

**P-06-1455 Protect the junior departments of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama from closure - Correspondence from the Petitioner, 08 October 2024**

Dear Petitions Committee

Apologies for my slow response to your email regarding the debate on my petition to protect the junior departments of the RWCMD. The reason I missed your previous email is that I have been working flat out on the creation of a replacement school for the junior department. Some of the now redundant teachers and banded together with me to start a cooperative during the summer break, and we were soon approached by Emma Archer of Cardiff music service and Mari Pritchard of the National Music Service to see if they could work in partnership with us. We agreed, and together we have set up the Young Musicians Academi, which has now been running at Stanwell School in Penarth each Saturday for the past three weeks. The effort it has taken to put this together in the incredibly short time the RWCMD allowed us has been enormous. But I hope this proves to them that there is a need to provide this service for the children of Wales and that they see the huge mistake they have made in rejecting the future of our country's arts talent.

Indeed, the response to this from RWCMD has been true to form. I contacted them to ask for a meeting to enable me to request basic assistance such as to see if they would inform ex students about the new provision, or perhaps offer us use of their hall for a fundraising concert for the Academi as a courtesy. The response I received said they would be in touch with me when the necessary staff returned from their summer breaks. They still have not been in touch, despite staff having returned to work.

The funding is still a huge issue for us at the Academi. Studying music at a high level requires a lot of contact time between teachers and students, and the experienced staff teaching these students do deserve to be paid a fair wage. We have set up a fundraising campaign and are applying for external support for the Academi, but I maintain that the talented young musicians of Wales deserve the same funding opportunities as their English and Scottish counterparts. We have already lost numerous children from the arts to this catastrophe, and will continue to do so if we cannot assist those who are on lower incomes with bursaries.

I would ask the Welsh government to consider matching the National Music and Dance Scheme which offers financial support to talented young musicians attending specialist music schools in England, if they want to protect the future talent of their nation.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Totterdell