

## ABSTRACT

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The National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) was established by an act of the Scottish Parliament on September 11, 2003. Scottish finance minister Andy Kerr proclaimed that the NTS would be based in Glasgow, but that it would not be defined as a single company or building. Instead it would be a commissioning body working with the help of Scotland's existing theatre companies to develop productions that would showcase the best of Scottish theatre to the nation and the world. Without a dedicated theatre space around which to build an identity, how will this new national theatre-commissioning concept work? My thesis traces the ways in which the concept of a "national theatre" has changed in Scotland over the past one hundred years, and how the shifting meanings and uses of the concept of a "national theatre" have served a series of initiatives to establish an independent Scottish cultural identity.

**Keywords: National Theatre of Scotland, National Theatres, Nationalism, Cultural Identity, Abbey Theatre**

SEARCHING FOR *HOME*: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL  
THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

By

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## Introduction

The National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) was established by an act of the Scottish Parliament on September 11, 2003.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government new release announcing this initiative stated, “The new National Theatre will be expected to set dramatic standards and provide strategic and artistic leadership. It will commission work from Scotland's existing creative talent for production that will tour the country.”<sup>2</sup> (Please see Appendix 1 for the text of the News Release.) Scottish finance minister Andy Kerr proclaimed that the NTS would be based in Glasgow, but that it would not be defined as a single company or building. Instead it would be a commissioning body working with the help of Scotland’s existing theatre companies to develop productions that would showcase the best of Scottish theatre to the nation and the world. Kerr also revealed that government funding had been allocated to establish the theatre, (proposals for which had been in existence since 1909).<sup>3</sup> On September 25, Frank McAveety, Scottish Minister for Culture Tourism and Sport said:

I am delighted to speak on behalf of the Scottish Executive in support of our motion on a national theatre. Proposals for a national theatre have spent decades in the wings, with an expectant theatre sector and theatre audience eagerly awaiting their entry. However, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, the national theatre seemed destined never to achieve corporeal reality. That said, over the past few years, the idea of a national theatre has moved dramatically from the periphery of many people's cultural vision to occupy the foreground of their concerns for the arts in Scotland. It has been emblematic of much of the debate about Scotland's identity and

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<sup>1</sup> My research involved interviews at the National Theatre of Scotland on January 7-9, 2007 in Glasgow, Scotland. However, my interviewees were not comfortable with signing my approved IRB, due to this I have not used any direct quotes from our conversations.

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government website, available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2003/09/4112> (accessed on 6 December 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Wade. “First Funding for National Theatre to Come ‘in days’,” *The Scotsman*, 1 September 2003. p. 3, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=963432003> (Accessed October 17, 2005).

cultural future and about how, in a devolved Scotland, the arts can best contribute to our society and its cultural identity.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the idea for a Scottish national theatre has been around as long as the fight for a devolved Scotland. Forerunners of this idea, which first emerged in 1822 after King George IV visit to Edinburgh's Theatre Royal, were frustrated for almost two hundred years. Finally, however, Scotland was to have its first national theatre. On November 2, 2005, Tim Cornwell announced the first NTS season in *The Scotsman*,

There was a real sense of excitement yesterday at the Tramway, as the National Theatre of Scotland launched its first annual programme. On one hand, it was a historic occasion - the climax of almost a century of campaigning for a Scottish national theatre; on the other, there was something thrilling about the fact that the company now taking shape so much reflects the innovative 21st-century model Scotland's creative theatre folk had wished for, a national theatre that would pour its money not into bricks and mortar, or structures and institutions, but on to stages across Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

The NTS was intended to promote the work of Scottish playwrights, actors, directors, designers, and perhaps most importantly, a Scottish theatre identity. Supporters hoped that the NTS would unite theatre artists, help to build a national legacy, and establish a new native theater tradition for Scotland and her people. No longer, they argued, would the best and brightest of Scotland's theatre artists have to pursue their careers away from their homeland. They also promised that the new institution would create a new national audience; and the expectation was that together audience and theater would help to create a Scottish theatrical identity, which would in turn assist Scotland in its search for its own

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<sup>4</sup> Scottish Parliamentary Debate, 25 September 2003. [Internet]. Available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-03/sor0925-02.htm#Col2125>. Accessed on October 12, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Time Cornwell "National Theatre Gets ready for Takeoff," *The Scotsman*, 2 November 2005, p. 9, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=2181162005> (Accessed on November 10, 2005).

national cultural identity. This longing for a national identity appeared most visibly in the NTS's 2006 inaugural production entitled *Home* – a project which featured ten simultaneous productions occurring throughout Scotland, and which was imagined as an event that would celebrate Scottish culture. The production title itself raises intriguing questions about identity, belonging and ownership. In this thesis I will examine the complicated issue of constructing a native theatre tradition during the twentieth century in Scotland and how that contributed to the establishment of the National Theatre of Scotland in 2003.

As excited as the Scottish arts community was about the prospect of a national theatre, however, a number of politicians and journalists doubted that this venture would ever truly take shape. From the first funding announcement newspapers in Scotland and England produced an endless stream of articles and opinion pieces both for and against the idea of a national theatre.<sup>6</sup> Even the arts community that had initially fought for the designation demonstrated almost as much wariness as celebration, since many Scottish companies were now worried that the establishment of the NTS would be used as an excuse for funding cuts in their arts budgets. There was also the concern that the existing theaters in Scotland were *already* doing what the NTS was proposing to do.

The conflict over the NTS reflected a series of ongoing debates that have endured for the past one hundred years, as artists and citizens have witnessed a continuing struggle for a national cultural identity in Scotland. From the emergence of the Scottish

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<sup>6</sup> For an example of some of the positive commentary please see David Scott, "Fresh Calls for a Pledge on the National Theatre," *The Scotsman*, 13 February 2003, p. 9, and Claire Smith, "Ongoing Drama: The Fight for a National Theatre," *The Scotsman*, 28 November 2002, p. 5. For some contrasting views see Juliette Garside, "Is it Curtains for a National Theatre?" *The Sunday Herald*, 01 December 2002, p. 14, and Mike Wade, "Executive Muted over National Theatre Plan," *The Scotsman*, 28 November 2002, p. 1. These articles are referenced throughout my thesis.

Renaissance that championed a national culture; to the establishment of the Scottish National Party (SNP); to the battle for devolution and home rule; to the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament; and now the creation of a National Theatre, Scots have debated but never agreed on an art form, a government structure, or an ideological mission that defines them *as* Scots. With this fractured history, can the new National Theatre of Scotland help the Scottish people construct a unified national cultural identity?

This raises the questions: Which parties or factions in the past have tried to define a single national identity for Scotland, and why? Since no country can ever legitimately claim to have a single point of origin, or a single ideological mission, efforts to establish cultural mythologies must necessarily be connected to political or social movements that would make such a shared identity useful in some way. For example, contemporary scholars have explored the ways in which the Scots have labored to separate their cultural history from that of England and have queried to what extent such a separation is either possible or useful since Scotland has been part of Great Britain since the 1707 Act of Union. Jonathan Hearn writes:

Scots are used to living in the cultural shadow of England, having their history, language and culture measured against an English standard. For centuries Scots have been told that historical progress is a matter of following England's example. Getting ahead has often meant suppressing the Scots language and approximating to the norms of middle-class English speech—and even leaving Scotland all together. Scottish culture has tended to be crudely stereotyped, portrayed as quaint and romantic, a pastiche of kilts, clans and bagpipes and somehow suspended in a distant past, no longer truly relevant. These images and attitudes have been created as much by Scots, especially expatriates and the middle class, as they have been by the English. But the result has been a legacy of resentment, and many Scots believe that greater control over their own politics would foster a more confident and self-assured cultural identity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Hearn, *Claiming Scotland; National Identity and Liberal Culture*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 3-4.

Hearn's suggestion that many Scots seek a "more confident and self-assured cultural identity," points to one of the motives for establishing a national theatre in Scotland.

The role of the theatre in the fight for nation and nationalism has been articulated in works ranging from Friedrich Schiller's *The Stage as a Moral Institution*, written in 1794, to the recent theoretical writings of Anthony D. Smith, S. E. Wilmer, and Benedict Anderson, among others. Loren Kruger's *The National Stage* and Kiki Gounaridou's collection of modern theoretical essays in *Staging Nationalism* also provide examples of the argument regarding theatre in nation building around the world from Poland to Japan, Indonesia to Quebec. In each case, the role of theatre in the fight for nation and national cultural identity varies as does the forms that nationalism can take.

My thesis traces the ways in which the concept of a "national theatre" has changed in Scotland over the past one hundred years, and how the shifting meanings and uses of the concept of a "national theatre" have served a series of initiatives that are part of an attempt to establish an independent Scottish cultural identity. By tracking the national debate regarding the need for a theatre for the ten years prior to its creation, I will explore the various arguments for and against the idea of a national theatre. Scotland has two recognized and award winning national theatre examples in close proximity, the Irish National Theatre (Abbey Theatre) in Dublin and the National Theatre in London, yet they chose not to follow those established models. Instead, they created their own representation of what a "national theatre" needed to be for a devolved Scotland. This model involves several revolutionary changes to the standard idea of how a national theatre operates. While most national theatres rely on an audience that comes to them, the NTS is organized and built around the concept of taking the theatre to the people of

Scotland. Without a dedicated theatre space around which to build an identity, how will this new national theatre-commissioning concept work? Loren Kruger writes, “A theatre in the center of the city confers on the cultural practices housed there a legitimacy generally denied to performances of the same text in a peripheral space.”<sup>8</sup> If this is true, can the NTS succeed without a centrally located performing space for its work and who and what will qualify if the NTS as a success? Finally, how are Scotland and “Scottishness” represented in NTS’s inaugural production of *Home* in February of 2006? Did the ten individual productions performed in ten locations throughout Scotland help to promote the uniqueness of a Scottish culture or did they further intensify the regional differences? Is there *one* monolithic or instead multiple Scottish cultural identities?

### **The Struggle for a National Theatre of Scotland**

The issue of a national theatre for Scotland has come up repeatedly since Sir Walter Scott originally championed the idea following King George IV’s visit to Edinburgh on August 27, 1822. As part of that momentous event there was a command performance of *Rob Roy* at the Theatre Royal.<sup>9</sup> The argument for a national theatre would raise its head again and again through the centuries, but no concrete steps were ever taken to make it a reality. This would continue until the 1940s when Scottish Renaissance member Hugh MacDiarmid wrote an essay championing the need for a Scottish National Theatre that brought the conversation back to the public’s attention.

According to Juliette Garside, arts correspondent for the *Sunday Herald*, “The curtain came up on the story as long ago as 1949, when then Chancellor Sir Richard

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<sup>8</sup> Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France and America*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Mackenzie, *Scotland’s First National Theatre* (Edinburgh: The Stanley Press, 1963), 31-32.

Stafford Cripps became the first politician to promise government funding for the project. After the Treasury's decision to back a national theatre in London, Cripps told the Commons that the 'Government would give sympathetic consideration to the question of Treasury aid towards the cost of erecting a Scottish National Theatre in Edinburgh'.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Cripps died in 1953 and the dream of a national theatre died with him—at least temporarily.

The idea for a national theatre almost became a reality in 1970 when the Scottish Arts Council prepared a report entitled *Theatre in Scotland* that recommended turning the Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh into a national theatre. However, the Lyceum was under the direction of Bill Bryden, Clive Perry and Richard Eyre —one Scot and two Englishmen. Perry and Eyre apparently did not relish the idea of producing only Scottish plays. Bill Bryden, however, did produce several well received Scottish plays there including *The Burning* by Stewart Conn, and his own play *Willie Rough*. Arguments continued between the Lyceum and members of the Scottish Arts Council until eventually all three men left the Lyceum and returned to the London theatre community. Bryden and Eyre would work together again at the National Theatre in London during the next decade.<sup>11</sup> In 1974, Bryden commented on the failed Scottish national theatre plan: “Our job is to make a Scottish theatre that stands up to be counted among the best companies in Europe. We are only beginning, but many movements of great potential in Scotland have died right there. The Scots truly 'don't know what they've got 'till it's

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<sup>10</sup> Juliette Garside, “Is it Curtains for a National Theatre?” *The Sunday Herald*, 01 December 2002, p. 14, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Search words: National Theatre of Scotland and Garside. (accessed 1 November 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Donald Campbell, *A Brighter Sunshine: A Hundred Years of the Edinburgh Royal Lyceum Theatre* (Edinburgh: Polygon books, 1983), 197-207.

gone'.”<sup>12</sup> Stewart Conn, a member of the Scottish Arts Council drama panel who had taken part in preparing the report, echoed Bryden when he said, “My recollection is that it was a harder struggle then. There was more sniping among theatre people. It foundered amongst inertia and lack of funding. I don't think it ever really came close last time, there were too many impediments to it. This time it is so close I think it would be a tragedy if it didn't happen.”<sup>13</sup> Once again the idea of a national theatre was raised only to fail due to infighting and a lack of a coherent mission which prevented the idea from gaining popular support in Scotland.

More recently, the Scottish Arts Council initiated a new project for a Scottish national theatre in 1994. Unfortunately, no consensus could be reached on how this theatre would operate. A new interest and focus on Scottish arts was raised after the 1998 Scotland Act resulted in the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament, for the first time since 1707, and a commitment to local and regional matters that included tourism, Scottish heritage and the Gaelic language.<sup>14</sup> The issue resurfaced when The Education, Culture, and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament met on December 1, 1999 and raised the question of a national theatre. They announced that they wanted to hear as many views as possible on the issue. One of the respondents was Hamish Glen, the artistic director and chief executive of Dundee Repertory Theatre and the chair of the Federation of Scottish Theatres who stressed that the federation was behind the idea of a national theatre and that they saw this as an “opportunity to improve the cultural life of

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<sup>12</sup> Juliette Garside, “Is it Curtains for a National Theatre?” *The Sunday Herald*, 01 December 2002, p. 14, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Search words: National Theatre of Scotland and Garside (accessed 1 November 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government Website, available at: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/publicInfo/hspw/devolution.htm> Accessed 12 November 2006.

