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The Friends of
Scottish Opera

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29 SEP 2004

Mr James Boyle
Chair
Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Carrington Road
Edinburgh
EH4 1EG

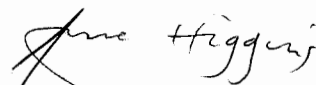
SCOTTISH OPERA

28 September 2004

Dear Mr Boyle

Our Vice-Chairman, John Mayne, has asked me to let you have a signed, hard copy of the Friends' submission - which he e-mailed to the Commission on Sunday 26 September 2004.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Anne Higgins
Friends Manager

Enc

From: John Mayne
 Vice-Chairman
 Friends of Scottish Opera
 39 Elmbank Crescent
 Glasgow G2 4PT

James Boyle
 Chair
 Cultural Commission
 Broughton High School
 Carrington Road
 Edinburgh
 EH4 1EG

26th September 2004

Dear Mr. Boyle,

Cultural Commission: Phase 1 of the Consultation Process

The Council of the Friends of Scottish Opera has asked me to respond to your letter of 17 August 2004. You explicitly ask us to "take the citizen's perspective, think radically and look ahead"; and to cover specific aspects of your remit. You are particularly interested in our response to "The concept of cultural rights for the Scottish citizen and those of its creative community." Your canvas is broad. We shall try to respond from our point of view.

The Friends of Scottish Opera is constituted legally as separate and independent from, though in purpose supportive of, Scottish Opera from whom you will, no doubt, be receiving a separate submission. We have some 2000 members, arranged in regional groups: Grampian and Highlands (based in Aberdeen and Inverness), Tayside (Dundee), Forth Valley (Stirling), Lothian and Borders (Edinburgh), Strathclyde (Glasgow) and Dumfries and Galloway (Dumfries). In addition the USA Caledonian Foundation, comprising Americans of Scottish origin and/or connections, functions as the American branch of the Friends of Scottish Opera. Our American Friends give particular financial support to educational projects in the Highlands and Islands.

I refer in this letter to some of the many letters written by Friends earlier this year which are particularly relevant to your remit and to our comments. They represent the many voices of Friends and of citizens outwith the Friends, concerned about Scottish cultural life and Scottish Opera within it. The letters are placed in an Appendix for ease of reference.

We are very ready to think radically about the future of Scottish cultural life, though we do not believe that pulling plants up by the roots merely to demonstrate radicalism is the best route to a healthy garden. Our natural focus is Scottish Opera but what we have to say can be applied equally to other art forms. Indeed, opera embraces many art forms.

Arts Sector in Scotland

It is most important that there should be a vibrant arts sector in Scotland, both for the cultural health of the country and its citizens; and to provide an attractive nation, appealing to its own citizens and others, tourists, inward investment, industry and commerce alike. The arts in all their diversity are an essential component of Scottish life (Appendix, Letter 1.4).

Scotland has a great heritage in this regard; it was the source of the Scottish Enlightenment, then leading the world in culture, philosophy, literature and science. Scotland remains strong in many of these fields, not least music and theatre.

Not only do we need a vibrant arts sector – we already have one. In music, opera and the visual arts, Scotland should be confident and proud of both its institutions and the products of these institutions. We have a clear success story here that would be endangered by any diminution of

support or by pulling up everything by the roots. Government cannot create an arts sector; it can only provide the conditions for it to thrive. The arts needs nurturing further by all our citizens if Scotland is to maintain and improve its standing in Britain, Europe and beyond (Letter 2.1 & 2.3).

The different branches of the arts in Scotland should not be set either conceptually or financially against one another. They should be mutually reinforcing. The funds needed to provide adequately for the arts in Scotland are not great in national terms. Much could be achieved for modest sums. Such proper funding for the arts in Scotland would not, it should be emphasised, impoverish the health service; the monies required are of a quite different order of magnitude for the two. Moreover, as has been repeatedly stated by the medical profession, a modest investment in the arts would lead to a disproportionately greater improvement in the national health at all levels. This was clearly set out in an editorial article by Richard Smith in the British Medical Journal entitled: "Spend (slightly) less on health and more on the arts: health would probably be improved." (BMJ 2002 volume 325, pages 1432- 1433).

Position of Scottish Opera within the Arts Sector in Scotland

An independent report by Sir Peter Jonas into the affairs of Scottish Opera, commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council, was completed in 2001. It was supposedly confidential to the SAC, the Scottish Executive and Scottish Opera, but has been widely leaked. Its findings remain most relevant to considerations of the funding and functioning of Scottish Opera.

