

PRESENTATION STRATEGY FOR THEATRES AND ARTS CENTRES IN WALES



National Dance Company Wales

CREU CYMRU

The development agency for theatres and arts centres in Wales

APRIL 2010

1. OUR PERSPECTIVE

In the current financial and political climate the Arts, along with other sectors, face a time of great change, as new circumstances force us to reassess our established structures and patterns of work.

However, in recent years the presenting sector in Wales has undergone a constructive and developmental process of change which has served to place it in a position to adapt positively to the new era, to address the challenges presented, to deliver WAG and ACW objectives and to advise on and influence strategic issues.

Central to this development in the sector's abilities and potential has been the establishment and influence of Creu Cymru and the creation of the Arts Outside Cardiff fund. Both have been major developments which have led to significant changes in the way in which the sector works and its potential to realise strategic initiatives.

The Arts Outside Cardiff fund has supported several theatres and arts centres across different scales to become actively involved as producers and co-producers, working in a constructive dialogue and partnership with producing companies from inside and outside Wales. The desire to develop in this direction is common to an increasing number of theatres who have hitherto been purely receiving venues.

Through Creu Cymru networks and schemes, and with the administrative support and professional experience of its staff, all theatres and arts centres now have the opportunity to engage as never before with colleagues - sharing ideas and information about touring product across artforms, working together on joint programming and marketing activities, and as groups and individuals visiting festivals and performances to research and report back on companies and performances.

The membership of Creu Cymru, across all scales of presentation, has levels of professionalism, knowledge and skill which can be seen only as the most valuable of resources to call upon to inform the strategies and developments needed to successfully realise the future direction of

artform presentation and audience development in Wales.

However, as Elan Closs Stephens noted in her report *A Position Paper on Theatres and Arts Centres in Wales*:

“In the past the sector has not been viewed as a strategic partner for ACW, capable of offering discussions on art forms and audiences. Whilst ACW has recently agreed artform strategies there is no strategic plan for the curatorial leadership and business development of theatres and arts centres and no sector lead officer. The sector now wishes to engage fully with the Arts Council as a strategic partner in developing the wellbeing of companies and the enhancement of audience appreciation.”

Now is the opportunity to utilise the skills and knowledge contained within the organisations responsible for the delivery and marketing of the performing arts to the people of Wales. We are confident that through an ongoing, informed and forward looking exchange between funders and sector an effective Presentation Strategy can be implemented, reviewed and developed in the greater interest of both audiences and practitioners.



Tanja Raman (Photo: John Collingswood)

a) National network of theatres and arts centres



The importance of sustaining and developing our national network of theatres and arts centres, ensuring that they are well equipped and well resourced, is essential to the development of the performing arts across Wales. Our theatres and arts centres are the link between presentation and audience development. Often they are the places where local communities are able to participate in the performing arts, either through professionally run activities or through involvement in amateur groups and organisations.

The network across Wales encompasses theatres and arts centres covering small, medium and large scale. Some have a production capability, some are increasingly involved in partnerships with producers, and some have a strong arts development remit.

At the larger scale, theatres in the towns and cities will have a regional and sometimes national and international profile, whilst at the mid and small scale the theatres' focus will be on serving a more local catchment area. It is quite likely, however, that these theatres will be presenting a programme of high quality performances from Wales, the rest of the UK and international companies, as part of their ongoing activity.

On the smaller scale, the Night Out scheme allows people to experience music, drama and

dance in their community centres and village halls. In a country such as Wales this is a vital facility.

Such a creative and supportive network is essential in delivering WAG and ACW policies and strategies regarding access, quality, artform and audience development. Without the existence of theatres and arts centres at the heart of communities in Wales, many people would be denied their right to access arts activities. For reasons of geography, transport, history and culture, people identify strongly with their local theatre or arts centre and have demonstrated an unwillingness to travel beyond their local area for this purpose unless it is for a significantly different scale of experience.

The development of much of this network has been an organic process driven by local needs and demands and supported by local communities. Although the network has not been established as a result of an overarching strategic analysis, it nevertheless represents a structure of delivery based upon experience of need, ambition for development and commitment from communities and funders. It is a network appropriate in size, spread and diversity for the engagement of people across Wales in the performing arts as audiences or participants.

In April 2008 Creu Cymru held three regional meetings of its membership across Wales to consider the role and future development of the theatre and arts centre sector. With support from the Arts Council of Wales it commissioned Elan Closs Stephens to chair each meeting and present a report on the resulting debate. The result was *A Position Paper on Theatres and Arts Centres in Wales*. The paper was circulated to the membership and the Arts Council of Wales in July 2009, its findings contributing to ACW's *Imagine - A Vision for the Arts in Wales*.