Scotland.” They applauded the fact that “Parliament is considering this idea and is giving us the opportunity to talk in this context lifts Scottish theatre into a new arena—one that we have wanted it to enter for the past 20 years.” He added that,

We have been talking about the idea of a national theatre for some time. A model has emerged that attracts the support of professional theatre makers throughout Scotland and that Scotland can accommodate culturally. It aims to provide performance of an international standard, which should not be confined to music, opera, classical ballet, the visual arts and the libraries. As has been pointed out before, the glaring hole in that list is a national platform for Scottish theatre. The model that we propose will enhance the existing infrastructure, exploit more fully the existing financial investment in Scottish theatre and provide a national and international platform for Scotland's most popular performing art form.

The model has a parallel in the Edinburgh International Festival, which is probably the best-established platform for theatre in the world. It is an independent organisation that can commission work from exciting theatre artists and producing companies to deliver work of world-class quality.

We believe that a Scottish national theatre should also be an independent organisation with several remits of equal importance, if of differing scales. It should have a remit to commission work from artists and companies of all scales and from all disciplines, for example; music-theatre, theatre for young people and large-scale work. The best talent should have the opportunity to work for good wages and in excellent conditions in the pursuit of excellence. That work would make up a Scottish national theatre season.<sup>15</sup>

Glen not only emphasized the support of the Federation of Scottish Theatres, but has been said to have laid the foundation for a national theatre that would work with existing Scottish theatres with the intent of making all of them stronger in the process. In this same meeting Paul Scott of the Saltire Society, a Scotland based organization

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<sup>15</sup> Scottish Parliament, Education, Culture and Sports Committee Minutes of 1 December 1999. [Internet]; available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/historic/education/or-99/ed99-1002.htm>. Accessed on November 28, 2005.

established to celebrate and restore Scottish cultural traditions,<sup>16</sup> also supported the creation of a national theatre saying,

The society, along with many other organisations and individuals in Scotland, has campaigned consistently for a Scottish Parliament and for more than 60 years for a national theatre. Now that we have the Parliament, the national theatre is the only vital institution that Scotland still needs... It is an historical accident that Scotland has national companies for opera and ballet, art forms in which we have little claim to distinctive traditions of our own, but not for drama, in which we have a substantial body of work and our own styles of performance.

Without a national company committed to Scottish drama, new Scottish plays tend to disappear after only a few performances. We need a national theatre to give the Scottish tradition an impulse and a focus. Experience in other countries has shown that their national theatres stimulate not only drama but literature generally and the cultural life of the community. They enhance cultural confidence and are an important means of self-expression and self-understanding.<sup>17</sup>

However, Nicola Thorold of the Independent Theatre Council, a UK- based theatre organization that includes thirty-five members in Scotland, disagreed saying,

No single organisation could reflect the diversity of Scotland and its languages and cultures or could cover the range of artistic, educational and social issues that the arts can address... You already have a flexible and diverse national theatre resource, which you risk destroying by focusing the spotlight on one organisation. Scotland needs a coherent national theatre strategy to be developed in partnership with practitioners, and with bodies such as local authorities. We want that strategy to include consideration of the low investment in companies that work at local and community levels, and in companies that are starting out.<sup>18</sup>

This range of comments reveals the diverse opinions among the arts community regarding a national theatre proposal. It is particularly worth noting Thorold's assertion

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<sup>16</sup> Saltire Society website: Available at: <<http://www.saltiresociety.org.uk/aimsandobjectives.htm>> [Internet] Accessed 25 November 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Parliament, Education, Culture and Sports Committee Minutes of 1 December 1999. [Internet]; available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/historic/education/or-99/ed99-1002.htm>. Accessed on November 28, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

that no one theatre organization could encompass Scotland's *diversity*, a signal that for some, at least, the concept of *one* monolithic Scottish national identity held little appeal.

In 2000 the Parliament recommended funding for "...the establishment of a national theatre company to commission a national theatre season from artists and companies."<sup>19</sup> The Parliament then set up an Independent Working Group to further examine the issues involved in establishing a national theatre. However, the working group could not come to a consensus on how a national theatre would be funded and organized.

On December 1, 2002, Juliette Garside of the *Sunday Herald* wrote, "The latest bid to establish a national company, which once looked so promising, is now mired in money battles and bitter recriminations, with the main players left to cast around to identify the villain of the piece." She adds that the Scottish Executive<sup>20</sup> was also behind the plan,

In January minister for culture, Mike Watson, duly announced extra funding, making it quite clear that the money was there to lay the foundations for a national theatre. I have listened carefully to the voices of those within the sector who have said that it would be a mistake to proceed with the ambitious National Theatre project without addressing the pressing issues facing our existing companies. I agree that this must be the priority. This funding will achieve that purpose by letting the theatre sector give its full attention in the coming year to consolidating, improving

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<sup>19</sup> Scottish Parliament, Education, Culture and Sports Committee Minutes of 1 December 1999. [Internet]; available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/historic/education/or-99/ed99-1002.htm>. Accessed on November 28, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> The Scottish Executive or Scottish Government was created as part of the Scotland Act of 1998 which stated: (1) There shall be a Scottish Executive, whose members shall be— (a) the First Minister, (b) such Ministers as the First Minister may appoint under section 47, and (c) the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor General for Scotland. (2) The members of the Scottish Executive are referred to collectively as the Scottish Ministers. (3) A person who holds a Ministerial office may not be appointed a member of the Scottish Executive; and if a member of the Scottish Executive is appointed to a Ministerial office he shall cease to hold office as a member of the Scottish Executive. (4) In subsection (3), references to a member of the Scottish Executive include a junior Scottish Minister and "Ministerial office" has the same meaning as in section 2 of the [1975 c. 24.] [Internet]; available at [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1998/ukpga\\_19980046\\_en\\_4#pt2-pb1-l1g44](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1998/ukpga_19980046_en_4#pt2-pb1-l1g44). Accessed on December 6, 2007.

the quality of its performance, and ensuring a stable infrastructure. This will prepare the way for the eventual establishment of a National Theatre for Scotland.<sup>21</sup>

Excitement over this announcement quickly subsided because the budget committee never considered the funding proposal. This omission led to continued infighting within parliament and among leading arts spokespersons throughout Scotland. The Executive published its *National Cultural Strategy* report which included a feasibility study for a national theatre. “The key was that it would be a virtual national theatre, with a creative head (not necessarily a director) with a budget of £3m a year to commission productions from Scotland's existing companies and stage them in existing buildings. There would be no capital costs and minimal staff costs, making it quite different from the Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera, with their full complements of performers, stage crew, orchestras and buildings to maintain.”<sup>22</sup>

Due to a lack of commitment from the Scottish Parliament the idea of a national theatre continued to lack both an approved plan for the establishment of the leadership and the funding required for the next step. In addition, not everyone in the theatre community backed the idea. As I noted earlier, many feared that a national theatre would undermine the current arts budget for all theaters. Brian McMaster, director of the Edinburgh International Festival<sup>23</sup>, was one of the leading voices against the NTS. According to Garside, he opposed it because, “...every national theatre he had ever

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<sup>21</sup> Juliette Garside, “Is it Curtains for a National Theatre?” *The Sunday Herald*, 01 December 2002, p. 14, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Search words: National Theatre of Scotland and Garside (accessed 1 November 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Scottish Parliament, Education, Culture and Sports Committee Minutes of 1 December 1999. [Internet]; available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/historic/education/or-99/ed99-1002.htm>. Accessed on November 28, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Brian McMaster was a strong voice in opposition to the NTS as he felt that the Edinburgh International Festival already did what the NTS was proposed to do for theatre in Scotland.

encountered had been hamstrung by administrative costs and overpaid backstage crews. Although the plan at the moment is for a virtual company,” she continued, “McMaster believes this model is just the thin end of the wedge and that Scotland will end up having to pay for an expensive building-based company.”<sup>24</sup> So without strong leadership and a committed arts community the idea for a national theatre seemed destined to fail.

On November 28, 2002, Claire Smith, arts correspondent for *The Scotsman* wrote, “There are mutterings in the theatrical world that it is using the alleged commitment to a national theatre to hide its other shortcomings in arts policy... Yet despite continued funding crises and the drain of Scottish talent to the West End, Broadway and Hollywood, theatre luminaries insist the Scottish Executive is not taking the project seriously.”<sup>25</sup> Richard Hull, the director of EVA, an Edinburgh arts management company, said, “I think in principle it is a great idea. The same argument goes on in England about the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Opera taking the lion’s share of the funding but I think there is a trickle down effect, which benefits smaller companies. The Scottish Executive should do something about it. Something big, something bold and imaginative.” As Hamish Glen said before his very public departure from the Dundee Rep, “It is time for Scottish theatre to have a platform that fully recognises its place in Scotland's cultural life.”<sup>26</sup>

Glen’s departure for England due to a lack of funding at Dundee Rep was a serious blow to the fight for a national theatre as he had been the leading proponent for

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<sup>24</sup> Juliette Garside, “Is it Curtains for a National Theatre?” *The Sunday Herald*, 01 December 2002, p. 14, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Search words: National Theatre of Scotland and Garside (accessed 1 November 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Claire Smith, “Ongoing Drama: The Fight for a National Theatre.” *The Scotsman*, 28 November 2002, p. 5, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1324052002> (accessed on November 12, 2005.)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

the theatre and was instrumental in designing the project. He also served as the chair of the Federation of Scottish Theatre and was the director of the Dundee Rep. Claire Smith wrote in *The Scotsman*, “Last week he announced his departure for the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, where he will have at his command a budget twice the size of Dundee's, deploring the executive's silence on the project and its lack of financial support in general for Scottish drama. He can't see the project going ahead without more investment in existing companies.”<sup>27</sup> This public attack on the Scottish Executive created a firestorm of responses and demands for accountability.

Another article in the same edition of *The Scotsman* took the fight a step further. Mike Wade presented several arguments attacking the Scottish Executive's policy on the arts. In the article he wrote, “The Scottish Executive's arts policy was in chaos last night after a key figure in the development of a national theatre admitted he had no idea what was happening with the project. Dr Donald Smith, the chairman of the steering group set up to establish a national theatre, questioned ministers' commitment and said he was ‘puzzled’ by the silence over the issue.” Wade continued, “Yesterday, the Executive said it was fully committed to the project, after a scathing attack on its arts policy by the acclaimed director Hamish Glen.” He quotes Donald Smith: “It's not so much that we've been told we're not getting money, it's that we just don't know. That I find puzzling. The Scottish Executive has encouraged us all along and we now have got to the point where it is a matter of delivery and investment, and suddenly there is a deafening silence. I'm the chair of the steering group, and I don't know what's going on, and nor does the arts council.” Finally, Wade writes, “Mike Russell, the Scottish National Party arts

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<sup>27</sup> Claire Smith, “Ongoing Drama: The Fight for a National Theatre.” *The Scotsman*, 28 November 2002, p. 5, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1324052002> (accessed on November 12, 2005.)

spokesman, said: ‘A lot of people have been led up the garden path by the Executive. There needs to be a commitment both to the theatre and the national theatre. Keeping silent is not an option.’<sup>28</sup>

The fight in the newspapers continued until December 2<sup>nd</sup> when Claire Smith wrote in *The Scotsman*, “Jack McConnell is to face tough questions in the Scottish Parliament this week about the crisis in the arts, amid claims that the National Theatre project has come to a complete standstill. Mike Russell, the SNP’s arts spokesman, will use First Minister’s Question Time to demand answers on the Executive’s commitment to a National Theatre and to theatre funding in general...Last night, Mr. Russell told *The Scotsman* he would ask why the Executive had failed to appoint a chairman for the National Theatre of Scotland. He said: “The Scottish Arts Council were asked by the Executive to get a chairman for the National Theatre this summer and have advertised the position twice. My understanding is that there have been a number of applications but no appointment. My further understanding is the Scottish Arts Council has frozen the appointment as they don’t know if they are going to have the money to have a National Theatre.”<sup>29</sup> This very public argument about the lack of action by the Scottish Executive regarding the national theatre plan forced them to defend themselves publicly. This led to the acknowledgement in *The Scotsman* that, “Jack McConnell effectively admitted yesterday that plans for a national theatre in Scotland were on hold. The First Minister said the Executive had not abandoned the idea, but argued that the short-term priority for arts funding in Scotland was helping regional theatres. Until yesterday, the Scottish

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<sup>28</sup> Mike Wade, “Executive Muted over National Theatre Plan,” *The Scotsman*, 28 November 2002, p. 1, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1324062002> (accessed 15 October 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Claire Smith, “McConnell Faces Criticism over National Theatre Debacle”, *The Scotsman* 02 December 2002, p. 1, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1340142002> (accessed on October 28, 2005).

Executive had consistently expressed its support for a national theatre, but refused to admit that the project was at a standstill, as critics have claimed.” Claire Smith observed, “Mr McConnell replied that the ‘key problem’ facing the sector was the need for more funding for regional theatre. It’s very important that theatres are supported at the right level. That is precisely why we had to delay the national theatre project because we needed to ensure that theatres across Scotland are properly funded in the meantime. Our commitment to a national theatre remains firm, but it will be a national theatre that will not be at the expense of regional theatre.”<sup>30</sup> In the space of a week plans for a national theatre were once again aborted.

