

30 March 2005

James Boyle, Esq.
The Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
1 Carrington Road
Edinburgh EH4 1EG

St Magnus
Festival



Dear Mr Boyle

01 APR 2005

Contact and consultation

It is rather a long time since we last met, when I was still in charge of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (I left in 1993) and you were at the BBC. You will probably know that I have come back to Orkney for one year, to direct the 2005 St Magnus Festival, and it is wonderful to be involved again in a place where so much is possible – where heritage and creativity go together, where locals and visitors meet as equals (be they artists or audiences) and where 'local' and 'international' are two faces of the same coin.

The 2005 programme is now at large and I take pleasure in sending you the brochure. I hope you enjoy reading it and will be able to take time out from the Commission's 11th hour to attend the Festival in June.

I am interested in your consultation process and suspect that you will not have time to get this far north during its course. Nevertheless, I hope that I can put in my two-pennyworth and that, if my thoughts can add any value to the work you are leading, there is yet time to take them on board.

I would like to see in Scotland a small number of **centres of excellence** – places for artists and cultural practitioners which will not depend upon costly building projects but can be built, in the figurative sense, on existing success, quality and potential. One of these should be in (and ideally throughout) Orkney, linked to the St Magnus Festival in partnership with many others. The essence of my proposition is contained in the attached short paper. Orkney would be a **centre of excellence** primarily for **music** (in its many forms) and **creative writing**. Additionally – and this is not described in my paper but reflects a long-term concern of mine – it should be a centre for **leadership** in creative management, which is so deeply and urgently required within the arts and cultural sector.

Arts Council England has recently bestowed the status of **centre of excellence** in music upon institutions at Dartington, Aldeburgh (based on the Festival and related activities) and Gateshead, each very distinctive and each now benefiting from substantial revenue funding; Scotland has had no equivalents and really needs them. Edinburgh and its festivals might argue for such status in an urban context; Orkney can make a powerful case to be a local, national and international **centre of excellence** located in a unique rural environment. Orkney Islands Council apparently is Scotland's top *per capita* spender on arts and culture (£30, as compared with £5 in Glasgow) and the benefits of the investment are palpable. This also trickles down into the education system wherein Orkney's provision for the expressive arts and especially music, in terms of quality and quantity, is the best I have come across anywhere in the UK (and I have been around and seen a lot).

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International partnerships will provide one of the keys to the success of this proposition, but a major key must also be the national one: with local, national and international partners, a complete chord of three interdependent notes will resound.

The subject of **leadership** in management may sound prosaic but addressing the issue is essential at every level – and it is topical, now that Gordon Brown has found £12 million for this to be spent within the culture, arts and heritage sector (and hopefully with more than £1 million of this coming to Scotland?). We must not only talk of the whiz-kid future leaders but also address the fatigue, lack of collegiate support, burn-out and loneliness of life at the top for many of the existing heads of organisations. Residential programmes within the Orkney **centre of excellence** mix can form part of an integrated plan throughout the country.

I have barely scratched the surface in this letter and yet you will have been snowed under by millions of words from elsewhere. I could not blame you and your team if you felt a certain word-weariness at this point and desired to call time on submissions, yet I would like to discuss these matters further with you if the timetable for the process could allow it. Please do not hesitate to get in touch about any of this.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Ritchie', written in a cursive style.

Ian Ritchie
Festival Director

Encl.

**Orkney Isles Summer School for the Arts
(Annual from June 2006)**

DRAFT OUTLINE

Rationale

The Orkney Conducting Course, now in its third and final year of a Lottery-funded pilot programme, is successful but fresh large-scale funding for its continuation from 2006 will be hard to find. The Hoy Composition Course, founded by Peter Maxwell Davies in the late 80s and run for a number of years under the auspices of SCO, was also much valued. Both are/were unique and they are needed. Glenys Hughes has mentioned the idea of setting up a Chamber Music Course, with the Nash Ensemble in residence; this might, in her view, alternate with the OCC in future years.

It is clear that Orkney is a place for artists and, equally, that the St Magnus Festival can be a "centre of excellence", engendering and nourishing the arts beyond the platform. By Orkney, we mean the Isles and not just the Mainland. The proposition is to develop the ideas and connect the diverse activities – and locations – through both modern technology and good, old-fashioned human communications.

Proposition

The St Magnus Festival will develop an Orkney Isles Summer School for the Arts which will be annual and flexible, in so far as the mix of art-forms and island locations can be strategically varied each year. The programme in the first year (June 2006) might be as follows:

Composition	(Sally Beamish / Alasdair Nicolson / Max)	Hoy
Conducting	(Martyn Brabbins)	Kirkwall
Chamber Music	(Nash Ensemble)	Sanday
Song-writing	(Rab Noakes)	Westray
Creative writing	(Bernard MacLaverty)	Rousay

The programme is illustrative and the locations are notional (but not entirely arbitrary).