The paper identified that theatres and arts centres:

- form an arterial network that sustains, nourishes, originates and distributes creative content to the people of Wales.
- develop diverse audiences, provide access and inclusion, and foster loyalty.
- provide active support for the development of creative artists.
- are creative hubs and focal points of the local community.
- are a popular and well-used resource by people in Wales. In the financial year 2008-9, theatres and arts centres sold over 2.5 million tickets to performances.
- provide a wide range of participatory activities for people of all ages and abilities.

The paper also found that theatres and arts centres should be considered as:

- strategic partners to the Arts Council of Wales's delivery of access, diversity and social inclusion.
- a tool for growing audiences for new companies, for fostering the audience's relationship with more established companies and the development of artform.
- the means to present, through collaboration, work of quality and excellence.

As well as providing cultural, educational and social benefit to the communities of Wales, the sector is a major contributor in terms of employment, and has additional financial

benefit to the rest of the community in areas such as tourism, accommodation and services.

Maintaining and developing a network of theatres and arts centres, whose buildings are sound and well maintained, efficient to run, and are technically well-equipped, is key to developing a strategy for the presentation of performing arts across Wales. This requires an urgent review of capital needs and a capital plan that identifies the key priorities.

This strategy will inform the development of a sector that wishes to further professionalise its activities, grow its audiences, exploit its commercial opportunities, and achieve more for the public finance investment.

The strategy will recognise and retain the individuality of each theatre or arts centre whilst recognising the value of clusters of theatres (some such as RCT Theatres/ Carmarthenshire Theatres/Blaenau Gwent Venues have shared management and/or a single artistic policy). For them to be central to their communities, they have to provide work that resonates with that community - the audience is created because something special happens there. They need to continue to set individual targets as well as co-operating to achieve regional and national targets. This diversity is the strength of the network and any loss of provision will damage Wales-wide access to the performing arts.



Máiré Ní Chathasaigh & Chris Newman

b) Engendering a collaborative sector



Maddy Prior & the Carnival Band

There have already been considerable changes within the sector. The traditional base of companies and theatres primarily funded for production has been extended by a growing number of presenting theatres producing and touring work either from existing companies or performers brought together for a specific tour.

The benefits of this approach are that the work is informed by specific artform or audience development need and there is a resulting opportunity for joint marketing and technical support across the tour.

A collaborative sector has a major role in artform development. With theatres and arts centres engaging actively with directors, companies and other creators of work in the performing arts, the sector can be seen as unified, acting for the benefit of all.

Collaborations bring theatres, arts centres and creators together, in partnerships to which each bring their own particular skills and interests. These can encompass a range of creative collaborations with a corresponding range of aims:

- Individual promoters working together to **commission, produce, and promote** a tour or programme of tours that meet agreed criteria either for audience development or to develop particular genres of work. These would also involve joint marketing and administration.

- Theatres and arts centres **working as producer** either through their own company (eg, Sherman Cymru, Torch) or in partnerships to fulfil a particular strategic need (eg, Mappa Mundi/Theatr Mwldan).

- **Long-term collaborations** that involve professional development opportunities, programming, critical debate, joint promotion and marketing (eg, Inventive Promoter, 21st-Century Promoter, Valleys Roots).

- Collaborations that focus on **national development priorities** (eg, Family Friendly initiatives).

[Theatres and arts centres often play an active part in a number of collaborations.]

This approach develops a more strategic framework in which the provision of touring reflects more fully the audience development ambitions of theatres and arts centres.

In order to increase both presentation opportunities and access, the sector will also consider other opportunities for programming, including:

- promotions outside the theatre or arts centre using **other spaces**.
- **site specific** work.
- the virtual links offered by the new digital era in the presentation of **screened live performances** (eg, National Theatre, Royal Opera).

c) Programming and presentation of work

Theatres and arts centres have a strong curatorial role in providing a mixture of experiences for their audiences across the whole range of the performing arts - drama, dance, music, comedy, circus and performance art. Many also promote cinema (commercial and cultural), literature and the visual arts.

Programming is accomplished through developing existing relationships with companies, as well as through the development of new relationships with companies whose work assists in furthering the promoters' artistic, audience development or financial strategies. A major development has been the production collaborations that have provided the opportunity to promote work not previously available, and that sustain and develop programming across the sector.

The key issues for developmental programming are the need:

- to offer diverse and evolving multi-artform programmes.
- to build sustainable audiences for each artform.
- for theatres to balance their programmes in relation to artistic considerations and with regard to cash flow, income and expenditure projections and the need for many venues to offer product that will appeal to a broad cross section of the community.
- to maximise the skills and knowledge of theatre programmers and marketers.

These issues will be different for each theatre and arts centre depending on scale, catchment area, resources and different operating contexts - those run by local authorities, those within universities and the ones managed by independent boards.