Jonas compared the management of Scottish Opera with that of two opera houses in Munich, and of one each in Berlin, Weimar, Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Innsbruck and Geneva. Scottish Opera showed up remarkably well in those comparisons, especially, as Jonas pertinently observed, since the Company is responsible for education and for small-scale touring, aspects which, in continental Europe, would usually be undertaken by other bodies. Jonas saw Scottish Opera's artistic standards as remarkably high: "Scotland, the Scottish Executive, and the Scottish Arts Council can and should be proud of the Company and the way it serves its audience."

Jonas concluded by recommending that Scottish Opera required an annual grant-in-aid of a minimum of £8.5 million in order to continue to function properly. Failure to fund the Company properly "will result in lost past and present investment...and...indefensibly bad value for taxpayers' money." We agree with that assessment (Letter 3.1 & 3.3 to 3.7).

Scotland can ill afford the loss or diminution of Scottish Opera, an institution and enterprise of genuinely international prestige and standing. It could easily and quickly be destroyed. It would take many decades to rebuild.

It has so recently produced, to international acclaim, an outstanding Ring Cycle which stands comparison with the best in the world (Letters 4.1 & 4.3 and 5.2). It can continue to maintain these standards and to remain a cosmopolitan force only if it is supported – and not only by government (Letter 6) - to the same extent as elsewhere. Despite the excellence of our opera, international comparisons within Europe give no grounds for complacency (Letter 7.2 to 7.6). Finland, a country of similar population and geographical diversity to Scotland, affords notable priority to the arts, especially opera. The example of Wales is chastening (Letter 8).

Arts Education in Scotland

There are some necessary conditions for a flourishing cultural life in any nation:

effective teaching in schools of the fundamentals – reading, writing, drawing, painting, drama, dance and, of course, music;

by "effective" we mean helping every child to become a person of enquiring and independent mind, ready to engage with all that life has to offer;

the existence of opportunities after full-time education to continue the learning process and enjoy the fruits available from all cultural activities.

We therefore welcome the Scottish Executive's target of providing a learning opportunity on a musical instrument for all pupils as they move through primary school, though we observe that the opportunity is not always made available. We believe that any child who shows aptitude and interest should continue to be given such an opportunity throughout his or her school career; and that more general musical appreciation should be taught throughout the primary and secondary levels.

We regard such opportunities as one of a child's rights. Rights entail obligations; and not only in terms of musical education children should be encouraged to earn their rights to further opportunities by good performance.

Scottish Opera For All (SOFA), the schools' educational limb, is a most imaginative, enterprising and popular aspect of Scottish Opera's activities. It is the oldest-established and most experienced opera education programme in the world. SOFA regularly shares its expertise in this field with opera companies from Europe and further afield.

For example, "The Tale o' Tam", a schools operatic version of Burns' "Tam o' Shanter" was prepared and rehearsed in Ayrshire schools in 2001, with just two professional singers; and then performed, with its large cast of school children, to great enthusiasm in local theatres. A year later the work was revived with the additional participation of schools from Norway, Germany and the USA. "The Tale o' Tam" is just one selected example of the educational work of Scottish Opera. These and many other examples give the lie to charges of "elitism".

We believe that Scottish Opera's contributions to musical education in Scotland, for example, through SOFA's working with schools (Letter 9), the Orchestra of Scottish Opera's working with schools' orchestras (Letter 1.1 to 1.3) and community workshops, are first class and should be better funded.

Delivery of and Access to Scottish Opera

Scottish Opera Go Round (SOGR) is opera performed in English with a small cast, to piano accompaniment, through a tour typically taking in 20-25 towns and villages throughout Scotland. Essential Scottish Opera is usually 4 singers, again with piano accompaniment, giving an extended and staged concert recital of operatic excerpts, over a tour of similar size and range to that of SOGR. With more resources we would support Scottish Opera's mounting more productions of Scottish Opera On Tour (SOOT) which is a version of SOGR but with a small orchestra instead of only a piano accompaniment. It is extremely gratifying to see, especially in the more remote locations, the enthusiastic attendance at these small-scale performances, which are frequently sold out.