The courses will last for between 7 and 10 days, overlapping with each other and with the Festival. They will function apart, giving artists a genuine "hothouse" retreat, and will work together, ensuring practical collaboration and a sense of community. This will be achieved by ICT and video-conferencing facilities, such as are available in the community schools and accessible from mid-afternoon into the evening. Therefore a writer on Rousay can send text to a song-writer on Westray and together they can make a song; meanwhile a composer on Hoy can e-mail work-in-progress to an ensemble on Sanday and then witness on screen its rehearsal in a workshop; and so on, through many interactive permutations. The artists and their works will come together physically in Festival performances, so that not only will each process be enriched by engagement with the others but also the products of the courses can be shared with the public as well as with each other. Through web-casting, the workshops/master-classes can all be enjoyed much more widely – not only on screens throughout Orkney.

Costs

The OCC currently costs £33,000 per annum but the expenses of each strand will differ, reflecting the particular resources required. A rough estimate for the Summer School package on a modest scale might be £130,000, but this is a guess not a calculation. A more substantial, year-round operation (possibly embracing other disciplines and fields) would give rise to the need for much more subsidy. Nevertheless this is intended to be an essentially capital-free proposal which draws upon existing local infrastructures and, above all, local people.

Partners

Ironically, it may turn out to be easier to find £130,000 (or more) annually than the smaller sum needed to sustain the Conducting Course on its own. The innovative use of technology could attract particular interest from the Scottish Executive, University of the Highlands & Islands (especially Orkney College – a likely partner) and Orkney Enterprise. The boost to the economy and the empowerment of the remoter communities will support the argument for European funding, which may be accessible through Leader+ in Orkney.

The Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama should be a natural partner. Already a strong relationship exists through the Festival and there is much scope for building upon the 2005 residency, schools workshops and outer isles touring by the RSAMD brass ensemble, in future drawing upon the other professional departments of the Academy. The Scottish arts community would have a unique resource for training and continuing professional development and the Scottish Arts Council should welcome the development of a distinctive version of the world-famous Dartington (UK) or Tanglewood (Mass., USA) summer schools, based in Orkney.

Such a venture might also attract funding from one among the handful of major trusts and foundations which can support the arts with large-scale grants. In the commercial arena, the idea might appeal to one of the major mobile telecommunications companies for sponsorship and technical support.

Ian Ritchie
January 2005

PRESS RELEASE

ST MAGNUS FESTIVAL 2005

Friday, June 17 – Wednesday, June 22.

ADVENTUROUS JOURNEYS AND WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE DURING ORKNEY'S LONGEST DAYS AND LIGHTEST NIGHTS

Orkney's annual celebration of the arts, the **St. Magnus Festival**, is a unique synthesis of world-class performance, community participation of the highest quality and the magic of Orkney at midsummer. Founded in 1977 by **Sir Peter Maxwell Davies**, the Festival has become one of Britain's most highly-regarded and adventurous arts events.

The 2005 Festival (June 17 – 22), under the direction of **Ian Ritchie**, is a heady mix of stimulating and inspiring events. Two of the themes running through the programme are sea journeys, which have been a fact of life throughout Orkney's history, and war, reconciliation and the healing and renewing power of the arts. There is a special focus on Bosnia, where Ian has been deeply involved in musical and humanitarian initiatives for many years (working closely with **Nigel Osborne**, several examples of whose music will be played during the Festival).

MUSIC

The Festival's four featured composers are **Sofia Gubaidulina**, **Sally Beamish**, **Nigel Osborne** and, of course, Orkney's distinguished resident composer **Sir Peter Maxwell Davies**. Their music will be heard alongside works by Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, Grieg, Haydn – and many more.

New work has always sat at the heart of the St Magnus programme and premières this year include the first UK performance of **Maxwell Davies'** quartet, *A Sad Paven for these Distracted Times*, played by the winners of the Maxwell Davies prize at the Premio Paulo Borciani 2005 who will have arrived hotfoot from Italy. The world première of *Prelude* for solo trumpet by **Edward McGuire** will be given by **Mark O'Keeffe** during the closing concert, in which one of the Festival's commissions will also be receiving its first performance: a new work created by **John Kenny** for **Clarence Adoo**, who will be making his return to professional performance on a specially developed new instrument, Head-Space, almost ten years after a dreadful road accident confined him to a wheelchair and robbed him of his career as a trumpet player; Clarence will be joined by **John Wallace** on trumpet and John Kenny on trombone. Another Festival commission, *Slices of Time*, inspired by Orkney's ancient stones and created by Orkney's renowned

traditional musicians, **The Wrigley Sisters**, working with cellist/composer **Kevin McCrae**, will receive its world première.

Visiting orchestras and ensembles include the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** with three concerts conducted by the acclaimed young Scot, **Garry Walker**. The SCO has enjoyed a close relationship with the Festival over many years, while the **Hebrides Ensemble** makes its St Magnus debut with two concerts. In residence throughout the Festival, the **Royal Scottish Academy Brass** sets forth on several sea journeys of its own, taking music to Orkney's rural parishes and outer isles, and returning to Kirkwall for the final Fanfare and Flourish which concludes the Festival.