However, a common concern is the lack of choice and availability of high-quality touring productions around which to build audience and artform development initiatives. In terms of national identity and profile a difficulty for the sector is that there is a lack of work being

created in Wales of the appropriate quality, innovation, reliability and frequency.

In drama and dance particularly, this has encouraged a number of theatres and arts centres, previously recognised as presenters, to become producers and co-producers. Through Creu Cymru's collaborative networks they share a knowledge of the sector's programming ambitions and audience development strategies. This is used to inform the choice of production and company.

The success of these collaborations, that also support the companies in developing their artistic ambitions, indicates that there is a benefit to be had from a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to the remit of funded companies. In this way, a funding environment is created to encourage a more strategic co-operation between producers and presenters, so there exists a clearer understanding of the relationship between the work produced and the development of audiences and artform. There are also clearly financial benefits in cost sharing and collaborative marketing initiatives.



d) Audience development

Programmers and marketers work together to agree an approach to programming and audience development that recognises the artistic and commercial strategies of the organisation. Ideally these should also involve closer working relationships with the producing companies, to engender a sense of shared responsibility for audience development.

Many examples of the benefits to audience development have already been seen through collaborative tour planning. This offers theatres and arts centres the opportunity to inform product choice, support joint audience development initiatives and provide high-quality touring on a consistent basis.

Building audiences takes time, focus and co-ordination between presenters, producers and funders. However, much has already been achieved in establishing networks for programme development, marketing and audience building amongst Creu Cymru members (eg, Creu Cymru artform consortia; Inventive Promoter; 21st-Century Promoter; Valleys Roots)

Relationships with production companies are vital, as is an understanding from all organisations, including ACW, that building audiences is a long-term investment. Any long-term strategy in audience development will involve co-operative and strategic thinking by companies and theatres which will inform the choice and provision of touring and other work.

In this area, it is important that Creu Cymru and the sector work in partnership with Audiences Wales on the practical implementation of their research findings.

e) Curating and managing

It is in the sector's own interest, as well as the interest of audiences, producers and funders, to continue to invest in professional development and training opportunities.

Training programmes for the sector will be sourced through providers including Audiences Wales, ITC, TMA, AMA.

i) Curating

Professional development opportunities will include:

- supporting individual and group visits to performances, UK and international festivals and cultural conferences.
- a programme of national and regional symposia and debates.
- development of a mentoring scheme for programmers and marketers.

ii) Managing

Ways to support financial management will include:

- Supporting initiatives to fully exploit the commercial revenues from theatres and arts centres (eg, hire of spaces; provision of café, bookshop or other retail outlet).
- Providing more investment across the sector in business development.
- Encouraging a more dynamic approach to maximising additional funding (eg, joint approaches to trusts and foundations, support from local businesses). It would widen funding bases and reduce reliance on just one or two major funding sources and would also contribute to long-term sustainability.

There will be guidelines, based on good practice, to inform the management of the network. Although the engagement in training/professional development will be dependent on the size and scope of the theatre, the intention will be to create a more unified and co-ordinated approach to management issues across the sector. In turn this will engender a greater understanding of the skill sets required to fulfil the different roles within theatres and arts centres. From this will come a clearer appreciation of the professional status of people working within the sector, and the career structures that will attract high quality entrants to the profession in future years.



Harnisch-Lacey Dance Theatre (Photo Matt Thomas)

2. OUR VISION

An inclusive, sustainable and vibrant sector in Wales for presentation of the performing arts, which involves theatres and arts centres, Wales-based companies and producers working collaboratively to further the aims of artform and audience development.

3. OUR PRIORITIES

This strategy paper has identified the following priorities which should lie at the heart of a structured and focussed programme of engagement involving funders, producers, presenters (including Night Out presenters) and audiences:

- National network of theatres and arts centres
- Programming and presentation of work
- Engendering a collaborative sector
- Audience development
- Curating and managing

The national network of theatres and arts centres will grow and thrive through the encouragement of organic co-operation based on shared aims and needs.

This growth will result from the opportunity for information and expertise sharing, critical debate, identification of potential collaborations, and programme and audience development initiatives.

The long-term sustainability of the sector will also be enhanced by the support it will be able to give its workforce to engage in a programme of training and professional development.

4. STRATEGIC STEPS

The network will have the status as strategic partner with ACW in delivering the strategy for theatres and arts centres in Wales, as summarised in the following table.

