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From: Ronald Douglas [r.douglas@ntlworld.com]
Sent: 11 October 2004 14:34
To: info
Subject: Cultural Commission[Scanned]

Dear Mr. Boyle,

I understand that you wish to have submissions from the general public.

I am a longterm supporter of Scottish Opera, having been a subscriber, with my late wife, since its inception in the sixties and the move to the Theatre Royal in the seventies. There have undoubtedly been ups and downs in the standard of productions over this period, and I would not wish to defend all of the output over these years.

However, during the past 10 years, under the tenure of Richard Armstrong, the standard has grown, culminating in the Ring Cycle over the past three/four years to universal acclaim in the arts world. This has put the name of Scotland on the world-wide stage in a way that few branches of the arts [let alone sports!] can claim. Prior to the vision of Sir Alexander Gibson and his colleagues over 40 years ago, Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, was regarded as a musical desert. The work of Scottish Opera, both on stage and in outreach to schools & communities throughout Scotland has been immense. The Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama, and its Opera School especially, are complementary to all of this.

It seems to me a tragedy that all of this is being put at risk of survival by the parsimonious policies of the present Executive toward the Arts and Opera in particular. Of course, Opera cannot sustain itself and be self-financing. But it has never done so - it has always depended on the patronage of wealthy aristocracy or governments and tax-payers, throughout the centuries and across the globe. All have deemed it part of civilisation that is worthy of support, particularly as the sums involved are trivial in the context of the vast expenditure on other things. The 'cake' available to the Arts must be enlarged.

Finally, if Scotland wishes to attract inward investment of people and business, one of the things that attracts decision-makers is the availability of a high standard of cultural activities. This is the 'goose' that lays the 'golden eggs' of economic success. Don't allow it to be killed!

Yours Sincerely,

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