The battle continued in the papers for the next several weeks. On December 21, 2002, *The Scotsman*, which was especially vocal in its support for a national theatre, ran a feature article with Scottish actor Brian Cox who voiced his opinion about the need for a Scottish national theatre. Claire Smith began her article with, “One of Scotland’s most successful theatrical exports has backed *The Scotsman*’s campaign for a National Theatre, and said the Scottish Executive must shake off its small-minded, provincial attitude.” She added,

Brian Cox of Dundee, said Scotland must learn to value its theatrical talent, like Hamish Glen and Kenny Ireland, rather than regarding them as nuisances and losing them. What Hamish did at Dundee was phenomenal and what Kenny did at the Lyceum is remarkable, considering the mess the Lyceum was in when he took over. These men should be cherished, and they should be listened to - and not regarded as nuisances. Hamish is a great loss to Dundee. He should have been the director of the new national theatre. He shouldn’t be in bloody Coventry...Unfortunately the conditions at the moment, in which somebody like me would want to come back and work, just aren’t good enough... We’ve got to shift -- we’ve got to really have a new mindset about the way we perceive things and particularly things which are important to us, our own culture. You

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<sup>30</sup> Claire Smith, “National Theatre Plan is Shelved” *The Scotsman*, 06 December 2002, p. 9, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1355862002> (accessed on 12 November 2005).

have got to be able to nourish your own talent, acknowledge the extraordinary work people have done and not to have a hand-to-mouth situation.<sup>31</sup>

The central issues continued to be funding for the arts by the parliament. On January 26, 2003, Liam McDougall, of *The Sunday Herald* quoted Paul Henderson Scott, writer and former president of the Saltire Society in his article,

Much of Scotland's identity and wealth depends on the arts. But there is little sign that the parliament understands the importance of the arts to Scotland. There is a real need for a national assessment of the arts to reinforce their strength in this country. The most disappointing missed opportunity is that the National Theatre has failed to materialise. Yet again, of course, there is the problem of a lack of funds.<sup>32</sup>

By February 2003, the fight for funds had touched every department of the Scottish parliament. David Scott, the Scottish Government Editor of *The Scotsman*, wrote, "The Scottish Executive yesterday came under renewed pressure to commit itself fully to the creation of a national theatre, as MSPs (Member of Scottish Parliament) accused ministers of complacency in their attitude towards the art... Michael Russell, the SNP culture spokesman, accused ministers of walking away from their financial commitment to a national theatre. He claimed they had operated a policy of divide and rule, and had failed Scotland in providing for the arts." He also quotes Rhona Brankin, a former Deputy Minister for Culture, who argued that the Scottish theatre proposal was not in melt-down as Mr. Harper appeared to suggest. The Midlothian MSP said she

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<sup>31</sup> Claire Smith, "Brian Cox Backs National Theatre Bid", *The Scotsman*, 21 December 2002, p. 3, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1418032002> (accessed on 14 November 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Liam McDougall, "Act of Betrayal; The Scottish Arts Community Believe They Created the Climate for Devolution. But Now They say the Executive has Turned its Back on Them." *The Sunday Herald*, 26 January 2003, p. 15, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Search terms: National Theatre of Scotland and McDougall (accessed 26 October 2005).

recognized that the Arts Council's decision to ensure that regional theatre was put on a sure footing before a national theatre could be funded was sensible. However, she urged the culture minister, Lord Watson, to restate the Executive's commitment to the national theatre. "A huge amount of work has been done by the Scottish theatre community on the plan for a national theatre. Let's get on with it, let's do it," she said.<sup>33</sup>

The political infighting continued for several more months and *The Scotsman* continued to cover every move by the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Arts Council. There were repeated accusations in the media that the politicians were using the arts as a voting issue. The parliament maintained that there had to be a financially stable theatre infrastructure throughout the country before they could fund a national theatre. Finally, on August 22, 2003, funding was approved for a national theatre. Mike Wade broke the story in *The Scotsman*: "It was envisaged as a key symbol of the new Scotland, a national theatre which harnessed the greatest talents of the devolved country. It has been a long time coming, but finally, after years of delay and increasingly bitter debate, enlivened by a campaign by *The Scotsman*, the project is about to become reality...At the height of the Edinburgh Festival, when a handful of home-grown companies are on show to promoters from around the world, *The Scotsman* has learned the announcement of funding for the scheme will be made by the Scottish Executive within weeks." He quoted Donald Driver, the chairman of the steering group for the national theatre, "This is a very significant moment in Scottish culture. There is a paradox in Scottish culture, which a national theatre can bridge. On the one hand, the Executive have been supporting events like Scotland at the Smithsonian, which took Scottish culture to America. But almost

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<sup>33</sup> David Scott, "Fresh Calls for a Pledge on the National Theatre," *The Scotsman*, 13 February 2003, p. 9, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=176742003> (accessed 14 November 2005).

immediately afterwards, we stage these great festivals which offer no real focus. If the Executive is serious about presenting Scottish culture, it needs a champion like a national theatre.”<sup>34</sup>

On September 11, 2003, the National Theatre of Scotland was officially established when Andy Kerr the Scottish Executive’s Finance Minister announced that £6.5 million would be designated for the national theatre plan to cover a three year period. Mike Wade wrote in *The Scotsman*, “In a statement this afternoon, Mr. Kerr will accept funding levels set by the steering group and allocate £2.5 million to the theatre in its first year with a further £4 million to consolidate the project in 2005-6. Thereafter, core funding for the project will be linked to inflation, and will be sourced directly from the Executive. The proposal for the national theatre does not envisage a building-based company, but a commissioning body. Its structure is designed to harness the talents of experienced theatre companies, directors and writers from throughout Scotland. Productions will be performed at venues across the country and - its supporters believe - the world.”<sup>35</sup> The NTS would develop a quality repertoire originating in Scotland that would include new work, existing work, and the drama of other countries and cultures to which a range of Scottish insights, language and sensibility could be applied; the NTS would look beyond Scotland for inspiration, and stimulate the interest in Scottish culture from other countries and cultures. The work would reflect the diversity of Scotland's cultures. Venues used to host NTS productions would range from small-scale productions that could play in schools and village halls all over Scotland to large shows that would

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<sup>34</sup> Mike Wade, “Executive to Give Funds for National Theatre” *The Scotsman*, 22 August 2003, p. 1, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=922422003> (accessed 8 November 2005).

<sup>35</sup> Mike Wade, “£6.5m funds Pledge Sets Scene for Scottish National Theatre”, *The Scotsman*, 23 August 2003, p. 1, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1000222003> (accessed 10 November 2005).

appear in the main city center venues. Finally, the NTS offices would be located in the Easterhouse Section of Glasgow.<sup>36</sup> Culture Minister, Mr. McAveety said, “The responsibility of the National Theatre of Scotland will be towards the people of Scotland; it is their theatre. It is about making the arts relevant to our communities and the people that live there.”<sup>37</sup> Scottish Arts Council Chairman James Boyle said, “We applaud not only the Minister’s generosity but also his vision in securing the future for this flagship organization, both at home and abroad, for all that is best and brightest in Scottish culture.”<sup>38</sup>

At last Scotland hoped to have a national theatre that would celebrate the best of Scottish theatre and culture. However, what *was* this Scottish culture that Scottish Arts Council Chairman James Boyle was championing? The question remained as to who would define “Scottish culture” and how this new cultural product—a national theatre—would be used by its supporters and understood by its audiences.

### **The Historical Backgrounds on the Scottish Identity Question up to the Period of the Scottish Renaissance**

Any theatre proposing to serve as a “national” site of expression of “Scottish” culture has a centuries-old legacy of differences and disputes to overcome. In Scotland the quest for a national cultural identity has been complicated by over 1,000 years of regional infighting that has developed distinct local patterns of language, culture and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> The Scottish Government website, available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2003/09/4112> (accessed on 6 December 2007).

<sup>38</sup> *Scottish Arts Council Delight at National Theatre of Scotland*, Scottish Arts Council web site. [Internet]; available at [www.scottisharts.org.uk/content/press\\_release.cfm?press\\_id=269](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/content/press_release.cfm?press_id=269); Accessed on 20 November 2005.

loyalties. The descendents of these factions have proved singularly unwilling to surrender what they consider their rightful cultural heritage, or to subsume their cultural traditions to a more generic notion of “Scottishness.”<sup>39</sup>

By the Middle Ages, four distinct “peoples” had settled in Scotland and each left cultural fingerprints on their area of the country. In the west there were the Scots or Gaels (Highlanders) that came from Ireland; in the north the Viking and Scandinavian influence; in the northeast it was the Picts; and in the Strathclyde area were the Britons.<sup>40</sup> The division between the Highlands and Lowlands regions was (and continues to be) economic as well as social. The existence of several languages including Gaelic, Scots (or Lallans), Welsh and English made unified communication difficult. Scotland was not a unified province or nation, so borders, regional politics and alliances were constantly changing. Perhaps most significantly, there was no autonomous Scottish culture or unified idea of what it meant to be Scottish. Rather than a single identity there were numerous regional identities that had been constructed over time and by various invaders, conquerors, and settlers of the area.<sup>41</sup> This may explain why the fight for a separate national cultural identity and the development of a cohesive Scottish nationalism has taken so long. The conflict between Scottish cultural and historic memory collides with modern ideas of identity within Great Britain and the European Union.

In addition, for over three hundred years, Scotland has deferred to the ruling monarchy in England; this relationship has eroded all but the deepest-set history and memory of the former Scottish nation prior to the Act of Union in 1707. Scotland has in

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<sup>39</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Nation*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 28-29 and 37-42.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>41</sup> R. A. Houston and W.W. J. Knox, eds., *The New Penguin History of Scotland* (London: The Penguin Press in association with the National Museums of Scotland, 2001), xvi-xvii.

effect been a conquered nation since the last Jacobite Rising of 1745 failed. Following the uprising, the British set out to extinguish the ‘Scottishness’ of the conquered people. The English quickly passed the *Act of Proscription* in 1746 that effectively wiped out the history and tradition of a people. The Gaelic language was forbidden; traditional clan dress and wearing of the clan tartans was outlawed; the weapons of the Highland warriors were confiscated; gatherings of clans were forbidden; and the bagpipes could no longer be played. The British Army provided the only exception to this rule as highland regiments were quickly created that allowed the wearing of the tartan and the kilt and the playing of bagpipes. The *Act of Proscription* was repealed in 1782, but by that time an entire way of life was lost.<sup>42</sup>

This economic, political and cultural dominance by England over the last three centuries has created confusion in the cultural psyche for many in Scotland. What does it mean to be ‘Scottish’ rather than ‘British’? This dual identity is the central issue that has stymied the push for an independent Scotland. Anthony D. Smith writes:

Movements of ethnic autonomy recognize the possibility, perhaps desirability, of dual identities, a cultural-national and political-national identity or, as they would see it, a national identity within a territorial state identity...they recognize the duality of historical memories and political sentiments that cannot easily be severed, not to mention economic benefits to be gained by remaining within an existing framework...<sup>43</sup>

Smith’s argument illustrates the confusion over what type of nationalism might be most applicable to the Scottish cause. Can Scottish nationalism be considered to be primarily ethnic? Are there enough differences between the English and the Scottish to be able to call them ethnically different? While Scotland possesses a cultural history and genealogy

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<sup>42</sup> Magnus Magnusson, *Scotland: The Story of a Nation* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000), 653-654.

<sup>43</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London and New York; Penguin Books, 1991), 138-139.

distinct from the English, the lack of a separate language, clear religious differences or political beliefs makes justifying the rise of Scottish nationalism as an ethnic movement difficult. As David McCrone writes,

As far as nationalism in Scotland is concerned, much has been made of the fact, that it belongs at the 'civic' rather than 'ethnic' end of the spectrum. This is in part because its cultural distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* England appears thin, and hence has been forced to develop a 'political' rather than a 'cultural' sense of what it means to be Scottish, which, almost as a by-product, emphasizes territorial inclusivity rather than ethnic exclusivity.<sup>44</sup>

The absence of cultural nationalism offers the greatest obstacle that Scottish nationalists face in gaining support to create an independent nation. As Smith points out:

Unlike the civic, territorial nationalism of the French Revolution and the West, which sees the nation as a territorial association of citizens living under the same laws and sharing a mass public culture, ethnic nationalism regards the nation as a community of genealogical descent, vernacular culture, native history and popular mobilization. The civic kind of nationalism is a nationalism of order and control, and it suits the existing national states and their dominant ethnic population. But it has little to offer the many submerged ethnic minorities incorporated into the older empires and their successor states. So they and their intelligentsias turn to ethnic nationalism, and try to reconstruct their community as an ethnic nation. Theirs is the politics of cultural revolt. Revolt not only against alien rulers, but against 'the fathers', the passive older generations, guardians of ancestral traditions and notables of a traditional order. To achieve their cultural revolution, they must thrust their ethnic communities into the political arena and turn them into political nations. The clash of rival nationalisms, ethnic and civic, is at the heart of the conflicts in the Middle East, India, the Caucasus and Balkans. We can also find it in more muted, but no less persistent, form in the West: in Quebec and Euzkadi, Scotland and Catalonia, Flanders and Corsica, wherever members of marginalized, threatened or aspiring ethnic communities seek to restore their heritage, language and culture.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Nation*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 177.

<sup>45</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "The Warwick Debates", *Anthony D. Smith's Opening Statement: Nations and their Pasts*. 1995. [Internet]; available at: <http://members.tripod.com/GellnerPage/Warwick.html>; accessed 12 November 2005.

