without us one of the newest RFOs, Lyra, would not exist. Barrowland Ballet and Curious Seed, two organisations who became RFOs in 2015, would not be creating children's work if not for Catherine Wheels
- Development agencies can only go so far to support artists. They need the expert advice and support we give; as experts in making, producing, marketing and touring work we support artists to realise their creative ambitions. Imagine that we are the vital next stage in fully supporting artists

## Artistic Quality

- We are nationally and globally recognised as experts in children's theatre; our international reputation is unparalleled in Scotland
- The quality of our work is recognised by audiences, press, promoters from around the world; we are the only theatre company in Scotland to have been nominated for an Australian Helpmann award, and twice nominated for Broadway's Drama Desk Awards. We have won every children's theatre award in the UK.
- *White* is the most successful show to come out of Scotland with 1,510 performances to date, touring to every continent (except Africa) across the globe
- In the Guardian's 2018 Unmissable Culture we are the ONLY theatre company in Scotland to be listed, with *Eddie & the Slumber Sisters* our co-production with NTS
- Our desire to create challenging innovative work for young audiences has led us to produce ground breaking site-specific work including *Hansel & Gretel* which was also presented in New York and at London's Barbican, and the award winning *Voice Thief*

## Our reach

- We are experts at touring in Scotland
- We tour annually to schools, community venues, village halls and theatres of all scales
- Our contacts with theatres, community centres, festivals, local authorities and schools is unsurpassed
- International touring and collaborations are central to our programme of work

**Given all this, our regular funding was still cut in January. We currently believe that we could be in the same position in the next funding round, unless steps are taken to ensure that work for young audiences is valued by Creative Scotland and they demonstrate their understanding of its importance by giving the sector adequate funding.**

## Why regular funding

Regular funding is the only way that Catherine Wheels can exist, ensuring that we continue to create and produce work while being central to the development of the sector. Regular funding means we have the flexibility to respond to the many wonderful opportunities we receive, as well as plan years in advance. This includes accepting international invitations for 2020 and beyond, having the ability to nurture other artists, collaborating with artists and organisations across the globe, and on a

very practical level continue to lease our production and rehearsal space which enables us to produce 11 tours (2017-18) a year, while also offering this resource to other Scottish artists and organisations.

The model of core regular funds given by Scotland's chief cultural funding body not only provides essential financial support, it also gives important validation and legitimises children's theatre in the eyes of the public and theatre community. Regular funding demonstrates a commitment from Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government to supporting artistic work for children and young people and shows that they are important as an audience today, just as much as they are valued as an audience of the future.

### **The process and the challenges**

Applying for Regular Funding (RFO) has been onerous. However, whereas we feel that Open Project funding (the other main funding stream from Creative Scotland, for individual projects) is unnecessarily demanding and asks a lot of individual artists, the scale of the RFO application is fair given that it is for 3 years funding. The creation of a substantial Business Plan brought focus to our 3 year plans and remains a useful working document.

There will always be disappointment. There is only a limited funding pot. We can only hope that one day we will have more than two theatre companies who are regularly funded by Creative Scotland to create work for young audiences. While we endeavour to reach that goal, we simply wish for a transparent and fair system. A system which includes an awareness of what each sector of the arts brings to our cultural landscape and funding to match, so that entire sectors – like theatre for young audiences – aren't cut completely, as they were in January.

The ecosystem of the Scottish theatre & dance young audiences sector is one committed to supporting individual artists & organisations throughout Scotland. Imagine is our sectoral development agency, key to linking individual artists to organisations like Catherine Wheels. As an RFO we have the resources to be able to offer support to artists, from information on touring to practical support such as rehearsal space and technical advice. Our principle focus is always on the work we create - our key aim being to create the very best theatre for our young people to see and be inspired by - however we realise our responsibility as leaders in our sector. We wish the sector to grow, to flourish, and to continue to lead the way internationally as leaders on the world stage. For this to happen we must be actively supportive of those who are new to the sector, or who have no or little support.

### **What we want**

This is the Year of Young People. That Scotland is the only country in the world to dedicate a whole year to young people is a crucial statement. We want this idea, that our young people deserve a rich cultural landscape, to be evidenced in the funding given to culture for young people. We believe that every child has the right to fully engage in the arts, which includes giving them the unique experience of being an audience member. This is an important distinction from participation in the arts. It needs to be valued as an equally beneficial and important experience.

We have three requests:

1. A review of Creative Scotland, done by an external party and done in collaboration with the sector. At present it appears that only an internal review is planned.
2. We want Creative Scotland to create a new post, a Head of Theatre & Dance for Young Audiences. Someone who works alongside the current Head of Theatre and Head of Dance. Someone who understands and champions the sector & the impact it has on our cultural landscape across Scotland.
3. We want ring-fenced funding. Funding that acknowledges the importance of the sector. Funding that would mean there would be organisations creating work for young people supported in the next RFO funding round. Theatre as a sector wouldn't ever be completely cut, nor would dance as a sector, but work for young audiences was cut in January - and that cannot happen again if we value all that the Year of Young People suggests we do.