International soloists include two brilliant young artists from different corners of the world, brought together for the first time: accordionist **Merima Ključo** from Bosnia and the German/South American cellist **Claudio Bohórquez**, who will give a joint recital of Bach, Gubaidulina ... and tango, and appear together also as soloists with the SCO. The Festival also welcomes back two leading Scottish virtuosi who have attained international status: pianist **Steven Osborne** and trumpeter **John Wallace**, giving separate recitals and performing together in Shostakovich's *Piano Concerto No 1*.

As well as playing his trombone, **John Kenny** brings an altogether more unusual instrument into the limelight: the Carnyx – a replica of a 2000-year-old Pictish war trumpet excavated near Fochabers in Aberdeenshire. Its baleful, ancient sound has moved composers of today, including Nigel Osborne, to write new works incorporating its unique voice and Kenny will be joined in *Forest – River – Ocean* by the peerless **Nash Ensemble**, a regular visitor to the St Magnus Festival, this time making a rare if not unique appearance as a string quartet (and also performing quartets by Haydn and Grieg).

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The **St Magnus Festival Chorus**, made up of over a hundred volunteers, has for years provided central pillar for the Festival's music programme and this year are preparing Haydn's *Paukenmesse: Mass in Time of War*.

Orkney's schoolchildren likewise have played key roles in the life of the Festival. This year's programme opens with a large-scale music-theatre production, *Notes in Time of War*, created by the children and local composer **Gemma McGregor**, with songs based on the wartime diaries of children in Bosnia, Iraq, Northern Ireland and Rwanda. More than 100 children from five Orkney primary schools are joined by the **Kirkwall Town Band**, the Royal Scottish Academy Brass and others in a promenade performance directed by local drama specialist **Chris Giles**.

DRAMA

Olaf Isbister, the Orkney Sailor, a short play by the great Orkney poet **George Mackay Brown**, receives its first Orkney performances in a production by Orcadian actors and musicians.

Professional drama is provided by one of Scotland's finest theatre companies, **Communicado**, who will bring their recent production of *Zlata's Diary*, based on the real-life diary of a child trapped in the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian conflict in the early 90s.

LITERATURE

Zlata Filipović, best-selling author of *Zlata's Diary*, will visit the Festival and talk about her work. From another age, the epic Anglo-Saxon poem, *The Seafarer*, will be represented in a newly-published translation and performed in a musical setting by **Sally Beamish** by the Hebrides Ensemble with **Gwyneth Lewis** as narrator.

The 2005 Festival Poet is the acclaimed Welsh writer **Gwyneth Lewis**, whose own recent sea journeys have inspired her latest work. She will read from her own canon and also from the poems of **George Mackay Brown**. Festival will also host the official launch of *The Collected Poems of George Mackay Brown*, the most comprehensive collection of his verse.

FILM

The film programme is a new departure for the St Magnus Festival. Eleven short films by **Margaret Tait** will be screened during two evenings in her erstwhile studio at Orquill. Every morning, documentary films relating to the Bosnian war will be shown in the Pickaquoy Centre to provide background and context to the Festival programme.

EXHIBITIONS

The Festival's main themes are also reflected in two of the exhibitions: *Bosnian Journey*, **Richard Welsby's** moving display of photographs and *Sails in St Magnus*, an extraordinary collection of 14 sails painted by Orcadian artists, hung in St Magnus Cathedral and depicting Earl Rognvald of Orkney's 1151 journey to Jerusalem: "*While the crusaders were on their famous voyage, slowly in Orkney the walls of St Magnus Cathedral were rising, the great stone ship that was to bear the people of Orkney through many generations*" (George Mackay Brown, 1993).

ORKNEY CONDUCTING COURSE

Festival visitors can drop in on sessions each day during the **Orkney Conducting Course** (June 13 – 23). Launched in 2003 and directed by Martyn Brabbins, the course enables eight emerging professional conductors to gain hands-on experience through working with orchestras, ensembles and soloists present in Orkney for the Festival.

FESTIVAL VENUES

The Festival takes place mainly in the two towns of Kirkwall and Stromness, using a variety of locations, most notably the glorious 12th century Cathedral of St. Magnus. Churches elsewhere in the islands host performances, including the beautiful Italian Chapel, built and decorated by Italian POWs during the construction of the Churchill Barriers during World War II. There are regular excursions to events in outlying locations and the Festival on Tour project takes visiting artists and ensembles to Orkney's outer isles.

Full programme available in print and on-line – www.stmagnusfestival.com – from 24 March 2005

General booking opens Monday May 2 (in person/postal) and Tuesday May 3 (telephone) – St Magnus Festival, 60 Victoria Street, Kirkwall, Orkney KW15 1DN – 01856 871445.

CONTACT:

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