

Dr Tristram Hunt, Director  
Victoria and Albert Museum  
South Kensington  
London SW7 2RL

cc. Dr Antonia Boström, Director of Collections  
cc. Mr Nicholas Coleridge, CBE, Chair of the Board of Trustees

Dear Drs Hunt, Boström, and Mr Coleridge

We are writing on behalf of an international coalition of performing arts scholars, artists, curators, and keepers of archives. We are deeply concerned about the planned reorganisation of the Victoria and Albert Museum and its impact on research and curatorial staff. We note that these proposals will disproportionately affect the care and development of the Theatre and Performing Arts collections by an experienced team of archivists and curators. We ask the V&A Directors to reconsider these cuts to the staffing of the nation's Performing Arts collections.

Not only will the reorganisation mean redundancies for expert staff, it risks the V&A's long term stewardship of the Theatre and Performing Arts Collection. When the Theatre Museum was closed in 2007, the V&A undertook to continue to develop the Theatre and Performing Arts collection within the Museum. The Theatre and Performing Arts Collection is the principal national theatre collection, and one which is of vital significance for artists, audiences, and performing arts scholars internationally. It is part of the tangible and intangible heritage of the performing arts in the United Kingdom, and as such, one of the foremost performing arts collections in the world, caring for the heritage of the world-leading British entertainment industry.

While the V&A regards itself as an object-related museum and research institution, collections of objects are never complete in themselves. Archival collections around objects give the objects meaning and context, and they are vital resources for practitioners and scholars to make use of in research, new art works and performances, and publications.

The distinctiveness of the Performing Arts as a body of knowledge and practice is at risk of disappearing in the reorganisation of the V&A into broad chronological periods. Your expert curators and archivists mount world-leading and original exhibitions, such as the recent landmark exhibitions 'Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes' and 'Opera: Passion, Power and Politics.' This work is done by a team of expert staff, whose ability to engage huge and enthusiastic audiences is only possible because of their specialist knowledge of the theatre and performance, and their deep knowledge of the V&A's performing arts collection.

We urge you to reconsider these proposals which not only put the jobs of dedicated and specialist staff at risk, but risk the present understanding and future development of our national Theatre and Performing Arts collections for all those across the world who value the past, present, and future of theatre, music, and dance.

Yours,

Professor Kate Newey, Chair, Standing Conference of University Drama Departments

Professor Roberta Mock, Chair, Theatre and Performance Research Association

Professor Elaine Aston, President, International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR)

Professor Trevor R Griffiths, Acting Chair of the Society for Theatre Research

Alan R. Jones, President, SIBMAS (International Association of Libraries, Museums, Archives and Documentation Centres of the Performing Arts)

Dr. Marla Carlson, President, American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR)

Dr Joshua Abrams, President, Association for Theatre in Higher Education ([www.ATHE.org](http://www.ATHE.org))

Dr. Yana Meerzon, President, Canadian Association for Theatre Research (CATR/ACTR)

Dr Kene Igweonu, President, African Theatre Association (AfTA)

Professor Christine Woodworth, President, Mid-American Theatre Conference (MATC)

Dr Cristina de Lucas, Co-Chair of the Society for Dance Research (UK)

Professor Bryan Moore, Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA)

Erin Lee, Chair, Association of Performing Arts Collections (APAC).

Dr Doug Reside, Curator of the Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library

Dr Eric Colleary, Cline Curator of Theater and Performing Arts, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas (Austin)

Jenny Fewster, AusStage: The Australian Live Performance Database.

David Tredinnick, Performing Arts Heritage Network (PAHN), the Australian Museums and Galleries Association