Smith's assertion raises an interesting question: Was Scotland a colony of the British Empire? The issue of post-colonialism in Scotland is complicated because, the Scots entered the Act of Union of 1707, willingly and for economic gain. As Immanuel Wallerstein, writes, "Lowland Scotland is a classic case of 'development by invitation'...he insists that the choice to develop or not was one made not by the Scottish elite, but at the invitation of the English, and concludes that Scotland's economic plan was not structural, it was a combination of circumstances. The Lowlands were in a position after the last Jacobite uprising of 1745, in Hobsbawm's phrase 'to take advantage of the exceptionally favorable European and British conjuncture of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century'."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Scotland offers an example of 'internal colonialism.' In the words of Anthony D. Smith, "The place of diffusionist models has been largely taken by the dependency models, which stress the processes of 'internal colonialism' by which peripheral communities are economically and politically subordinated to core *ethnies*, especially during and after industrialization."<sup>47</sup> Scottish nationalists have had to develop a kind of hybrid approach to their struggle, synthesizing civic and cultural nationalism, invoking some ethnic claims of "Scottishness," while battling the effects of internal colonialism.

While these issues have simmered since the Act of Union, they became more topical and urgent as the economic and political changes in England following World Wars I and II led all regions of Great Britain to examine their relationship to England and their own "British" identity. The severe agricultural decline following World War I, which coincided with the Prohibition Act in the United States, produced severe economic

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<sup>46</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Nation*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 60.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

hardships across Scotland. As a result of these economic changes, 23% of those born in Scotland between 1911 and 1980 immigrated. The economic troubles throughout Scotland inflamed the passions of nationalists, thus their movement began to take on an especially urgent tone among the “Northern England” population. During World War I, Scotland lost roughly 110,000 men, which represented over 20% of the total war dead for Britain. The loss of the men and the feeling that these veterans were not being appreciated upon their return energized the nationalist movement in Scotland.

At the same time the concern that there could be a repeat of the Irish Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin created a fear among the politicians in England. This resulted in the decision in 1919 to send 12,000 troops, one hundred lorries, and six tanks to control the protests of Glasgow workers who were demanding a forty-hour work week and protesting the ending of wartime rent restrictions. The proposed reduction in hours would not only benefit the current workers, but would also provide work for the unemployed soldiers returning from the war. During this demonstration, Scottish workers raised a red flag, which further outraged the British politicians and was described by Scottish Secretary Robert Munro as a “Bolshevist rising.” The outraged response by the British and the continued economic decline across the region resulted in a surge of support for the nationalist movement throughout Scotland.<sup>48</sup>

Continued unrest in Glasgow led to the establishment of the Scottish Home Rule Association in 1918 and victory by the Scottish Labor party in the 1922 election. Increased nationalism led Glasgow MP George Buchanan to introduce the Home Rule Bill at parliament in London in 1924. However, because of political infighting among the

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<sup>48</sup> Murray G. H. Pittock, *Scottish Nationality*. (Edinburgh: Palgrave, 2001), 103.

Scottish members of parliament, the bill eventually expired without a vote. In 1934 the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party united to form the Scottish National Party (SNP) and this new organization became a unifying and powerful force in the development of Scottish nationalism. The fight for Home Rule continued through World War II and beyond, but no concrete steps were taken until the political victory of the SNP in the late 1970s. Their success forced political parties in London to recognize the Scots' feeling of alienation from the rest of England. The political battle continued for many years until the Scotland Act of 1998 was passed which led to the establishment of the first Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh since 1707. The devolution settlement was the result of many years of campaigning for a devolved English government in Scotland. The reconvened Scottish Parliament gathered for the first time on May 12, 1999.

At the first convening of the Scottish Parliament, Dr Winnie Ewing (Oldest Qualified Member) said,

...I have always wanted either to say or to hear someone else say: the Scottish Parliament, which adjourned on 25 March 1707, is hereby reconvened. On behalf of my party, I pledge to make this Parliament work. All of us here can make it work—and make it a showpiece of modern democracy. It is no secret that, to members of the Scottish National Party, this Parliament is not quite the fulfillment of our dream, but it is a Parliament we can build a dream on. Our dream is for Scotland to be as sovereign as Denmark, Finland or Austria—no more, no less. However, we know that that dream can come true only when there is total consensus among the people of Scotland, and we accept that.

I will end by quoting from the debate of 1707. I have chosen a passage by Lord Belhaven, who was an opponent of the treaty: 'Show me a spurious patriot, a bombastic fire-eater, and I will show you a rascal. Show me a man who loves all countries equally with his own and I will show you a man entirely deficient of a sense of proportion. But show me a man who respects the rights of all nations while ready to defend the rights of his own against them all and I will show you a man who is both a nationalist and an internationalist.'

It was said that 1707 was the end of an auld sang. All of us here can begin to write together a new Scottish song, and I urge all of you to sing it in harmony—fortissimo.<sup>49</sup>

With those words, Scotland took an important step in the struggle for a new nation and national cultural identity. The next challenge would be to fuse political liberty with cultural freedom.

### *The Role of the Arts in Developing a Scottish National Cultural Identity*

Throughout the twentieth century the arts have played a central role in the awakening of nationalism across Scotland and in the revival of a Scottish national cultural identity. The arts were, one might argue, never more powerful in the development of Scottish nationalism and the fight for home rule than during the Scottish Renaissance (1920-1950) following World War I. That era marked a resurgence of interest and enthusiasm for Scottish culture, and a period when the diverse strains of Scottish regional traditions began to come together in tangible artistic forms. The Scottish Renaissance was part of the Modern Movement that was occurring in literature during the 1920s through the 1940s. Alan Riach writes,

The central tenet of the Modern Movement was exile. This resulted in a renewal of linguistic energy in its greatest writers and artists. The equivalent aspect of the Scottish Renaissance was a fresh alignment between the sense of being earthed to native soil and an international context for it. This distinguishes the Scottish Renaissance—or Scottish Modernism—from that of Ireland, England or the United States in the same period, and partly this depends upon the centrality of the Scots as a language and spoken loyalty that is aligned with this language is very

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<sup>49</sup> Dr. Winnie Ewing, "A New Sang": Remarks from the Chair on Wednesday 12 May 1999. (Minutes on-line). The Scottish Parliament. [Internet]; available at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/corporate/history/whisp/whisp-99/wh01-03.htm>; accessed 10 November 2005.

different from the cosmopolitan provenance of English which appeals so strongly to a city-centered view of modernism.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most vocal proponents of nationalism and home rule was poet Hugh MacDiarmid (1892 -1978) considered by many to be the leading Scottish poet of the twentieth century. In his most famous work, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, published in 1926, MacDiarmid examines the ruin of the drunken, English influenced Scotsman against the traditional backdrop of the Scottish image of the thistle. MacDiarmid wanted Scotland to awaken from the sentimental image of the tartan and bagpipes and embrace a vibrant modern Scotland that had a culture independent of England. This piece marks a dramatic change from the romantic works of Burns and Scot, who wrote about the glorious Scottish past and its heroes. MacDiarmid not only wrote poetry, but was also an important translator and writer of the Scots or Lallans language; in effect he led the resurgence of the language as an acceptable cultural and artistic voice. As a participant in the Scottish Renaissance, MacDiarmid was the leading proponent for a unique Scottish cultural identity—a theme reflected not only in his work but also in his politics, where he was a founding member of the National Party of Scotland (an early incarnation of the SNP). In response to critics who argued that the Scottish Renaissance was all show and no substance, he replied, “The Scottish Renaissance has taken place. The fruits will appear in due course. Earlier or later – it does not alter the fact. For the Scottish Renaissance has been a propaganda of ideas and their enunciation has been all that was

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<sup>50</sup> Alan Raich, *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 124.

necessary.”<sup>51</sup> The effect of the Scottish Renaissance in establishing an artistic and cultural voice in the arts must not be underestimated. According to Alan Riach,

The Scottish Renaissance should also be located in a broader historical context. It spurred cultural articulation in various forms: the literary and artistic production of Scotland throughout the twentieth century has been in advance of its political struggle towards national self-definition...If the Scottish Renaissance movement has had an incalculable long-term effect, it arose in the aftermath of a distinct period of development in national artistic expression which began in the late nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

Thanks in large part to the Scottish Renaissance and Hugh MacDiarmid during the Inter-War years, the Scots language and pride in cultural identity were reawakened in Scotland, as was the wish for a native theatre.

While the Scottish Renaissance did much to promote the visibility of Scottish artists nationwide, the most effective and global use of the arts in the fight for home rule came some forty-five years later with the release of the Mel Gibson movie, *Braveheart* (1995), which celebrated the life of William Wallace, the Highland warrior who fought to free Scotland from English rule. Seeing an opportunity, the Scottish National Party used the premiere of *Braveheart* to hand out pro-nationalist leaflets throughout Scotland. Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National Party, commented:

In 1995, *Braveheart* mania broke out, and it had a pretty powerful political impact. The SNP campaigned on the back of the film, and surged to 30% in the polls. I well remember the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox sending the SNP a lawyer’s letter demanding that we ‘cease and desist’ from distributing *Braveheart* leaflets outside cinemas. They changed their minds when I gently pointed out that while we may have appropriated the stills from their film, they had appropriated the story of our hero!<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Hugh, MacDiarmid, *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, ed. Alan Riach. (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1995), 210.

<sup>52</sup> Alan Riach, *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 129.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

Ironically, a foreign-produced film, starring an Australian action hero reawakened the pride of the Scottish people in their own national cultural legacy and the national heroes of Scotland. This new cultural awareness became an important element in the fight for Home Rule.

### **National Cultural Identity and Theatre in Scotland**

While the Scottish Renaissance had prompted an explosion of poetry, music and art, and *Braveheart* had promoted Scottish cultural mythology, the theatre remained curiously silent about it in the quest to develop a distinct Scottish national cultural identity. Given the historic role played by theatre in the construction of national identity in other countries this absence seems remarkable. In the words of Friedrich Schiller,

A standing theatre would be a material advantage to a nation. It would have a great influence on the national temper and mind by helping the nation to agree in opinions and inclinations. The stage alone can do this, because it commands all human knowledge, exhausts all positions, illumines hearts, unites all classes and makes its way to the heart and understanding by the most popular channels. If one feature characterized all dramas; if the poets were allied in aim—that is, if they selected well and from national topics—there would be a national stage, and we should become a nation.<sup>54</sup>

Schiller wrote this in 1784 as the German theatre was searching for its role in the developing German nation. Schiller was not the only theorist of this time promoting the use of theatre in nation building. Throughout Europe in the nineteenth century, theorists and theatrical practitioners were arguing that drama and theatre were effective means of nation building. During the romantic era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the sharing of common history, heritage and cultural traditions allowed

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<sup>54</sup> Friedrich Schiller, “The Stage as a Moral Institution” quoted in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski* (Boston, MA: Thomson Heinle, 1974), 444-445.

different regions to develop their own cultural legitimacy in opposition to the dominant cultures of larger powers. Since the eighteenth century, governments across Europe have looked to their national theatres as signs of cultural unity and civic pride.

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, various European ethnic groups established their own nation-states and understood that national theatres were a way to build a national identity that was separate from the previous dominant culture. Following the example of the first national theatre, the Comédie-Française in Paris that was established in 1680, various European countries founded their own national theatres to promote their own language and culture in the theatre. They include: The National Theatre in Warsaw, Poland founded in 1765; the Hamburg National Theatre founded in 1767; the Riksteatern (Sweden's national theatre) founded in 1773; the Finnish National Theatre founded in 1872; the National Theatre of Norway (Nationaltheatret) founded in 1899; and the Irish National Theatre (Abbey Theatre) founded in 1903. Interestingly, England was also late in developing a national theatre (not opening its first national theatre until 1963) – a factor, which, given the close political and social ties between England and Scotland, may have been a contributing element in Scotland's delay. What was happening in England and Scotland during the second half of the twentieth century that slowed the development of a national theatre? In order to understand the comparatively late development of a national theatre in England and Scotland, I would suggest that it is first necessary to discuss the development of the repertory theatre movement in Ireland and England. The repertory system became the impetus for the national theatre movement in both countries, but it

also brought with it a host of concerns and potential problems for both audiences and managers.

### *Repertory Theatre Movements in England and Ireland*

What originated as a form designed to allow artists greater freedom from commercial concerns was perhaps not the best model for a state-sponsored, ideology-driven national theatre. The growth of national theatres in England and Ireland and the desire to control the choice and variety of plays that were being produced at these venues coincided with the modern repertory theatre movement that began at the end of the nineteenth century. George Rowell and Anthony Jackson write about the changing theatrical landscape that, “The repertory movement was propelled by a double revolt against the Edwardian theatrical establishment: a revolt against the dramatic fare offered by London managers and actors, and against the exploitation of the provincial theatre as the market for metropolitan products.”<sup>55</sup> The trend of long runs had come to dominate the theatre in England after the 1820’s and people responded to this situation by demanding a return to the previous repertory system with new material of significance that would be intellectually challenging for the people to see. In England, Mathew Arnold, William Archer, H. Granville Barker, George Bernard Shaw and Annie Horniman were influenced by this change and became the leading proponents of the new repertory theatre movement.<sup>56</sup> They believed that the stock and touring companies that serviced the theatres outside of London did not provide enough variety and talent for

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<sup>55</sup> George Rowell and Anthony Jackson, *The Repertory Theatre Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>56</sup> George Rowell and Anthony Jackson, *The Repertory Theatre Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3, 18-20.

local audiences. They wanted to be able to control the quality and variety of productions rather than being dependent on the actor-manager controlled touring productions that operated under the current “long run system” of simply remounting plays that had had a successful run in London.<sup>57</sup> They felt that by organizing and subsidizing independent theatre companies, a new vibrant theatre environment could be created to provide artists and audiences alike with new material by the likes of Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov that was not just commercially viable for the existing actor-manager controlled theatres and touring routes.<sup>58</sup>

William Archer, a respected British drama critic, was one of the staunchest supporters of an independent repertory theatre that could flourish along the lines of the European theatre model. The independent European theatre companies from the Continent that toured through England during the 1880s inspired Archer with their work. From his own trips abroad he realized that the call for a national theatre, subsidized theatres operating under the European repertory model and the desire for new English plays all revolved around the central need for an independently funded theatre organization.<sup>59</sup> The desire to get away from the current commercially based theatre plan would allow theatre practitioners to produce material not driven by profit concerns. In addition, Archer wished to expand the repertoire to include non-English playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen and other European writers of the time. Archer connected the wish/need

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Anna Irene Miller, *The Independent Theatre in Europe 1887 to the Present* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc, 1931), 7-11.