In the first 42 years of its existence, Scottish Opera has given the world première performances of 13 newly-commissioned operas, every one of which was by a Scottish or a Scottish-based composer. In 11 of the 13, the libretto was by a Scottish writer. These observations are made not so as to endorse narrow chauvinism, which should have no place in artistic enterprises of this kind, but so as to counter any suggestions of neglect by Scottish Opera of indigenous composers – and writers. Indeed Sir Walter Scott is an author whose literary works have been taken up remarkably often as the basis for operatic libretti. Probably he is second only to Shakespeare in this. At least 60 operas are known to have been based on stories by Scott.

Scottish citizens should have the right of access to opera performances on a scale appropriate to the locality. This is a right taken for granted in most European cities – not to speak of entire countries. Scotland should aspire to be on a par with high-performing European equivalents. This right of access implies full-scale performances in cities and lesser-scale performances elsewhere, as widely as possible given Scotland's population and geographical spread (Letter 10). Touring cannot be viable without a firm base of main-scale productions, serving as the centre of excellence from which the offshoots can be derived (Letter 11). Scottish Opera already has the bones for this but needs to flesh out the ability to tour more extensively and continue and build on small-scale tours.

In all the activities of Scottish Opera social inclusion must play a very important part, in terms not only of reasonable prices but also of provision for the many forms of disability. Two letters from Friends make this point very persuasively (Letters 12 & 13).

Scottish Opera already goes far in providing opportunities to all our citizens who wish to take advantage of them - not to an elite but to anyone interested in buying an inexpensive ticket. We would like it to do more. This would require more resources – and not just from the public purse.

Artistic Infrastructure

We do not have a settled view on how best the artistic infrastructure should be organised to provide best value across the board for all the arts within the resources available.

As far as government is concerned there is a great deal to be said for:

- clear and consistent arts policies, agreed with the sector;
- steady and generous funding, sufficient to realise the policies;
- funding on at least a three-year rolling cycle, especially for opera. Unclear and last-minute funding makes opera planning, which is done on an extended time-scale, almost impossible; and
- an effective arms-length relationship between government and the arts to eliminate political interference in the arts.

Just as important as basic funding is the role which government – both the Parliament and the Executive – can play in valuing the arts and giving public and consistent commitment to their vigorous development. Without such expressions of values, the private sector will not be inspired to fund the arts generously; and many citizens will assume that the arts do not matter.

Marketing and Promotion

The role of the arts in encouraging inward investment, visitors, tourists and international conferences should not be underestimated or scorned. A culturally rich Scotland is not only a boon for its citizens but also an attraction both for those outwith Scotland who wish to enjoy its artistic life and for those who seek outlets for economic activity (Letters 3.2, 7.1 & 15).

In Glasgow at least, Scottish Opera appears to be better at pulling in a cross section by age and otherwise than many other “traditional” arts. Fresh work and innovative productions are important in this regard. Opera productions are not museum pieces, but new ideas sometimes take time to be accepted and do not immediately put “bums on seats”, although often appealing to new attenders and supporters of other art-forms such as theatre and dance.

Encouraging Creativity, Maximising the Creative Potential of the People of Scotland

We have already described Scottish Opera’s contributions to education, to making opera available and accessible to all and to providing opportunities for creativity in this multi-faceted art form. None of this work would be possible without a centre of excellence, embodied in the Company itself and in its main-scale productions – just as the arms and legs of the body cannot function without the head and the heart. Such centres of excellence provide opportunities for artists; make the arts readily available to all; and set the highest standards to which the citizen can aspire. Against these the artist and the citizen can judge their own performance and that of others, including in centres of excellence in other countries.

Citizens’ Cultural Rights

We approach this issue with caution. We support the establishment of a clear set of values about the importance of a full and vibrant cultural life, sustained publicly and in all its aspects by government, the private sector and the voluntary sector; and endorsed by all citizens. We think that the American Constitution (which incidentally drew heavily on the Declaration of Arbroath) was correct in establishing the rights to: “Liberty, Life and the pursuit of Happiness” – but not to happiness itself. This reflects the reality that such rights cannot be absolute and unlimited. They are limited by such forces as the law, acceptability, feasibility and resources – what is “within reason”. They also entail corresponding duties and obligations. Thus, the enjoyment of any art form is a function of, among other things, availability in its broadest sense and the willingness of the citizen to seek it out. We can and should seek to increase the former and inspire the latter. This entails hard work both by the

artist and by the citizen. To speak of citizens' cultural rights in this context does not seem to us to be particularly helpful or useful.