OUR VISION	OUR PRIORITIES	STRATEGIC STEPS
<p>An inclusive, sustainable and vibrant sector in Wales for presentation of the performing arts, which involves theatres and arts centres, Wales-based companies and producers working collaboratively to further the aims of artform and audience development.</p>	<p>The national network of theatres and arts centres</p>	<p><u>Resource category 1</u> Dialogue with ACW Chief Executive, regional directors and senior artform officers to agree a plan for sustaining and developing the national network</p> <p>Strategy to be developed by the theatres and arts centres in partnership with local authorities, WAG and other stakeholders</p> <p>The network to be an active and engaged partner in the strategies of ACW (the relationship to be monitored and developed through bi-annual meetings between the network and ACW)</p> <p>Identify those theatres and arts centres that are producers or co-producers, and those that have aspirations or potential to develop in this way</p> <p>Establishment between Creu Cymru and ACW of an industry standard for technical facilities (appropriate for each scale of theatre and arts centre)</p> <p><u>Resource category 2</u> To undertake a project mapping the sector, identifying present and potential collaborations</p> <p>To undertake a cultural, economic and social review of the sector</p> <p>To undertake an audit of building and technical resources across the membership. This review and its findings can inform relevant WAG projects, such as the Heads of the Valleys funding pot</p> <p>To identify the existing network through a piece of research mapping the interconnectivity of theatres and arts centres and where shared services and programme and audience development activities already exists.</p> <p>The map to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect existing collaborations • inform discussions as to the potential relationships between local and regional theatres and arts centres and development of clusters of common interest • highlight examples of good practice <p style="text-align: right;">Cont...</p>

		<p><u>Resource category 3</u> Capital investment in the buildings and technical resources of Wales's theatres and arts centres</p>
	<p>Engendering a collaborative sector</p>	<p><u>Resource category 1</u> Continue to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • networking opportunities (eg, Creu Cymru facilitated artform consortia); professional development (eg, Go and See scheme) • collaborations (eg, Inventive and 21st-Century Promoter schemes) • more interface between presenters and producers (eg, the relationship between Creu Cymru and WAPA) <p><u>Resource Category 2</u> Increase investment in Go and See and professional development</p> <p>Develop mentoring and twinning opportunities</p> <p><u>Resource Category 3</u> Develop international twinning opportunities</p> <p>A training programme for individuals and groups of staff and trustees incorporating both skills training and in the development of the creation and promotion of the performing arts</p>
	<p>Programming and presentation of work</p>	<p><u>Resource category 1</u> Theatres and arts centres developing relationships with companies and producers</p> <p>ACW and sector to have dialogue with funded companies regarding the provision of work that meets artform and audience development strategies</p> <p><u>Resource category 2</u> Creating funding mechanisms to facilitate co-production initiatives in line with the theatres' and arts centres' audience development aims</p> <p>Support for development of artform priorities, eg the development of a dance touring partnership for Wales</p> <p><u>Resource category 3</u> Secured funding to develop and provide high quality performance on a regular basis</p>

	<p>Audience development</p>	<p><u>Resource category 1</u> Increase engagement between Audiences Wales and existing Creu Cymru networks (eg, artform consortia, Inventive and 21st-Century promoter groups) to explore the practical implementation of research findings</p> <p><u>Resource category 2</u> To develop informed box office and audience data research programmes that will enhance the theatres' understanding of their audiences (with Audiences Wales)</p> <p><u>Resource category 3</u> To undertake an audit of marketing resources of the CC membership and to initiate a programme of investment to support the development of those resources</p>
	<p>Curating and managing</p>	<p><u>Resource category 1</u> Develop a network of mentoring and shadowing opportunities between theatres and arts centres</p> <p>Develop partnerships with private companies, working within their CSR remit and with Arts & Business Cymru to offer advice on potential partnerships</p> <p>To produce industry standard guidelines of good management practice</p> <p><u>Resource category 2</u> Local authority theatres and arts centres to take advantage of the opportunities of networks such as Public Service Management Wales Annual Summer School</p> <p>Financial support to be offered to cover fees and missed working days (for staff attending training courses / professional development opportunities)</p> <p>Take advantage of existing leadership programmes and develop different and more customised programmes together with a professional accreditation (with input from Creative and Cultural Skills / Clore Leadership programme / AMA / ITC)</p> <p>Investing in developing business skills within the sector (eg, supporting initiatives to fully exploit commercial revenues from theatres and arts centres)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Cont...</p>

		<p>Investing in the continued development of a knowledgeable and experienced workforce</p> <p>Individual professional development provided through existing schemes and the development of mentoring and twinning with other successful organisations not necessarily in the arts</p>
--	--	---



Cyfarwyddwr | Director
Richard Hogger

Rheolydd Datblygu | Development Manager
Deborah Keyser

Gweinyddiaeth | Administration
Yvonne O'Donovan

Creu Cymru
12 Unedau Creadigol | Creative Units
Canolfan y Celfyddydau Aberystwyth Arts Centre
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
Cymru | Wales
SY23 3GL

ffôn | tel +44 (0)1970 639444

Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Assembly Government



CEFNOGI CREADIGRWYDD
CYNGOR CELFYDDYDAU CYMRU
THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES
SUPPORTING CREATIVITY