<sup>59</sup> George Rowell and Anthony Jackson, *The Repertory Theatre Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 3, 18-20.

for a national theatre with the need for a change in how theatre was produced at that time in England.<sup>60</sup>

However, the first repertory theatre company established in Great Britain was actually the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. The Abbey Theatre emerged from theatre artists desire to control the material that was produced in Ireland and to establish an Irish voice for the Irish stage. Prior to the creation of the Abbey Theatre, Ireland (and Scotland) were dependent on the English touring companies for their theatrical fare. With the help of W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Miss Annie Horniman, an English tea heiress, this began to change. Yeats and Lady Gregory had first came together in 1897 when they formed the Irish Literary Theatre with George Moore and Edward Martyn. The Irish Literary Theatre was “devoted to creating a body of Irish drama that would combine Ireland’s rich cultural legacy with the latest European theatrical methods.”<sup>61</sup> Sharing a desire to create a theatre that was not dependent on the English touring theatre companies, Yeats and Lady Gregory produced material that focused on Gaelic mythology, folklore and Irish language<sup>62</sup> that would appeal to the elite in their social circle. The group also generated an immense number of letters, essays, pamphlets and two theatre journals, *Beltaine* and *Samhain*, dedicated to the Irish literary revival. Although they disbanded in 1901, the material they produced created the foundation for the growing nationalist theatre movement in Ireland. In 1903 Yeats, Lady Gregory and William Fay united several organizations, including the National Dramatic Society and the Gaelic theatre society Cumann na nGaedheal, into the Irish National Theatre Society

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Trotter, *Ireland’s National Theaters: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Welch, *The Abbey Theatre 1899-1999*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12.

that combined the memberships into one collective producing organization.<sup>63</sup> Yeats was elected president and they continued to promote and present plays that were Irish in origin. However, membership in this society was constantly changing as the role of politics in the theatre was constantly being debated.

In 1904, Horniman, purchased the theatre on Abbey Street as a place for W. B. Yeats to further his theatrical ambitions. While she was not interested in Yeats' nationalist politics, she was a firm believer in his talent. As Mary Trotter writes, "Horniman hated Irish politics: the theatre was a gift to Yeats, the artist and man she adored, for the furtherance of his aesthetic vision, which she determined transcended politics."<sup>64</sup> This theatre company was the first example of a repertory theatre that was based on a dedicated company of actors producing new material for a new audience. However, it is interesting to note that the Abbey Theatre that was dedicated to representing Irish playwrights, actors and the Irish voice on stage depended on English enhancement money and directors at its inception.

The first modern repertory theatre in England was also a result of Horniman's involvement with a theatre company.<sup>65</sup> In 1907, she bought and renovated the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester and established the first English repertory company. Horniman had grown impatient with the way that Yeats, Lady Gregory and the Irish National

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>64</sup> Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theaters: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 116.

<sup>65</sup> Repertory theatre had existed in Great Britain from the time of Shakespeare through the 1820s. The modern repertory movement was an effort to control the quality and variety of material that was available to audiences outside of London. Rather than being controlled by London actors and managers who presented production in the long-run method, the modern repertory movement was dependent on regional amateur actors, managers and producers. For more information please see William Archer and H. Granville Barker, *A National Theatre: Scheme and Estimates* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1907), John Elsom and Nicholas Tomalin, *The History of The National Theatre* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1978), George Rowell and Anthony Jackson, *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Anna Irene Miller, *The Independent Theatre in Europe* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc, 1931).

Theatre operated and was looking for a new outlet for her patronage. Dismissive of Yeats' use of the Abbey Theatre for his political ambitions for Ireland, she severed her ties with the theatre and the company and returned to England. In Manchester, she hired Englishman, B. Iden Payne, who had been the stage director at the Irish National Theatre, as her Artistic Director. Payne's first item of business was to create the Gaiety Theatre resident acting company that included known performers Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson,<sup>66</sup> who would follow Payne as Artistic Director, as well as local actors including Charles Bibby and Basil Dean. Once the acting company was established, they produced their first repertory season with a slate of shows from their "Manchester School" of playwrights that included Harold Brighouse and Stanley Houghton. Splitting their time between the theatre in Manchester and touring the provinces, The Gaiety Theatre quickly established a pattern that was followed by theaters in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Bristol, among others. By no longer being dependent on the actor-manger touring companies in London, the new repertory system allowed for central control of the material and the artists. Although the outbreak of World War I would end prematurely the first step of the repertory theatre movement, the process of producing theatre in England had changed immeasurably.

The modern repertory movement created the foundation for an independent theatre tradition in England that allowed for new self-producing theatres operating with a resident acting company to produce new work by English playwrights. George Rowell and Anthony Jackson write, "Repertory has, then, contributed to British theatre's sense of itself in that it has provided the basic network of the nation's theatre, without which it

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<sup>66</sup> John Elsom and Nicholas Tomalin, *The History of the National Theatre* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1978), 58-59.

would be wholly London-based and deprived of much of that new talent in writing, acting and direction which found its opportunity in the regions. Repertory has provided the decentralised nurturing of artistic strength and individuality and the focus for local cultural growth, which has given British theatre the vitality and variety for which it has become so internationally renowned.”<sup>67</sup> With the establishment of the repertory theatre movement that provided greater artistic freedoms in England and Ireland, the conversation now turned to the need for national theatres in both countries.

### **National Theatre Movement in England and Ireland**

Although first championed by Effingham Wilson in 1848; Harley Granville Barker and William Archer in 1904, and Laurence Olivier in the 1960s,<sup>68</sup> the National Theatre of England was not established until 1963 and did not have a dedicated theatre building in London until 1976. Throughout the twentieth century the issues of who the national theatre was for, what purpose it would serve, and who would finance the endeavor were discussed and fought over by the English parliament and the leading theatre proponents of the time including Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw, Geoffrey Whitworth, among others. Archer and Barker wrote in 1904 that,

There has hitherto been one enormous obstacle to the establishment of a National Theatre in England. However, willing a man or body of men might be to give a new impulse to the art of the theatre, and place England abreast of France and Germany in respect of theatrical organization, he or they could have no definite idea how to set about it. A public park, a picture-gallery, or a free library is very easily created, and, once created, it practically runs itself...But an Endowed Theatre, in England, a wholly unfamiliar piece of mechanism, and the management of it and unknown

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<sup>67</sup> George Rowell and Anthony Jackson, *The Repertory Theatre Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 190.

<sup>68</sup> Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France and America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 87-88.

art; while there are many reasons why no foreign institution of the kind could be imitated in detail with any hope of success. There is no clear-cut channel, as it were, in which liberality and public spirit can easily flow in the direction of theatrical reform.<sup>69</sup>

They laid out a plan for a national theatre that would require a commitment from the English people and the patrons of the theatre. Once that support was in place they would establish and then operate a theatre that would focus on the needs of the community (London) as well as the nation. They were adamant that,

...the National Theatre must be *its own advertisement*—must impose itself on public notice, not by posters and column advertisements in the newspapers, but by the very fact of its ample, dignified and liberal existence...it must not even have the air of appealing to a specially literary and cultured class. It must be visibly and unmistakably a popular institution, making a large appeal to the whole community...it will be seen that the Theatre we propose would be a National Theatre in this sense, that it would be from the first conditionally – and, in the event of success, would become absolutely – the property of the nation.<sup>70</sup>

Their theatre would be dependent on a private endowment with a dedicated theatre building that included proper staffing that would produce a repertory season of Shakespeare and other traditional popular material for a general public. However, as extensive as their plan was, it never got off the ground due to lack of support from the government and the arts community. Loren Kruger writes, “Like the cultural philanthropists who brought the matter to its attention, the 1913 Parliament maintained the conviction that the disbursement of culture, like other forms of charity and

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<sup>69</sup> William Archer and H. Granville Barker, *A National Theatre: Scheme & Estimates* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1970.), xv.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii

consolation, is best left to private individuals and should not therefore be subject to legislation.”<sup>71</sup>

The next forty years saw the argument continue; however, with two world wars and England’s loss of territory abroad, plans for a national theatre were put on hold until the passage of the National Theatre Act in 1949 which guaranteed £1,000,000 for the creation of a national theatre building.<sup>72</sup> In the parliamentary debate that ended with the creation of the National Theatre Act, the changes in Great Britain were apparent. Kruger writes,

The second parliamentary debate took place in 1949, after two world wars and the beginnings of postcolonial devolution had ravaged, if not completely destroyed, Britain’s sense of imperial power. As in the earlier debate, the speakers in this one support the monumental representation of selective traditions as opposed to heterogeneous representations of diverse practices. But, unlike its predecessor, this debate was marked by disputes as to the appropriateness of a national theatre in the monumental style at a time when the dimensions of the nation appeared shrunken by comparison, and by concrete financial considerations indicating an increased commitment to the theory and practice of state subsidy for the theatre.<sup>73</sup>

The government continued to be concerned over who would control the theatrical image of Great Britain as a nation, who the work would be performed for and what a national theatre would represent in the changing landscape. Even with this change in the government’s funding of a theatre, it would be another twenty-four years until the new National Theatre would produce its first show. Why was a country that has such an extensive theatrical history as England still without a national theatre? Fiona Fearon argues that this latest set-back was do to the existence of two well established theaters in

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<sup>71</sup> Kruger, 126.

<sup>72</sup> Fiona Kavanagh Fearon, “The 1950s: Birthplace of the National Theatres of Great Britain,” in *British Theatre in the 1950s*, ed. Dominic Shellard, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 106.

<sup>73</sup> Kruger, 127-128.

the 1950s that were already doing the work of a national theatre: the Royal Court in London that featured new material and the Stratford Memorial Theatre soon to become the Royal Shakespeare Company that featured the work of William Shakespeare.<sup>74</sup> In addition, England also had an established circuit of regional and touring theater companies that featured both new and traditional work year-round.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s the government and the Joint Council argued over the location, purpose and make up of the proposed National Theatre. A foundation stone was actually laid by the Queen at a site near Festival Hall in 1952, however, disagreement on who would be involved and the mission for the theatre continued for the next decade. Finally, in August of 1962, Laurence Olivier was appointed as the first Artistic Director and Kenneth Tynan as Literary Manager of the National Theatre and the first season was launched at the Chichester Festival Theatre.<sup>75</sup> In 1963, the National Theatre leased space at the Old Vic Theatre in London where it would be based for the next thirteen years until its permanent home was built in 1976. Using elements of the Archer and Granville plan of 1904, the National Theatre under the direction of Olivier and Tynan featured international plays, directors, actors and companies as part of the repertoire as well as Shakespeare and other English traditional work.<sup>76</sup> However, with the Royal Court Theatre established as the developer of new English playwrights and the Royal Shakespeare Company producing the country's best-known playwright, the National Theatre was forced to expand its material to include

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<sup>74</sup> Fiona Kavanagh Fearon, "The 1950s: Birthplace of the National Theatres of Great Britain," in *British Theatre in the 1950s*, ed. Dominic Shellard, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 107.

<sup>75</sup> National Theatre website [Internet] available at <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/The%20beginning%201848-1962+9786.twl> accessed on October 24, 2007.

<sup>76</sup> Fiona Kavanagh Fearon, "The 1950s: Birthplace of the National Theatres of Great Britain," in *British Theatre in the 1950s*, ed. Dominic Shellard, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 109.

classics and new plays from the international market. This competition between the three theaters for funding, material and audiences made each develop its own strategies for survival. Fearon writes, “By challenging the right of the National for funding and repertory choices the RSC probably mobilized the National Theatre movement out of the stagnation of the 1950s, enabling the National to find its identity through contrast and comparison.”<sup>77</sup> By the time the company moved into its new building in 1976, the National Theatre was known, due largely to Tynan, for a revolutionary English and international repertory that featured some of the top actors of the time. This has continued to the present day

The Abbey Theatre or Irish National Theatre was also built upon the repertory theatre movement in the early years of the twentieth century. With Horniman’s money behind them, Yeats and Lady Gregory founded the Irish National Theatre with the following artistic mission:

- To promote and develop new Irish plays and thereby create a repertoire of Irish Dramatic Literature
- The guardianship of the Irish repertoire through the reanimation of the wide canon of Irish writing already in existence
- The enrichment of that repertoire through the presentation of masterworks of world theatre
- To be the guarantor of continuity and vitality in the Irish theatre through the employment, promotion, training and development of Irish theatre artists and practitioners.<sup>78</sup>

By presenting plays that reflected issues and concerns of the Irish people, the Irish National Theatre became a leading voice in the fight for Home Rule in the early twentieth century. Its contribution to the fight for an Irish Free State was rewarded in 1925 when the Irish National Theatre “was given an annual subsidy by the new Free State, and the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>78</sup> The Abbey Theatre website [Internet]; available at <http://www.abbeytheatre.ie/about/history.html>; accessed on 12 January 2007.