Conclusion

We endorse the statements of values in the Cultural Policy Statement and in the latest Executive statements but observe that actions to date do not in all respects match the fine words. Lack of effective commitment on the part of all sectors diminishes the vibrancy and spread of cultural activities. A programme of action, involving all sectors working together, well-funded and necessarily led by the Executive, is needed if Scotland's rich cultural past is to be maintained in future. Cultural life in all its aspects has to matter to everyone.

I leave the last word to another Friend, Dr Guy Johnson MRCP, who wrote on 18 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

"Yann Martel concluded his introduction to *The Life of Pi*, thus: "If we, citizens, do not support our artists, then we sacrifice our imagination on the altar of crude reality and we end up believing in nothing and having worthless dreams."

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Mayne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

(John Mayne)

**Appendix to the Friends of Scottish Opera letter to the Cultural Commission,
27th September 2004.**

Extracts from some letters from Friends

1. Professor Colin Suckling, Chairman, West of Scotland Schools Symphony Orchestra wrote on 3 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

1.1 "The WSSSO is a charity that continues the work of the former Strathclyde Schools Symphony Orchestra in providing the best possible standard of large scale music making for pupils of all backgrounds throughout the West of Scotland. Like Scottish Opera, it has become an integral part of the fabric of musical life in the West of Scotland.

1.2 I am aware of your review of Scottish Opera and recognize that it must operate under sound financial principles. However I should like to draw your attention to the partnership that we have formed with the Orchestra of Scottish Opera. The WSSSO now has a joint programme of rehearsals and events with the Orchestra of Scottish Opera which is thus making a direct contribution to the development of musical talent in Scotland. This partnership has greatly added to the value of what we do and has been much appreciated by the 12 local authorities represented on our Trust.

1.3 In this way, it can be seen that the Orchestra of Scottish Opera has become part of the infrastructure of musical education as an organisation. Moreover, many of its members provide the quality teaching that goes on in our schools contributing to the Scottish Executive's challenging target of providing a learning opportunity on a musical instrument for all pupils as they move through primary school. It is obvious, therefore, that the demise of Scottish Opera as a performing organisation would have consequences well beyond the public presentation of performances and I ask you to give consideration to this dimension of their impact in your review

1.4 Finally, from my perspective within the University of Strathclyde, I would suggest that all of our national companies contribute to the attractiveness of Scotland as a place to live and work. To use a phrase from another Scottish public body, a "smart, successful Scotland" must welcome companies and people to a cultural environment that values the full range of style, genre and audience. Scottish Opera, the RSNO and the SCO are essential components of that breadth."

2. Adrian Edwards wrote in an e-mail of 1 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

2.1 "I was born in England but have been proud to call Scotland my home for the past seven years. One of the things that appeals so much to me and others like me is the wonderful quality of life to be found living in the great cities of Scotland. A major factor in this is the vibrant cultural life which manages to exist independent of London. If we are to halt or reverse the flight of the ambitious and well-educated (Scots or English) towards London and the South East of England, Scotland must nurture that precious resource, with subsidy if needs be.

2.2 It is depressing to read attacks on opera as "elitist". These writers often claim a pseudo-democratic justification. Of course popular surveys will show that a greater percentage of people believe that football or traditional music should receive the subsidy currently enjoyed by opera. But MSPs are representatives, not delegates, and should take a broader view of Scotland's cultural well-being and its long-term effect on the morale of the country.

2.3 The purpose of a devolved Scottish Parliament must surely be more than just to oversee the more efficient working of bread-and-butter administration. It should promote Scotland as a nation, not as a region of the UK; part of that must be to support a full cultural life. Denmark and Sweden with similar populations manage it."

3. Sir Raymond Johnstone wrote on 12 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

3.1 "I was on the Board of Scottish Opera for five years and was chairman from 1985 to 1988. I then became honorary president until 1997. I gave a lot of time to the company not so much through a love of opera or music but because of the importance of the role which I see Scottish Opera fulfilling for Scotland as a whole.

