

Society for Music Analysis

School of Arts and Cultures
Armstrong Building
Newcastle University
Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 7RU

4 February 2025

Professor Wendy Larner
Vice-Chancellor's Office
Main College Building
Cardiff University
Park Place
Cardiff CF10 3AT

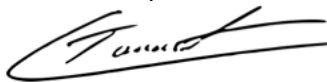
Dear Professor Larner,

We, the trustees of the Society for Music Analysis (SMA), write to express our surprise and dismay at your recent decision to mark out Music at Cardiff as a subject area for closure. We think this is a terrible plan that will have a far-reaching negative impact for your own students (both in Music and in the wider university), as well as more broadly. We find it difficult to understand this plan as anything more than arbitrary, given the Music School's strong record of leading research, teaching, and student recruitment at all levels. This decision is made all the more perplexing because it means that Cardiff University will be neglecting its local responsibility to the city of Cardiff as a good, civic educational institution, but also to the country as Wales's leading university music department.

Music at Cardiff recruits strongly and has an international reputation as a leading centre for musicological and practice-led research. It also enjoys productive synergies with the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Welsh National Opera, and it is central to the broader musical ecosystem in Wales and South-West England. Contrary to your comments on BBC Radio 4 last week, which appeared to view Cardiff's Music School and the Royal Welsh College as offering something interchangeable, it is important to point out that Cardiff University is a wholly different type of institution from the Royal Welsh College; both offer 'music', but one is focused on research and the scholarly study of the area, the other on training professional musicians. These are fundamentally distinct areas and it is wrong to confuse or conflate them. Based upon HESA figures available for 2022–23, the closure of Music at Cardiff would lead to the removal in Wales of 77% of scholarly music at undergraduate level, and 63% at postgraduate taught level, which would be a chronic loss. The closure of the Music School will cause irreparable harm to the musical life of the university, the city, and the broader region. It would also contribute to the acceleration of Wales's decline as an important international cultural centre after cuts to the WNO and the RWCMD, and the closure of St David's Hall and the National Museum.

Cardiff's Music School is inherently valuable to the broader university. By marking it out for closure – given that it is among the healthiest music departments in the UK – you are demonstrating your indifference to its qualities and your willingness to cause huge damage to Wales's cultural life, the aspirations of students at Cardiff, and your own reputation as a member of the Russell Group. We urgently call for you to withdraw this damaging, short-sighted, and ill-conceived proposal.

Yours sincerely,



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