Abbey became the first ever state-subsidized theatre in the English-speaking world.”<sup>79</sup>

From its first days the Irish National Theatre fulfilled its artistic mission by using the stage to fight the colonizing forces of the British and establish a unique Irish voice on the stage.

The Irish National Theatre was, however, not alone in this mission within the country. As Mary Trotter writes:

What makes the Irish case especially exciting in the context of national formation and theatrical formation is the heterogeneity of politics and aesthetics in the germinal years of the Irish dramatic movement. Several Irish theaters of resistance fought against the political, cultural and theatrical hegemonies of the British Empire in Ireland during the turn of the century...Irish nationalist organizations developed theater companies to create a sense of cultural identity among the Irish people outside the colonial definition of Ireland already well established on the English stage...The establishment of the Abbey Theatre in the midst of these nationalist performance activities and the interest it aroused point to Ireland’s commitment to cultural legitimation through theatre. Yet the theatre in all its forms provided more than a means of resisting English domination; it provided an important field on which nationalist groups—each with its own ideas of what made up Irish nationhood—vied for political legitimacy.<sup>80</sup>

There is an absence of this use of theatre in Scotland at this time and instead a continuing reliance on England for its theatrical voice and traditions. With this example of a new national theatre in such close proximity, why didn’t the Scottish people follow in their footsteps and also use theatre as a way to voice their opposition to English domination? As we shall see, Scotland lacked both a defining moment in its political history such as the 1916 Easter Uprising to force the political question of their relationship with England

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Mary Trotter, *Ireland’s National Theaters: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001) xiii.

and an established theatre company that could immediately turn its focus to presenting nationalistic material at the time it was needed.

In contrast to many European nations, Scotland was still searching for a theatrical voice and tradition to use in the fight for a national cultural identity at the beginning of the twentieth century. During this time there was not an established theatre company to rally theatre artists and audiences towards an independent Scotland.

### **Establishing a Theatre Tradition in Scotland**

While England, as well as most countries in Western Europe, had established theatrical traditions dating back hundreds of years, Scotland did not have a separate theatrical identity with its own playwrights, actors and producers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although Scotland did have a variety of dedicated theatre buildings, they did not have self-producing theatre companies. Instead, similar to Ireland and England, Scotland was also reliant on the touring companies in the early part of the twentieth century. As David Hutchinson writes, “Despite their strength in numbers, the Scottish theatres of this period were almost entirely dependent for their presentations on touring companies based in London, which brought the latest metropolitan successes to the rest of the country.”<sup>81</sup>

This reliance on London continued until the founding of the Glasgow Repertory Theatre in 1909. Following the repertory theatre movement in England and Ireland, Alfred Wareing, an Englishman who had gained experience at the Abbey Theatre with Hornimann and B. Iden Payne, sought to bring the same independent theatre idea to

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<sup>81</sup> David, Hutchinson, *The Modern Scottish Theatre*. (Glasgow; The Molendinar Press, 1977), 5. Hutchinson’s work on this period is not extensive and much more research remains to be done drawing particularly on newspaper records available only in Scotland.

Scotland and to make Glasgow “theatrically independent of London.”<sup>82</sup> The company’s manifesto stated that, “The Repertory Theatre is Glasgow's own theatre. It is a citizens' theatre in the fullest sense of the term. Established to make Glasgow independent from London for its dramatic supplies, it produces plays which the Glasgow playgoers would otherwise not have the opportunity of seeing.”<sup>83</sup> On March 19, 1909, the *Glasgow Herald* printed a manifesto from the Scottish Playgoers Ltd. that stated:

The objects of the company include the establishment in Glasgow of a Repertory Theatre...and the encouragement of the initiation and development of purely Scottish drama by providing a stage and acting company which will be peculiarly adapted for the production of plays national in character, written by Scottish men and women of letters.<sup>84</sup>

The Glasgow Rep sought to create new Scottish theatre pieces that reflected contemporary issues as well as bring productions to Scotland that had not previously been seen including material by Chekhov, Ibsen and Shaw. The Glasgow Rep was able to produce several shows, including several new Scottish plays including first productions of material by Neil Munro, Donald Colquhoun, Anthony Rowley and J.A. Ferguson. However, finances were a constant worry and many announced productions were later canceled for lack of funds. These financial issues and the absence of solid leadership, as well as the start of World War I, forced the Glasgow Rep to disband in November of 1916. Although short lived, the Glasgow Repertory Theatre was the first theatrical institution established in Scotland for the specific purpose of creating and producing uniquely Scottish theatre, totally independent of England.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>83</sup> Scottish Arts Council Archive Focus: Citizen’s Theatre. [Internet]; available at [www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/artsinScotland/drama/features/archive/focuscitizenstheatre.aspx](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/artsinScotland/drama/features/archive/focuscitizenstheatre.aspx); accessed on 27 January 2007.

<sup>84</sup> David, Hutchinson, *The Modern Scottish Theatre*. (Glasgow; The Molendinar Press, 1977), 16.

However, with the example of the Abbey Theatre so close by, what prevented the Glasgow Rep from becoming the same type of nationalist theatre in Scotland? First, the Glasgow Rep did not have established Scottish playwrights such as Yeats, Lady Gregory and John Millington Synge to use as an example of native playwrighting that could be celebrated. While they did produce several new plays by Scottish playwrights, the main repertory revolved around popular English and European material. In fact, the Glasgow Rep was the first theatre in Britain to produce Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* by Shaw was the first production of a censored play to be performed outside of London.<sup>85</sup> Second, the people of Glasgow did not seem particularly interested in seeing plays featuring Scottish language and themes. An article in *The Times* said, "There is no great enthusiasm in Glasgow about a Scottish Theatre; Glasgow men prefer to see English plays. Scotch writers are too sentimental for the Scotch; they have to go to London."<sup>86</sup> Third, the political situation was much different in Scotland at this time. Where Ireland had the combination of a demand for an Irish voice on the Irish stage and a heightening political situation that focused on independence from England, those elements were absent in Scotland during the time of the Glasgow Reps's existence. Perhaps if the Glasgow Repertory Company had been in existence during the Red Clydesider labor riots in Glasgow in 1919, it could have taken on the same role that the Abbey Theatre performed during the Easter Rising in 1916 in Ireland. Without that impetus and perceived need, Scotland was once again without an independent theatre company following the closing of the Glasgow Rep in 1916.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>86</sup> *The Times*, quoted in, David, Hutchinson, *The Modern Scottish Theatre*. (Glasgow; The Molendinar Press, 1977), 26. This is an area I need to explore further with extensive primary document research. Unfortunately, I do not have access to the Scottish newspaper archives that cover this time period.

However, following the end of World War I, interest in theatre rose once again in Scotland. David Hutchinson writes that, “The upsurge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be attributed to the general increase in leisure time, the expansion of education, and the realization, particularly in areas relatively far from large centers of population with professional theaters, that in this activity not only was there the opportunity for large-scale community involvement but also a clear way to participating and gaining access to the arts.”<sup>87</sup> This increased interest in amateur theatre was seen throughout Europe following World War I and led to the establishment of the Scottish Community Drama Association in 1926, which was founded with the “aims of encouraging drama in Scotland and organizing festivals of community drama.”<sup>88</sup> As David Hutchinson writes, “The sudden rise to popularity of the amateur theatre in Scotland can be seen by comparing the number of entries for the one act festival in 1926-27 (35), 1928-29 (88), 1930-31 (243) and 1932-33 (307). By 1937 the number of amateur theatre companies and clubs had climbed to over 1000.”<sup>89</sup> He goes on, “A perusal of the newspapers of this time makes it clear that this was no coterie pursuit but one in which a lot of people were involved and interested. The Scottish newspapers of the time all had regular weekly columns on the amateur scene and reviews of the plays.”<sup>90</sup> Through the amateur theatre movement, people from all classes and regions were united in their passion for and love of theatre in Scotland.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> In my newspaper archive search for the Scottish National Players and amateur theater news, I found numerous listing of memberships in amateur theatre companies in the obituary announcements. These notices were for the leaders of businesses, government officials as well as everyday workers, women and men.

Of these amateur companies, the Scottish National Players were the most influential and well known. Formed in 1921, the Scottish National Players was made up of all social classes with a common goal of creating and performing plays that were Scottish in character and issues. Under the management of the St. Andrews Society, the Scottish National Players first performed on January 13, 1921 at the Royal Institute, West Campbell Street in Glasgow where “three new one-act Scottish plays were presented.”<sup>91</sup> A year later the Scottish National Theatre Society was founded to “develop Scottish national drama through the productions by the Scottish National Players of plays of Scottish life and character...to encourage in Scotland a public taste for good drama...to found a Scottish National Theatre.”<sup>92</sup> Tyrone Guthrie, an Englishman who had gained experience with the repertory theatre movement at the Oxford Playhouse<sup>93</sup> and was an early producer and director with the Scottish National Players, wrote that:

The Scottish National Theatre Society aimed at the creation of something in Glasgow, which should be the counterpart of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin... Our main achievement, as I see it, was that we provided a valuable training ground for talent: the best in Scotland, and one of the best in Britain; and, more important, that we were one of the links in the chain that will ultimately result in some form of indigenous drama in Scotland.<sup>94</sup>

The Scottish National Players, which remained an amateur company for its entire existence, encouraged young actors, playwrights and directors to explore and become involved with the development of a new Scottish theatre tradition. Although they usually

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<sup>91</sup> R. B. Wharrie, *The Scottish National Theatre Venture*. (Glasgow: Bone & Hulley, 1953), 21.

<sup>92</sup> David Hutchinson, *The Modern Scottish Theatre*. (Glasgow: The Molendinar Press, 1977), 43.

<sup>93</sup> Norman Marshall, *The Other Theatre*, (London: John Lehman Ltd., 1947), 19.

<sup>94</sup> Tyrone Guthrie, *The Scottish National Theatre Venture*. (Glasgow: Bone & Hulley, 1953), 13-14.

played a short season in Glasgow each year, their main focus was on touring throughout Scotland, as “the players sought to be a national rather than a regional group.”<sup>95</sup>

In their search to find new voices for Scottish theatre, the Scottish National Players was, in effect, creating the first national drama of Scotland. As Karen Anne Marshalsay writes:

The Scottish National Players were seeking Scotland’s national identity through drama, and the overwhelming feeling from a survey of the plays which they presented is that this would be found in the Highlands and in the past. Jacobite plays were an especial favorite with the *Scottish Player* declaring in March 1924 that *Campbell of Kilmohr* and *The Dawn* were being produced, ‘and not in order to propagate foolish dynastic politics but to give the Scotsmen something to dream over.’ The dream was more potent because it was set in former times when, it was felt, Scotland’s national identity was more obvious and the Scots were more distinct from the English.<sup>96</sup>

Through their repertoire, which included plays like *The Glen is Mine* by John Brandane, *Campbell of Kilmohr* by J.F. Ferguson and *James, the First of Scotland* by Robert Bain, the Scottish National Players endeavored to recover native Scottish types and develop additional historic material for the stage. In addition, they encouraged the use of the Scots language, which further distanced them from the English plays of the time and reminded Scottish audiences of their own largely forgotten dialect.

By traveling to all regions of Scotland, the Scottish National Players introduced theatre to people who were prevented by finances and geography from traveling to the cities where professional theatre flourished. The Scottish National Players were often the only exposure rural populations had to theatre. David Hutchinson quotes an article in the *Glasgow Herald* in January 1926: “It has been said that the work of a national theatre

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<sup>95</sup> David Hutchinson, *The Modern Scottish Theatre*. (Glasgow; The Molendinar Press, 1977), 44.

<sup>96</sup> Karen Anne Marshalsay, “The Quest for a Truly Representative Scottish Native Drama: The Scottish National Players. *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer 1992): 113.

cannot properly be restricted to one centre of activity; it must carry its work to the small town and village as well, and this it should do consistently and thoroughly.”<sup>97</sup> Thanks to repeated exposure, rural areas began to develop amateur theatres that reflected their own individual character and culture.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, amateur theatres began to emphasize unique regional qualities of Scottish language and character, which distinguished them from the prevailing English theatre culture of this time. Amateur companies like the Scottish National Players and others, encouraged new growth and development in Scottish theatre. Although many of the actors, playwrights and directors never achieved a professional career, they were an invaluable part of the growing desire for a national theatre. Indeed many of the actors, playwrights and directors of the amateur companies of the inter-war years went on to become the artistic directors and leading voices of the arts movement following World War II. The ensuing decades saw a surge in the development of Scottish theater companies and plays, further distancing the nascent Scottish theatrical tradition from England. This included the establishment of the Glasgow Unity Theatre, which was created in 1941 from a collection of existing amateur companies, as well as the Worker’s Theatre Group, the Clarion Players, the Glasgow Jewish Institute Players and the Transport Players. The Glasgow Unity Theatre was “committed to a socialist viewpoint

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<sup>97</sup> David Hutchinson, *The Modern Scottish Theatre*. (Glasgow; The Molendinar Press, 1977), 45.

<sup>98</sup> This is similar to the Federal Theatre Project, established in the United States in 1935 with the stated aim: To set up theatres which have possibilities of growing into social institutions in the communities in which they are located...and to lay the foundation for the development of a truly creative theatre in the United States with outstanding producing centers in each of those regions which have common interests as a result of geography, language origins, history, tradition, custom, occupations of the people.