3.2 From 1960 to 1990 as head of an international investment group based in Glasgow I traveled the world extensively with at least annual visits to Japan and America. I often found myself acting as an unofficial salesman of Scotland to the presidents and finance directors of companies I was visiting several of whom would discuss where they should locate a new factory. In both America and Japan I was impressed by the tremendous importance of the part played at the level of corporate decision taking by the cultural background of a country in which they were considering an investment. We are lucky to have very good music and arts in general in Scotland but the flagship most widely acclaimed around the world is Scottish Opera which has an outstanding international reputation. That it continues to be a full time company performing operas to an impressive level of quality which is widely acclaimed has I am sure an importance to Scotland that few people here realise.

3.3 The remit of the Scottish Arts Council is to provide with their grant the best arts for the people of Scotland as a whole. Their first reaction is, quite understandably given their remit, to put a limit on how much should go to any one company. Given their overall grant level this has consistently led to funding for Scottish Opera insufficient for them to maintain their standards.

3.4 Clive Priestly was asked by Mrs Thatcher to write a report on the financial problems of Covent Garden. His conclusion was that the company was well run but that opera was expensive. A government should decide what level of opera provision they wanted for the country and then fund it accordingly. Clive Priestly was then asked to report on the provincial companies in the UK. He gave them all a good bill of health, and recommended quite substantial increases to the Arts Council on an ongoing basis specifically to fund their opera provision adequately. It took six weeks for the Scottish Arts Council to frustrate government wishes and decide they would only pass on to Scottish Opera the same proportion of extra money as they normally gave of their total funding.

3.5 If the case for a strong opera company is recognised by government then to implement this on an ongoing basis either the Arts Council should have their remit changed or government should itself determine the level of funding for opera in Scotland after taking account of comments by the Scottish Arts Council. They could for instance give a base grant to Scottish Opera (and perhaps the other three National companies) and instruct the Arts Council to disregard it in allocating their own funds.

3.6 Glasgow has great strength and a wonderful reputation in Music and the Arts. Opera brings together those in the live theatre, artists and musicians in a unique way and creates great synergy in the artistic community. This I believe important, but it is only by looking at the strength created by our four National companies and the value this must add to the work of Locate in Scotland that the danger of damaging them for a minor saving in expenditure can be seen in perspective.

3.7 I hope and pray that you will be able to find a way of preserving the strength of our artistic heritage which adds such a lot to Scotland's worldwide reputation"

4. Dr Helen Boden wrote on 2 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

4.1 "Scottish Opera's Ring Cycle was a lifetime cultural highlight for many people from Scotland and worldwide who were fortunate enough to see it last year. Preventing the company from capitalising on the creative momentum generated during the development of this project, by further curtailing funding for its core work, makes absolutely no sense. The men and women on Scottish Opera's payroll who worked hard to make this phenomenal event happen deserve long-term secure employment, together with the opportunity to build on experience and expertise gained, in order to rise to further artistic challenges. The audience at home and beyond are equally deserving of the continued provision of a quality product. Innovative full-scale productions must constitute the infrastructure supporting the company's important work in education and the community, and not vice versa.

4.2 Exposure to the widest range of cultural activity should be everyone's right. The arts have too significant a role to play in the improvement of the quality of lives, alongside initiatives in health and education, for this to be otherwise. If hierarchies (of popularity, relevance etc) continue to be externally imposed, and to determine funding priorities, the result will be that many individuals lose the chance to experience culture beyond that considered appropriate to their – topographical or class – positioning in the UK, with disastrous implications for the future, as creatively talented young people are forced to seek work outwith Scotland.

4.3 Opera and so-called high culture are needed more than ever, both to make a statement about the country's cultural health and wealth in an international context, and to provide an aspirational model for its own citizens. Opera should not be forced into competition for limited available resources with traditional artforms, but secured alongside them by the provision of adequate funding. I hope you will do whatever you can to help bring this about."

5. Caroline Denison-Pender wrote on 18 February 2004 to First Minister Jack McConnell:

5.1 "Not only has Scottish Opera brought great opera into the lives of many more people, but it has also helped encourage a new generation of outstanding young singers. There always have been the superstars, but the broad base of singing talent is of an infinitely higher caliber than it was forty years ago. As a result smaller touring companies have also sprung up, spreading opera to an even wider public, as indeed has Scottish Opera's outreach program. But what is the point of all this outreach stuff if the new enthusiasts it creates are then told "sorry, if you want to see it done properly you'll have to go to London"?

