



Dr Tristram Hunt
Director, V&A

17 March 2021

Dear Dr Hunt

The Association of Performing Arts Collections (APAC) is the charitable membership organisation for all museums, libraries and archives holding performing arts content in the UK and Ireland. We are writing to express our concern regarding the proposal by the V&A to centralise the research function thus, in our view, destroying the cohesion of a highly valued and internationally important performance collection.

In our considerable experience the performing arts are inherently difficult to document due to their ephemeral nature thus making the range of collections represented by the V&A rare and historically very important. These collections, held, managed, preserved, interpreted and accessed at the V&A reflect the extraordinarily rich and very diverse creativity that is widely admired both here and internationally whilst making a significant contribution to the British economy. The proposal that a cultural institute, housing the largest and most important performing arts collection in the UK, is planning to create cross-disciplinary teams, removing the interrelatedness between archive, library and museum material is of great concern and will, we believe, have a devastating effect on the pool of knowledge and specialist expertise that has enabled informed access to all.

In light of this we are asking the V&A to reconsider:

- the scale and scope of the proposals
- the central role the V&A plays in safe-guarding the history of the performing arts not just for the UK but also international interest
- the integral role that curators, librarians and archivists play in enabling access for future generations across all the different forums and formats
- the dangerous precedent this proposed restructure could set across the sector
- the negative impact this would have on all the different projects using the performing arts to inform education, research, academia, publishing, film and television if specialist knowledge was not an integral part of the offering

At the very least we call on the V&A to hold a public consultation on these sweeping decisions. By enabling a full and open debate, prior to pursuing this course of action, the Board will be made fully aware by industry professionals of the devastating impact this is likely to have on the UK's performing arts heritage and the future of the arts and culture sector, not of course forgetting the £7.7 billion

the performing arts contribute to the UK economy every year. In doing so there will be a far clearer understanding as to why this announcement has caused so much concern within our sector.

Yours sincerely

APAC