<sup>98</sup> *A Plan for the Organization of Regional Theatres in the United States*, By E. C. Mabie (W.P.A. Federal Theatre Records, Washington, D.C.) quoted in Hallie Flanagan, *Arena: The History of the Federal Theatre Project* (New York: Benjamin Blom Inc., 1940), 45, n. 6.

and it hoped to attract a working class audience.”<sup>99</sup> Also in Glasgow was the Citizens Theatre, which took its name from the Glasgow Rep’s manifesto. James Bridie who was known as “Scotland’s best known playwright of the day” founded the Citizens Theatre in 1943.<sup>100</sup> Bridie had come to prominence in the inter-war years due to the productions of his plays by the Scottish National Players. However, Bridie himself bemoaned the fact that the Scottish audiences were not that supportive of the plays he produced by Scottish playwrights, saying,

...it isn’t entirely that the Scots wants to see only English toffs on the stage behaving in an English fashion, though this element is present. The truth is that we have never had a theatre, at least not for 400 years. The Theatre is a very traditional organism and we have always associated showmanship with London. Our ear had become attuned to the London accent on the stage and to the London idiom in playwrighting. It is that association I am trying to break down.”<sup>101</sup>

Bridie had visions of turning the Citizens Theatre into a national theatre, briefly enlisting the help of Sir Richard Cripps in this endeavor, but nothing came of the association. In 1965 the Royal Lyceum Theatre was founded in Edinburgh, which was followed by various theatre organizations such as The Scottish Society of Playwrights and the Theatre Society of Scotland, whose sole purpose was to establish a building where a national theatre could flourish. But the struggle for a national theatre was destined to continue as a lack of political and public support failed to take the conversation to the next level. However, the work by the Glasgow Rep, the Scottish National Players, and the Citizens Theatre did establish a belief in the future of Scottish theatres, playwrights, actors and directors that was separate from the English dominated theatre companies of the early

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<sup>99</sup> University of Glasgow Special Collections, [Internet]; available at <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/sta/collections/unity.html>; accessed on 26 April 2007.

<sup>100</sup> Citizens Theatre website [Internet]; available at [http://www.citz.co.uk/?node\\_id=1.3.1](http://www.citz.co.uk/?node_id=1.3.1); accessed on 30 December 2007.

<sup>101</sup> Norman Marshall, *The Other Theatre*, (London: John Lehmann Ltd., 1947), 196.

twentieth century. Through the next thirty years various plans for a national theatre were discussed but a lack of political and public support prevented the theatre from being realized. This would change with the re-establishment of the Scottish parliament in 1997 and the fight for an independent Scotland that required a new examination of Scotland's place not only within Great Britain, but in the new European Union. In the midst of these changes came the creation of the National Theatre of Scotland.

### **The National Theatre of Scotland: A Twenty-first Century National Theatre**

The National Theatre of Scotland became a reality with the announcement that the Scottish parliament had agreed to fund the venture on September 11, 2003. Now that the funding was in place for the theatre, the next step was to find an Artistic Director who would put the plan in motion. After months of searching and interviewing more than thirty applicants, Vicky Featherstone was appointed the inaugural Artistic Director on July 30, 2003. Her appointment surprised many in the arts community in Scotland. Joyce McMillan wrote in *The Scotsman*, "The choice of Vicky Featherstone is about as bold and challenging an appointment as Richard Findlay and his board could have made. Young, brilliant and not remotely Scottish - apart from a few childhood years spent in Alva - Ms Featherstone, at just thirty-seven, represents a young generation of British theatre talent that has completely recast the old pattern of relationships between London, where her current company, Paines Plough, is based, and the rest of the UK; and which tends to regard Scotland as being in the forefront of new developments in British theatre." There was, however, concern about her lack of association with existing Scottish theatre companies. McMillan writes, "There's also a question-mark over Ms.

Featherstone's relationship with those Scottish theatre companies with which she has had no contact in the past; given the commissioning model on which the National Theatre is based, winning the trust and creative co-operation of the whole Scottish theatre community will be the key task of her first months in the job."<sup>102</sup> Ms. Featherstone said in an interview following the announcement of her appointment that, "I am honored to be charged with the historic responsibility of developing and achieving the founding vision for the National Theatre of Scotland. The company will build upon all that is vibrant, dynamic and ground-breaking in Scotland and the Scottish theatre scene, to create life-changing theatre for all to enjoy."<sup>103</sup> Of course the fact that a majority of her career had been based in England was controversial. She did, however, have an extensive record of working with contemporary Scottish playwrights, including David Greig, Douglas Maxwell, Gregory Burke and Linda McLean.

Over the next few months Featherstone hired her artistic team. She appointed Neil Murray as chief executive; John Tiffany, director of new work; David Greig as dramaturg; and celebrated Scottish writer, Liz Lochhead as an artistic associate. All of the appointments were well received since all four represented some of the best talents in the region. Murray had previously been the Director and Chief Executive of the Tron Theatre in Glasgow. He said of his appointment:

I am thrilled to be involved at the inception of this important, ground-breaking new venture. The appointment of Vicky Featherstone as the first Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland has quite rightly raised expectations of what the company can achieve, nationally and internationally. The opportunity to work with Vicky and a new team to

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<sup>102</sup> Joyce McMillan, "Brave New World of Theatre Finds New Voice", *The Scotsman*, 30 July 2004, p. 9, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=871622004> (accessed 12 October 2005).

<sup>103</sup> Scottish Executive News web site. [Internet]; available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/News-Extras/156>; accessed on 12 October 2005.

realize that promise and capitalize on the talent available to Scotland is a very exciting prospect."<sup>104</sup>

However, it was interesting that Murray was Welsh and Featherstone and Tiffany were English. This is reminiscent of the early Scottish theatre companies that also depended on English producers, money and administrators to control the theaters. Although the appointment of Vicky Featherstone had been a surprise, the arts community and politicians did approve of the representation of Scottish creative talent with the appointment of Greig and Lochhead to the staff. Now that the core personnel were in place the theatre could focus on the issue of repertoire. The first season slate was scheduled to be unveiled for a fall 2005 season.

The first two issues to be addressed were how the commissioning component of the NTS would work and how a national theatre would operate without a dedicated theatre space. Featherstone, who was quick to offer her thoughts on both issues in an article in *The Scotsman* on February 21, 2005, said,

Basically a non-building-based theatre is very simple. We will have relationships with theatres which work in buildings and companies who produce theatre. We will create work with them and for them. It is about co-producing, which is a very ordinary model in theatre and it happens all the time. Two different groups get together and they talk about a piece they would like to make together and why. They can make that work in a more effective way than if they were doing it on their own. Whether it is financial, because they can bring the right people to it, or they have the right building and the other people don't, all of those things. So we will talk, we will create work that wouldn't otherwise be created. So it wouldn't be better than the work that they create already, it won't be more important than the work they create already, it will be another piece of work that they wouldn't otherwise have been able to do. So it will be about being able to have more rather than better."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> "National Theatre of Scotland appoints Executive Director." Scottish Arts Council website, [Internet] available at <http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/latestnews/1001476.aspx>. Accessed on 10 October 2005.

<sup>105</sup> Thom Dibdin, "Dramatic Role as a Champion for Theatre" *The Scotsman*, 21 February 2005, p. 9. <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=196652005> (Accessed on 14 November 2005). There

In brief, by being a commissioning organization the NTS could strengthen the already existing network of theatres by enabling them to produce shows that may otherwise be out of their budget and artistic range.

Central to the mission of the NTS is its commitment to create uniquely Scottish productions throughout all the regions of Scotland and the international theatrical community.<sup>106</sup> In June 2005, the National Theatre of Scotland announced the following development plans:

- The NTS is committed to work with each region of Scotland once per year, whether in terms of youth work, touring productions, site-specific shows, co-productions, or community theatre.
- Creation of an ensemble touring company annually staging works from April to September in different parts of the country – three shows per year including one children’s show, one youth show and an adult production
- Creation of a youth company to run youth theatre training and workshops and to stage one major community production and one small scale production per year
- Up to four National Theatre of Scotland productions to tour internationally per year
- Key focus on staging Scottish works, across Scotland, the UK and internationally – commitment to three pieces of Scottish work from the recent past per year
- Creation of an NTS Workshop – to develop ambitious works, collaborate with international artists and to develop talent
- Staging of up to two large-scale shows a year either as solo or as co-productions
- Commitment to three mid-scale shows a year, in association with existing theatre companies of Scotland
- Up to four small-scale shows a year

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are a multitude of assumptions and ideas to be found in her comments that deserve closer attention than I have room for in this project.

<sup>106</sup> These plans are similar to the goals of the Federal Theatre Project in the United States. They also went to the rural communities and created theatre with the people as a way to encourage community arts and to re-awaken an interest in the cultural legacy. Additional information can be found in the work of Hallie Flanagan, *Arena* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1985) 175; Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 134-187; John O’Connor and Lorraine Brown, ed. *The Federal Theatre Project: Free, Adult, Uncensored* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1986), 1-9.

- One major site specific production per year
- Two children/family shows per year
- One youth theatre show per year<sup>107</sup>

The plan was ambitious but also showed the NTS's commitment to building a strong cultural and theatrical identity through various theatre programs throughout all areas of Scotland and the international theatre community. Featherstone, who feels strongly about bringing the arts to the forefront of Scottish culture and about the role of the arts in building national identity, said "I think that any piece of theatre that is created in a country with Scottish actors, by Scottish playwrights is about the national identity. National identity in its best form is the thing that is in everybody's DNA about being Scottish that you don't necessarily need to define, and that is also what I think theatre is about: I think theatre is about the search for identity - asking the questions which make us say: who are we? Where are we now? What are we thinking about? And through that we come to some kind of feeling or notion of what identity is."<sup>108</sup>

The NTS proposed to achieve this new theatrical and cultural identity through several initiatives: the co-production of scripts with existing theaters throughout Scotland allows both rural and city identities to be nurtured and reflected in the productions and planned touring productions allowing all regions of Scotland to share their cultural history through theatre with the rest of the area. In addition, the NTS planned to produce shows in all regions of Scotland, with the hope of creating a new audience base that will reflect all areas and cultures of Scotland. Finally, the NTS intended to reach out to

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<sup>107</sup> The British Theatre Guide, "NTS Development Plans Announced". [Internet]; available at <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/news/NTSdev.htm>; accessed on 25 October 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Tim Cornwell, "National Theatre gets Ready for Take-off" *The Scotsman*, 2 November 2005, p. 9, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=2181162005> (accessed 14 November 2005).

Featherstone's statement raises several issues that need further interrogation and analysis than I have room for in this project.

celebrated Scottish actors (Sean Connery, Brian Cox, Ewan McGregor, Alan Cumming, Dougray Scott, etc.) across the world to be a part of the national theatre productions in their home country, raising the profile of the theatre and the material.

The pledge to tour Scottish productions internationally was another decisive step in the development of the NTS. These touring productions which would feature Scottish playwrights, directors, actors and co-producing theatre companies are intended to establish an identity for all involved, both within and without Scotland's borders. Finally, the international tours were intended to spread unique Scottish perspectives and culture throughout the world, much as Ireland had used its Irish image to increase awareness of their culture and heritage.

On November 2, 2005 the first NTS program was announced in *The Scotsman*,

The programme announced yesterday involves partnerships and co-productions with theatre companies, local authorities and arts organisations from Caithness to Dumfries, and from Stornoway to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. The number of artists involved already runs into dozens; and partnerships with the Edinburgh International Festival and cutting-edge companies from beyond Scotland are planned. Another highlight, later in the year, will be the staging of *Tutti Frutti*, a Scottish theatrical landmark and hit BBC comedy series from 1987, which centres on the fictional Scottish "kings of rock", the Majestics. Vicky Featherstone, the NTS artistic director and chief executive, has already lined up a major United States tour for a production she will personally direct, *The Wolves in the Walls*. Taken from the children's graphic novel, it is called a "musical pandemonium" for all the family. Another major highlight is *Black Watch*, by Gregory Burke. The new play about the oldest Highland regiment, by a writer who took the Fringe by storm with the shows *Gagarin Way* and *The Straights*, will open in Edinburgh next August. Featherstone is also directing *Mary Stuart*, by Friedrich Schiller, in a new translation by Scottish playwright David Harrower.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Tim Cornwell, "National Theatre gets Ready for Take-off" *The Scotsman*, 2 November 2005, p. 9, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=2181162005> (accessed 14 November 2005).