5.2 Opera is a cosmopolitan enterprise. Scottish Opera's policy of performing most of its operas in the original language (no longer a problem to audiences thanks to surtitles) means casts of many nationalities sing alongside our home-grown singers. A devolved Scotland must preserve its cosmopolitan face or it will become dull and introverted, and cities like Edinburgh and Glasgow will not persuade its bright young people to stay, or attract bright young people from outside. At present musical life here is very rich. As well as Scottish Opera, we have two really outstanding orchestras, the BBC Scottish and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, as well as the RSNO and several fine chamber groups. And of course the Edinburgh Festival competes with any festival in the world. Scotland needs these things. A devolved Scotland becomes an impoverished Scotland without them."

6. Michael and Brenda Pell wrote on 3 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism and Sport:

6.1 "Examination of opera throughout the world will show that most companies are supported with a level of state funding that allows them to function creatively and effectively.

6.2 Throughout the centuries the arts have depended upon patronage to survive. The change from private patronage to public funding and corporate sponsorship has resulted in a broader spread of financial support and at the same time has brought the arts within reach of a wider audience but in this country the pot of gold remains modest and the various art forms are seen to be engaging in a competition to secure a share of the limited funds to assist their survival. It is a hand to mouth existence. If Scotland is to retain its cultural standards with its museums, art galleries, concert halls, orchestras, traditional music, theatres, drama and its opera company then the Scottish Executive should have the vision to underwrite the arts more generously.

6.3 Opera is an expensive art form. It is a complex art form. Success depends upon the pursuit of excellence in a variety of fields: in casting, acting, singing, orchestral playing, in directing, producing, in staging, in communicating. It also involves the employment of numbers of people."

7. Mr George I M Chapman wrote on 29 January 2004, 29 February 2004 and 17 June 2004 to First Minister, Jack McConnell:

7.1 "...all of the performing arts in Scotland, provide(s) an improvement to the standard of life in the country a factor in attracting inward investment. As a former professional chartered accountant I know only too well that such facets of life are important in decision making by potential investors.

7.2 We should be following the lead of other small countries in Europe in our development of the arts and opera in particular. Look at Switzerland, with a population of just over 7 million has opera houses of international standard in Zurich, Geneva and Berne. On the larger scale take France, with whom the First Minister hopes to renew the Auld Alliance. The latest edition of Opera magazine reveals twenty-seven locations for opera in cities and towns throughout the country."

7.3 "From personal experience I can report that Lithuania, with a population of 3.4 million supports a State Opera and Ballet company in Vilnius, the capital (population 850,000) in a modern albeit Soviet era building and a Music Theatre presenting opera and operetta in the second city of Kaunas (population 700,000) in a charming fin de siècle building. The other two Baltic States, Latvia and Estonia, with smaller populations, maintain internationally renowned opera companies in Riga and Tallinn.

7.4 In Prague (population 1.1 million) and capital of the Czech Republic there are three opera houses and there are opera companies in Brno and Karlovy Vary. Similar opera companies are maintained in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia.

7.5 Indeed the countries of Western Europe all have opera companies, even Iceland with a tiny population. These countries may prove a more attractive destination than Scotland.

7.6 My point is, that, if you wish to attract people from such countries to Scotland, you will have to have in place cultural centers of excellence, such as Scottish Opera. Indeed to retain the existing intelligentsia and to entertain and educate our next generation this will be necessary."

8. Mrs Valerie Cairney wrote on 14 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

8.1 "The Welsh nation and their Assembly do support and fund not only their national Welsh culture and sporting activities but also opera and singing. Unlike Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera is encouraged to flourish, its new permanent home will be opened soon and it can afford to produce CDs and DVDs of its work as a reminder of fine performances, this allows particularly younger generations to study past

performances as well introducing people wary of theatres to watching a complete opera.

8.2 I have a dream that the Scottish Executive will follow the Welsh example and see value in being proud of Scottish Opera's excellence, be pleased with its success and standing within the British and International Opera world and that they look towards supporting instead of castigating and possibly decimating what has in reality been a true Scottish success story going from artistic strength to strength over the last forty years."

