

Re: Live Performance and Creative Industries Industrial Strategy

Friday, 6th October 2023

Dear Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee,

I am writing to request the committee to examine the urgent necessity for a comprehensive industrial strategy encompassing the Live Performance sector in Wales (including Theatre, Dance, Opera, and Music) as well as the broader Creative Industries.

The substantial and widely beneficial impact of a well-defined and sustained industrial strategy for the Creative Industries in Wales is well documented, showcasing remarkable growth within the sector over the last decade. However, the Live Performance sector in Wales is currently facing a complex, intersectional crisis despite possessing considerable assets in capital infrastructure, human resources and skills, a strong reputation, and a potentially excellent positioning in domestic and international markets.

In this post-pandemic, post-Brexit, and amidst a cost-of-living crisis reality, there are numerous shared challenges and opportunities that could be better addressed through a strategically underpinned partnership between Live Performance and the Creative Industries:

- 1. Skills Shortage:** The sector has witnessed a significant exodus of skilled individuals during and after the pandemic. This talent drain is evident across both the creative and technical aspects of the sector and at various career stages. Structural issues within apprenticeships and training, compounded by the small size of many organisations and already stretched administrative structures, have hindered the full utilisation of apprenticeship schemes. Given the well-established talent pipeline from Live Performance to the wider Creative Industries, there exist notable opportunities for more interconnected working to meet shared needs.
- 2. Utilising Existing and Potential Capital Assets:** Although there is considerable co-working and asset sharing between the sectors, Live Performance's capacity, infrastructure, and legislative support to attract commercial investment and effectively manage risks for sustained growth significantly lag behind its Creative Industries counterparts. As all large venue-based organisations are having to make fundamental changes to their business models, an interconnected strategic perspective regarding the ongoing potential of capital assets and better cross-sector collaboration would have a substantial impact on the Welsh economy.

3. **Development and Exploitation of Intellectual Property:** A compelling case can be made that all the capital, organisational, and human infrastructure required for a commercial theatre production hub in Wales already exists. However, what is lacking are the strategic and organisational capabilities to attract and manage commercial investment and risk over the medium term. While the live performance sector possesses well-established models for substantial and sustained income generation, project life cycles may span between 5-15 years with the need to manage multiple and variable seven-figure risks over that period. Currently, the live performance sector lacks organisations with the capacity to operate in this manner, and there is no existing framework for the government to invest or support this form of investment, as is the case within the screen and digital media industry. This lack of capacity is also profoundly limiting innovation, particularly in relation to hybrid live and digital forms. Research and development opportunities are being offered through organisations such as Creative Cardiff, however, the Live Performance sector lacks the capacity to respond with agility and flexibility to these offers. This is causing us to fall behind our competitors nationally and internationally in a fast evolving and exceptionally lucrative marketplace to the detriment of both the Digital and Live performance sectors.
4. **Bilingual Talent Development:** While some established Welsh creatives, especially Writers, Directors, and Performers, can move fluidly between Live Performance and the Wider Creative Industries, there is also a considerable loss of talented individuals leaving Wales to seek employment elsewhere in the U.K. or exiting the industry altogether due to being siloed within a single art form. Establishing joined-up talent development initiatives (for example, bringing together television and film to theatre and dance) supported by a combined industrial strategy could have a transformative effect in this area.
5. **Data-Led Audience Development:** The majority of Welsh mid-scale and small-scale venues lack the financial and staffing capacity to perform the type of data-led audience development work that is commonplace across the rest of the U.K. This has a considerable impact on audience numbers and ticket sales, and therefore the commercial viability of touring and theatre production in Wales. A shared investment in this area, accompanied by well-planned evaluation and impact management, could have a transformative effect on Return on Investment (ROI) in production and presentation models nationally.
6. **Green Agenda and Recycling:** While there is sector-leading work being done in both Live Performance and the wider Creative Industries around low and zero carbon producing models, significant inefficiencies persist in storage, recycling, transport, accommodation, and the hire/sharing of technical equipment and infrastructure. Targeted capital investment into key infrastructure supporting national hubs of activity could yield substantial economic and environmental impacts.
7. **International Reach:** Presently, there is clearly evidenced demand for Welsh Live Performance internationally. However, barriers related to financial,

administrative, and human capacity are leaving this demand unmet. By fostering joined-up communications, investment, and more effective resource utilisation, the combined sectors could deliver considerably more impact, both economically and crucially, reputationally. This aligns with the shared responsibility to showcase a vibrant and confident Wales to global partners and audiences.

This letter offers a non-exhaustive overview of the areas that a combined industrial strategy could address. We are experiencing an outdated and artificial barrier between these sectors and I ask that the committee seek evidence and perspectives as to how we may better serve the people of Wales in working in a more fluid and impactful way with the support of government. On behalf of National Theatre Wales and the wider sector, I would be delighted to provide a list of key individuals who could offer their perspectives on the areas outlined in this letter and other relevant opportunities. Over the last 6 months, I have been part of the steering group for an impact study on the combined live and creative industries in the U.K. led by McKinsey. This report explores impact models in some of the areas discussed herein. I would like to extend an invitation to the committee to the report's launch on 27th November and will furnish the committee clerk with further details.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to discussing this with you and other colleagues in the collective interest of the continued resilience and impact of these remarkable facets of Welsh culture and society.

Diolch yn fawr.

Yours sincerely,



Lorne Campbell
Artistic Director/Chief Executive.
National Theatre Wales.