

Scottish Youth Theatre, Scotland's national theatre 'for and by' young people, welcomes the creation of the Cultural Commission. The company feels that it is best placed to respond to the consultation process because it delivers many of the aims of the commission.

THE COMPANY

Scottish Youth Theatre is a national company that has been in existence since 1977. It delivers quality theatre arts provision on a national basis to a constituency of participants and partners covering the length and breadth of the country. The company reaches thousands of young people, aged between 3 yrs and 25 yrs, every year through the National Roadshow; the Summer Festival; Weekly Drama Classes; Curriculum-based sessions in schools; SYT Productions; and special projects. Although the youth theatre is based in Glasgow, it delivers its programme of activities, both participatory and performance projects, all around Scotland all year round. All of the company's work is based on education and training. Scottish Youth Theatre endeavours to enable young people to explore and reach their creative potential through a quality theatre arts experience.

The company operates on various levels ranging from fully accessible fun workshops and personal & social development projects to more advanced and intense pre-professional training for individuals intent on a career in theatre, film and television. Scottish Youth Theatre acts as a conduit providing young people with a natural pathway into further education in arts institutions and directly into the profession. The company hopes that young people with a local interest in theatre arts aspire to challenge, extend and improve their skills with Scotland's national youth theatre.

Scottish Youth Theatre has represented Scotland internationally at festivals and on cultural exchanges. More recently in St. Petersburg, Russia; Agrigento, Sicily; and Prishtina, Kosovo. Summer Festival, the company's annual flagship event, regularly welcomes participants from overseas. In 2004, participants came from as far a field as Luxembourg, Dubai, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Kosovo.

In 2005, Scottish Youth Theatre is pleased to be opening a new national centre for youth theatre arts. This excellent facility, based in the refurbished Old Sheriff Court in Glasgow, will include 6 spacious rehearsal rooms; a studio theatre; a sensory room; scenic & costume workshops & storage space; general offices; a large foyer and an outdoor courtyard. Scottish Youth Theatre believes the building will become a national and international focus for 'best practice' in youth theatre. It will allow the company to expand activities giving more children and young people access to our work. The center will also enable the youth theatre to re-introduce in-house sessions for schools and colleges. Training for teachers and youth theatre leaders will also be programmed into the schedule of work in the building.

Not only will youth theatres benefit from the facility but the company looks forward to welcoming other theatre companies and arts organizations into the building. The center will allow us to share resources, creative and technical, with other groups. Plans and talks are already underway for future collaborations with R.S.A.M.D., Strathclyde University and the new National Theatre of Scotland. Scottish Youth Theatre is a founder member of Promote-YT, the network of youth theatre in Scotland. It is hoped that the network will use the building for future conferences, festivals and events.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Education: Education & Training are at the heart of all of Scottish Youth Theatre's activities. The company feels that all children and young people have the right to participate in and see the very best of theatre arts that the national arts companies, adult and youth performing arts companies, have to offer. **It is our belief that children and young people should have access to at least one of the national companies every year.**

Scottish Youth Theatre feels strongly that there is a dearth of good youth theatre leaders and that a high quality training scheme is required to assure quality leadership in the future. With this in mind the

company is in discussions with RSAMD and Strathclyde University with view to working in partnership to set up accredited courses for drama tutors.

The institutional infrastructure: Scottish Youth Theatre believes that the Scottish Arts Council is probably the best way to support the cultural sector. However, it is under-funded and under-resourced in regards to staff. The SAC spends most of its budget on the 'national' companies. This leaves a small amount to be distributed between other constituents. It leaves little or nothing for the development and nurturing of new talent. Practitioners are constantly competing with one another for an ever decreasing pot of money. Artists deserve the freedom to take artistic risks and to be allowed to fail and to learn from these failures.

The national companies including the youth performing arts companies should be funded directly by the Scottish Executive. This would allow the SAC to support and develop the smaller more regional organisations.

Scotland needs the Executive to make a financial investment in our cultural future by investing in the SAC. The SAC should not be afraid to take creative risks.

The delivery of services and access to them: Scottish Youth Theatre believes that the best way to deliver services nationally is to support and encourage the national companies including the youth performing arts companies. Allow these companies to take their expertise to local communities. These visits should make a local impact – a parachuting in effect should not be encouraged. Companies should be encouraged to have some sort of artistic legacy behind. This might come from a supporting education programme in schools and a training service for local arts workers and leaders. Good practice should be passed on to local workers.

Marketing and promotion: Scottish Youth Theatre feels that promotion and audience development should start with children and young people. If young people come to take participation in creativity as a given right then they should develop a lifelong interest in the art. Children and young people should be encouraged to develop their imagination and creativity in their favourite art form. Creative must be valued in the education system not just seen as an add on or extra treat.

The Executive and the national press need to value achievements in the arts as highly as they value achievements in sport.

Websites are the obvious way forward in the age of the Internet.

The 'arts' community needs to convince the community at large that the 'arts' are for everybody not just the elite.

Financial support for special ticket and entry deals.

Encouraging creativity: What is the best way to maximise the creative potential of the people of Scotland? Scottish Youth Theatre believes that schools and the education system are at the core of maximizing creative potential for children and young people. An increase in the number of local community arts centres would go along way to encouraging adults to realise their creative potential – opportunities for participation is all that is needed.

The concept of 'cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community':

- participation in the arts should be a cultural right
- all citizens should be given the opportunity to explore and reach their creative potential

- all children should have the right to attend a performance or participate in a workshop session led by at least one of the national companies, including the youth performing arts companies, each year
- all artists should have the right to experiment and to fail
- all artists should have the right to personal and professional development or training

Please identify the key issues as you see them for you/your organisation and list the main priorities you feel that you have to address.

Key issues for Scottish Youth Theatre include:-

- the recognized status of the national youth performing arts companies
- the establishment of the new building as a national centre for the development of the imagination in children and young people through theatre arts
- the training of youth theatre leaders
- the ability to deliver a quality theatre arts experience to all young people in Scotland
- the recognition of the youth theatre process as an important element in the development of well-rounded citizens for Scotland
- the ability to collaborate with the other national youth performing arts companies in the delivery of excellent performances for national festivals
- the opportunity to represent the best of Scottish Culture at and international level
- the creation of an international forum for debate and exchange of ideas regarding the development of the child through the creative process.

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