Excitement over this announcement was tempered by the fact that a major theatre company for new works, The Traverse, was not a part of the initial season and that there wasn't any material that celebrated Scotland's theatrical legacy. Indeed, the season was entirely contemporary. This provoked Tim Cornwell to write,

There are some notable gaps in the pattern of co-operation: no major project, so far, with any of the four producing theatres in Fife and Tayside, nor with Scotland's leading new-play theatre, the Traverse. There's perhaps already a slight tendency for the company to build up its own production base where it should be working through other companies. And, of course success hinges on the skill with which it is marketed to a Scottish public which has often remained sadly unaware of the rich theatrical culture that has grown up on its doorstep.<sup>110</sup>

Despite these concerns, it is arguable that the NTS has delivered on several of the objectives first set out in 2003. This was, perhaps, seen most clearly in their first co-productions of *Home*, which launched the NTS in February of 2006. This ambitious project brought together ten Scottish directors in ten locations working on ten original Scottish productions about the concept of "home" and what it means to various individuals and regions in Scotland. Featherstone set out immediately to reassure skeptics that NTS's major challenges: the problems of no home based theatre for the nation to rally around and the commissioning of new works by Scottish playwrights could be surmounted. Mark Fisher wrote in *Hi-Arts*,

Any opening show that didn't express something of this flexibility would have given a misleading impression of what the NTS was about. Thus, Featherstone's inspirational opening gambit is not one show at all, but ten of them, dotted about the country and performed within a period of five days in spaces as unlikely as a derelict house in Aberdeen and an art gallery in Dundee. All of them are called 'Home', and all of them adhere to the broadest definition of what theatre can be. Demonstrating from the start that this is a theatre for the whole of the nation and not some Central Belt indulgence, Featherstone has commissioned *Home* performances in

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

locations across Scotland, including Caithness, Inverness, Shetland and Stornoway. Each is the responsibility of a different director who has found a group of collaborators and somewhere to perform – the stipulation being that it couldn't be a conventional theatre – on a performance that should somehow embody the idea of home.<sup>111</sup>

All ten productions of *Home* opened simultaneously on February 25, 2006, in the following locations: Aberdeen, Caithness, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Dumfries, Dundee, Glasgow, Inverness, Shetland and Stornoway. Joyce Macmillan, who had watched the battle for a National Theatre closely, said in her review in *The Scotsman* that,

On the downside, I would say - on the evidence of the five shows I saw - that it has been a shade too artistically uneven for comfort; and sometimes, too, ominously short of faith in the power of live theatre, as opposed to the screen images on which many shows depended. On the upside, though, the new company has achieved a dazzling geographical reach, and a real sense of connection with local communities that has both enabled those communities to re-examine their own story, and given them a new voice on the national stage. It's been a start, in other words; and, taken as a whole, a brave and imaginative one, designed to smash and rearrange many hostile Scottish preconceptions about theatre. But there are still many miles to travel before Scotland can begin to take this long-neglected art-form back into its heart, and into its sense of what home is, and what it might become.<sup>112</sup>

Mark Fisher writes,

One of the pleasant spin-offs of being a theatre critic is you end up as a bit of a social anthropologist. Travelling round, you get to see not only the performances on stage, but also the audiences they attract. In class, age, outlook and sensibility, every theatre engages with a different group of people and it's fascinating to observe how they differ...Never has this been more the case than with the National Theatre of Scotland's inaugural 'Home' project. By designing performances for very particular, non-theatre spaces and responding to the idea of "home", the ten directors created a set of productions that were inextricably rooted in the places

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<sup>111</sup> Mark Fisher, "The Long Way Home" Hi-Arts Arts website: : <[http://www.hi-arts.co.uk/feb06\\_feature\\_national\\_theatre\\_scotland\\_launch.html](http://www.hi-arts.co.uk/feb06_feature_national_theatre_scotland_launch.html)> (February 2006). [Internet]; accessed on 25 March 2006.

<sup>112</sup> Joyce Macmillan, "For One Weekend, All the World's a Stage - or All the Country, at Least" *The Scotsman*, 27 February, 2006, p. 10, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=298912006> (accessed 12 November 2006).

where they happened. Whether it was a doll's house in Stornoway mirroring the abandoned buildings of Lewis, or the Northlink Ferry in Lerwick echoing the experience of generations in transit, every one of the performances was an expression of local identity. For this reason, even the least successful of the five performances I saw had a sense of purpose, a feeling of value, borne out of a real relationship with the community.<sup>113</sup>

Nominations for the Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland (CATS), which were announced in June of 2006, offer the best evidence for the NTS's achievements. After announcing the nominations, Robert Dawson Scott, Convenor of CATS, said, "The first few months of the National Theatre of Scotland have proved to be both a popular and critical success. It is in line with its innovative model that all its nominations are the result of partnerships and co-productions with the existing talent pool. Once again we were struck by the quality of work being produced across the country, from Shetland to East Lothian and from large and small companies."<sup>114</sup> This culminated with three of the productions of *Home* winning CATS Awards on June 4, 2006.<sup>115</sup> CATS said in their press release, "2006 has been a good year for theatre not in theatres and for the new National Theatre of Scotland. So it's not entirely surprising that the winning production combines those two. *Roam* (the next production after the launch of *Home*) was hugely ambitious in every sense - as a play not just an event in an unusual venue - and despite

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<sup>113</sup> Mark Fisher, "Home Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh," *Hi-Arts*, 1 March 2006.

<sup>114</sup> "2005 - 06 Shortlists for Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland," Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland, [Internet]; available at [http://www.scottishtheatreawards.org/shortlist\\_2005\\_06.html](http://www.scottishtheatreawards.org/shortlist_2005_06.html); accessed on 20 September 20, 2006.

<sup>115</sup> (Best Design - Karen Tennent for *Home: East Lothian*, National Theatre of Scotland in partnership with The Brunton and East Lothian Council; Best Music - Hugh Nankivell for *Home: Shetland* directed by Wils Wilson - National Theatre of Scotland in Partnership with the Shetland Islands Council; Best Childrens Show - *Home: East Lothian*, written and directed by Gill Robertson- National Theatre of Scotland in partnership with The Brunton and East Lothian Council.) The National Theatre of Scotland's co-production of *Roam* with Grid Iron Theatre Company in Edinburgh won three additional awards (Best Theatre Production, Best Ensemble and Best Technical Presentation).

enormous difficulties, Grid Iron pulled it off. But they would not have been able to work on this scale without the support of the NTS. A good result all round."<sup>116</sup>

As the National Theatre of Scotland completed its first year of production, Tim Cromwell wrote in *The Scotsman*, "It has toured 44 cities, towns and villages across Scotland, reached 100,000 people and won 11 awards - all in its first year." Later in the article he remarked, "Scotland's culture minister, Patricia Ferguson, revealed in a recent interview how she worried last November that the line-up was too ambitious. 'What they have delivered has been amazing...It has had a significant impact and will continue to do so.'"<sup>117</sup> The NTS is commissioning new Scottish work with local actors, directors, playwrights and designers; co-producing productions with established theatres throughout rural and urban areas of Scotland; touring productions throughout all regions of Scotland; their first international touring production will begin in 2007. Most importantly, the national theatre is helping to unite Scottish theatre artists who in turn are building a fresh national legacy that will facilitate the development of an innovative native theater tradition and new audience base for Scotland and her people.

Through their ten inaugural productions of *Home*, the NTS celebrated, not only their Scottish heritage, landscape, myths and language, but also the regional differences that are uniquely Scottish. The NTS productions of *Home* incorporated a large team of Scottish playwrights, directors, actors all working for their own unique vision of Scotland. Finally, the productions of *Home* united an audience across the various venues

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<sup>116</sup> "2005 - 06 Winners for Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland." Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland, [Internet]; available at [http://www.scottishtheatreawards.org/shortlist\\_2005\\_06.html](http://www.scottishtheatreawards.org/shortlist_2005_06.html); accessed on 20 September 2006.

<sup>117</sup> Tim Cornwell, "After Hit-and-Miss Year, National Theatre is Winning Over Critics." *The Scotsman*, 1 November 2006. P. 5, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=1614142006> (Accessed on 2 December 2006)

in Scotland in one cohesive cultural event that was uniquely Scottish. Anthony D. Smith writes, "By means of the ceremonies, customs and symbols every member of a community participates in life, emotions and virtues of that community and, through them, re-dedicating him or herself to its destiny." Through the ten productions of *Home*, ten different regions of Scotland came together in one event that celebrated theatre, audience and nation. Through that sharing of a cultural event, the NTS created a symbol and ceremony that could be shared by theatre and audience alike. Sarah Jones writes in *The Independent* that, "The opening programme, ambitious and broad-ranging, is exciting. For any country, the controversial notion of a national theatre provides not only a world platform for theatre, but a focus, artistically and politically, for national pride."<sup>118</sup> With their inaugural production of *Home*, the NTS reached a wider audience in five days than any building based theatre could hope to attract in the same time period. In addition, by co-producing in ten locations throughout Scotland, the NTS produced a cultural event that was for *all* of Scotland. Featherstone writes,

We spent a long time thinking of how to present our opening night and finally came up with "Home". We asked 10 of our best directors to create a piece of theatre around the word "Home" - commonly thought of as one of the most evocative words in the English language. Each of them have been working in partnership with a specific area, and they are right in the middle of creating a unique experience for each particular audience. It was important for as many people as possible to know that we had begun, and to feel that they could have a connection with us [the NTS]. "Home" is our way of launching all over Scotland: allowing somebody in Inverness or Stornoway or Caithness to see an entirely different performance by a completely different director but at the same time be part of the opening night; for the work to reach across Scotland as far as possible.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Sarah Jones, "The National Theatre of Scotland: Open for Business" *The Independent*, 16 March 2006. <http://arts.independent.co.uk/theatre/features/article351639.ece> (accessed on 14 November 2006).

<sup>119</sup> Vicky Featherstone, "Dream Theatre Becomes Reality," *The Scotsman*, 19 February 2006, p. 1, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=257162006> (accessed 14 October 2006).

By opening with *Home*, rather than a star-studded event with a celebrity actor in a famous play, the NTS instead chose to open with a show that would allow for all regions of Scotland to be a part of the inaugural celebration of their National Theatre.

Featherstone writes, “We want people to realise the NTS relates to the people of Scotland and for people to feel that they have ownership of it. We have an opportunity to define what theatre, or a national theatre, can and should be.”<sup>120</sup> With the opening of *Home*, the NTS showed that this new model of a non-building based, commissioning organization could be a national theatre for all of Scotland.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the National Theatre of Scotland has delivered on several of the objectives first set out in 2003: it is commissioning new Scottish theatrical works with local actors, directors, playwrights and designers; co-producing productions with established theatres throughout rural and urban areas of Scotland; touring productions throughout all regions of Scotland; and touring their first productions internationally in 2007. Most importantly, the national theatre is helping to unite Scottish theatre artists who in turn are building a fresh national legacy and canon that will facilitate the establishment of an innovative native theater tradition and new audience base for Scotland and her people. The National Theatre of Scotland has picked up where the Glasgow Repertory Company, the Scottish National Players and the amateur theatre movement left off. Indeed, using many of the same concepts, the NTS is establishing a rich tradition of Scottish theatre. Although organized differently, the National Theatre of Scotland is similar to the Abbey Theatre; its tone is nationalist reflecting Scottish

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

ambivalence about its location in Great Britain and the European community. With this new theatre tradition comes the unifying element that has been missing in the fractured Scottish cultural identity. As Featherstone writes:

It is a risk, but when theatre stops taking risks it becomes dull, audiences start feeling bored and the dynamism is lost. From here we will build on the extraordinary talent we have currently working both within and outwith Scotland. In the next two to three years we will have been able to cover Scotland in various imaginative and unique ways. As well as going for the big hitters like Tutti Frutti, we'll continue to take top-quality productions to theatres - and communities - that don't expect to have them. All our planning and ideas are for nothing if we do not excite the audience with their potential. It must make Scotland proud.<sup>121</sup>

Finally, with the completion of their first season, the National Theatre of Scotland has shown that a non-building based theatre centered around co-producing and commissioning new work can be a valuable addition to the theatrical landscape in Scotland. John M. Morrison of *The Guardian* writes,

Suddenly the NTS is making other arts organisations look a touch old-fashioned. Does the fact that the National Theatre in London inhabits such a definite home seem a little limiting by comparison, despite the virtues of its three Denys Lasdun-designed auditoria? Were English National Opera not constrained by occupying the biggest theatre in the city could it not make work that was miles more interesting, varied and exciting than that which it is has to do now?<sup>122</sup>

Perhaps the struggle that the National Theatre in London faced regarding the location and construction of their own theatre building had an impact on the creation of the NTS. Choosing not to follow the examples of the National Theatre in London or the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the NTS has created a new model of what a “national theatre” needs to be for Scotland. While at first questioned, the concept of a non-building based theatre

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<sup>121</sup> Vicky Featherstone, “Dream Theatre Becomes Reality,” *The Scotsman*, 19 February 2006, p. 1, <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=670&id=257162006> (accessed 14 October 2006).

<sup>122</sup> Charlotte Higgins, “Flower of Scotland” *The Guardian Unlimited*, 14 August 2006. <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1844036,00.html> (accessed 14 October 2006).

has become an element that represents artistic freedom for a theatre that stresses the importance of performance in found spaces rather than dedicated theatre buildings. As seen in the ten productions of *Home*, which were performed at a variety of locations throughout Scotland, including: a ferry, in factories, warehouses, gymnasiums, the street and on the side of a building, this element allows the NTS to emphasize the importance of the connection of the material to each specific region in Scotland. In this way, the NTS is a new model for what a “national theatre” of the twenty-first century can be for a theatre and a nation.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> There are many issues that still need to be explored before the NTS can be said to have delivered on its key initiatives. This is work that I will continue beyond the scope of this project.

# Appendix 1

## **The Scottish Government**

### **News Release**

#### **National Theatre Takes Centre Stage**

11/09/2003

A National Theatre for Scotland is to be created with a budget of £7.5 million over the next two years, the Executive has confirmed.

It will be a 'virtual' commissioning body with offices located in Glasgow.

The new National Theatre will be expected to set dramatic standards and provide strategic and artistic leadership. It will commission work from Scotland's existing creative talent for production that will tour the country.

Culture Minister Frank McAveety said his immediate priority was to identify a Chair, a Board and a creative director.

The money for the new National Theatre has been secured as part of the Finance Minister's re-allocation of End Year Flexibility (EYF) funds, details of which were outlined in Parliament today.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> The Scottish Government website, available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2003/09/4112> (accessed on 6 December 2007).

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