9. Betsy Barker wrote in her e-mail of 8 February 2004 to the MSP for East Lothian:

"As a primary music specialist in East Lothian, lover of opera, and admirer of Scottish Opera, I would like to underline how very important retaining a fully operating Scottish Opera company is for the education and enjoyment and general cultural diversity of the people of Scotland. I have had the good fortune to be involved twice in primary schools productions with Scottish Opera for All. Also, I have instigated as facilitator the writing and producing of more than 10 small operas in primary schools, the most recently last year. These were either based on a book loved by the children, or on basic emotional/social ideas within their society, and the latter operas were written, composed, acted, sung, designed by the children themselves. If Scottish Opera cannot through lack of financial support stage regular high quality productions, then the children who may well go on to be "cultural consumers" will not be able to see quality opera in their own country. This would be a terrible shame, and a result of very short-sighted neglect by both the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Arts Council. And a further point is that where will all the children who take up instruments under the Executive's wonderful new initiative go when they perhaps decide to become professional musicians?"

10. Frank Ellen and Lady MacLellan wrote on 17 February 2004 to the Stirling Observer, the Herald, the Scotsman and their MSPs Brian Monteith and Sylvia Jackson:

10.1 "Opera is one of the major international art forms deemed essential, and thus promoted, by numerous nations throughout the world. This, despite it being one of the most expensive of the arts to undertake, involving as it does, virtually all the arts – music, drama, decoration and presentation, all of which demand the highest standards to succeed. Every European city of note has an opera house..."

10.2 A major financial hurdle in Scotland is obviously the huge geographical area to be covered and the sparcity of population. However, in past years Scottish Opera has also traveled to Newcastle, Liverpool etc thus "showing the flag"...

10.3 Finally, in this material age of speed, mechanization, electronics, PCs, mobile telephones, and every possible gadget to aid our lives, the existence of live arts of all disciplines is an essential counterbalance to persuade us that we are still creative, caring human beings rather than purely mechanical button-pressing puppets."

11. Dr J R & Mrs E Williams wrote on 7 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

"It would be unreasonable to demand that Scottish Opera concentrate its efforts on touring and outreach work: these result from the main body of productions, they are not an alternative to them. Besides, Scottish Opera already has an unrivalled record of taking its music to a wide range of venues across Scotland. Its work with schools and young people nurtures a love of music which must be a welcome balance to the overwhelming emphasis on commercial entertainment. Indeed it was a pioneer of this brand of social inclusion."

12. Margaret Beveridge wrote on 8 April 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

12.1 "I am a single parent and am also looking after my mother who has dementia. I quite simply, could not afford either the time or the finance to see main scale opera productions outside my own country.

12.2 Scotland should be very proud and supportive of what Scottish Opera has achieved, not only locally, but also internationally.

12.3 While it's to be commended that the education work of Scottish Opera should continue to delight and inform – there is little point in teaching the general public the delights of opera if they can't afford to see main scale productions locally. This would cause opera to become elitist!"

13. David Slater wrote on 22 February 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, among others:

"The needs of handicapped people are recognised and extremely well met. For blind and partially sighted opera-goers, voluntary "audio-describers" deliver invaluable commentaries, regardless of which language is being used in the opera. This, I believe, is unique in Britain. "Touch Tours" provide opportunities to handle costumes and stage properties; information and musical examples are supplied on tape in advance of a performance. All this involves a great deal of preparation and is done for each performance and at every venue. Being a totally blind person, I greatly appreciate these services."

14. David Smythe on 5 March 2004 to Frank McAveety, Tourism, Culture and Sport:

"A Smart Successful Scotland needs and deserves a properly funded and confident national opera company. We need to keep talented people like Sir Richard Armstrong in Scotland, and attract more like him, but we can only do that if opera funding is both adequate and stable. There is a real opportunity that together with the Sir Alexander Gibson Opera School at RSAMD, Glasgow could become a centre of operatic excellence that other countries would look to as an example of best practice."

15. Mr Kenneth W Muir BSc, PhD, Cchem, FRCS wrote on 15 March 2004 to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport:

"I have attended many large international scientific conferences, from Beijing to Seattle. Attracting such conferences to Scotland is clearly something you would wish to encourage. The availability of high quality cultural events is a significant factor in attracting conference business. Thus, I have attended concerts at the historic Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, at the prestigious Musikverein in Vienna and seen Swan Lake in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, to take just a few examples. These events were provided, not out of charity, but as part of packages that drew several thousand scientists to the cities in question. In a private capacity I frequently receive offers of opera-based tourist trips – Buxton, Paris, Vienna, many Italian cities generate this kind of tourism and Scottish Opera has a strong enough international reputation to do the same thing here. Indeed, I would argue that Scottish Opera is the jewel in the cultural crown of Scotland and that it could and should have a major role in attracting tourists with money to spend."