

# RSAMD

The ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY  
of MUSIC & DRAMA

May 30, 2005

- 6 JUN 2005

James Boyle  
The Cultural Commission Office  
Broughton High School  
Carrington Road  
Edinburgh

Dear Mr Boyle and colleagues,

To date I have not made a personal submission though, as a board member of Proiseact nan Ealan (Gaelic Arts Project) and part-time RSAMD staff member, I have shared some input.

Though I realise the Cultural Commission intends to wind up and present a report in June, I hope that it is still not too late accept your open invitation 'not just to share [my] **vision of 2030 ...**' regarding the place of culture in [e.g.] Scottish education but also to **'imagine what steps [could be] taken to bring this about.'**

This week, eavesdropping a general about the Cultural Commission discussion prompts me to try to avert a negative attitude summed up in one cynic's remark: "So, even if they throw tens of thousands of pounds at it, very few people will benefit...." While too often plagued by doubters and 'begrudgers' I remain optimistic for a brighter, better Scotland. And so, I offer the attached, an idea with a very attainable objective that *would* give something to everyone in a very short space of time. (I regret that, due to family illness and bereavement, it has not been possible to have done this sooner.)

At the same time, I send my best wishes to the Committee at this important stage. May we all look forward to a better informed, more culturally aware, and, above all, appreciative nation.

Yours sincerely,

pp. *M. H. Jenkins*

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## ***What is Culture?***

**BACKGROUND:** Three years ago, a major project supported by European Union Funds enabled the production of a CD-ROM entitled *What is Culture?* Commissioned by the UHI for their new BA in Cultural Studies (Orkney College), the CD-ROM explores many aspects of Scottish culture. As researcher and writer, I used material from the SCRAN archive (over 10,000 images), the School of Scottish Studies sound, video and photographic archives, the Scottish Film Archive, the Alan Lomax archive (New York), and my personal archive then collaborated with The National Museums of Scotland Multimedia Team to create this ambitious, exciting, 'all-singing-all-dancing' production.

As it is copyrighted to the UHI it can not, at present, be used outside of their education programme. Meanwhile several key players in Scotland's cultural scene have pressed for availability. Musician Brian MacNeill, Head of Scottish Music at the RSAMD and Colin Hynd, Director of Celtic Connections Festival expressed the urgency of having this, or a similar CD-ROM, available to everyone. There has also been keen interest expressed in Ireland and in the USA.

**PROPOSAL:** To make this CD-ROM available to every child, youth and adult in Scotland. Can the Cultural Commission challenge the copyright that restricts publication, or, if the copyright issue cannot be negotiated, support the creation of a similar production, (say) **'Exploring and Experiencing Culture'**

**RATIONALE;** This CD-ROM is not only a user-friendly educational tool but is full of adventure and fun — for example, in the section on dance, not only does the music play but the feet dance; or, you can step inside a lesson and watch where to place your feet! In the section on the Scottish year you can (e.g.) visit a sacred well on Beltane, watch the extravaganza on Calton Hill, etc.

### **ACHIEVABILITY:**

This is not a pipe-dream (to use the Commission's expression) but an entirely achievable objectives. As I have already spent two years researching and writing the project, the creation of a new version could be much quicker and much cheaper than the original. (European Funding of £250,000 covered four educational CD's, one of which was **'What is Culture?'**, by far the most expensive of the four).

### **ASSESSING THE IDEA**

Ideally, members of the Cultural Commission should view the CD-ROM to assess its value — With this proposal I offer my time to demonstrate the project along with Frank Tait, Head of the Multi-Media Team who can also be available to answer questions on production and cost.

### **SUPPORTING THE PROPSAL**

While funding is a consideration, the main cost would be to engage the imaginative, creative and highly skilled Multi-media team from the National Museum of Scotland.

It may more difficult for your committee to quantify the less visible or tangible aspects, which, with this submission, are offered at no cost to the Commission

or to Scotland (unless you subscribe to the idea that things that come 'free' are worth nothing). The material that went into the original project comes from a deep well of ideas drawn from cultural experiences of many generations. Not the least, however, these ideas have been assimilated within own life and career as a teacher<sup>1</sup>, university lecturer<sup>2</sup>, writer<sup>3</sup>, consultant<sup>4</sup>, singer<sup>5</sup> and, most significantly, mother of Martyn Bennett, whose cultural development, understanding and appreciation informed me more than any book I ever read — I will do this in Martyn's memory and because I so passionately share his dream for a vibrant, culturally aware and culturally appreciative Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup> Trained Jordanhill; also B.A.(Ed). Taught primary school, then 5 years in Special Education (teaching and creating material for all abilities); Channel 4 schools TV & writer of teacher's handbook. Now developing pre-school material as we must begin there.

<sup>2</sup> Post-grad Master's degree in Folklore; Ph.D. in Ethnology; 14 year lectureship at University of Edinburgh; free lance lecturing and consulting includes planning board of UHI and of RSAMD Scottish music Degree; external examining & guest lectures for Sheffield Univ; Queen's Univ in Belfast, et al, and in the USA & Canada (Harvard, York, St. FX, et al) Currently part-time lecturer at RSAMD.

<sup>3</sup> All relate to Scottish culture: 5 books, (3 awarded book prizes); contributions to 30+ books, many articles in print and on web, radio, TV & CD notes.

<sup>4</sup> Consultant folklorist to numerous radio, TV and film documentaries, the Smithsonian festival 2003 & currently for Alan Lomax archive in New York. Was awarded 'Celtic Woman of the Year' for services to Scottish and Celtic culture, Celtic Women International (Toronto, 2004)

<sup>5</sup> I've sung at major world festivals; awarded the 'Master Music-Make Award', North Carolina, 1999 (Previous recipient was Tom Paxton). Recorded with my son, Martyn Bennett (1971—2005); significantly, Martyn's profound understanding of music, song and culture in general must be attributed to his life path, from infancy, through schooling, training, exploration, practice and internationally acclaimed performance.