

*Yn Gosod y Llwyfan I'r Celfyddydau Perfformio yng Nghymru
Setting the Stage for the Performing Arts in Wales*

24th November 2022

Annwyl / Dear Delyth

I hope this letter finds you well.

I'm writing to you regarding the recent news about St David's Hall in Cardiff and a possible take over by a commercial organisation.

St David's Hall is a long-standing member of Creu Cymru and a member of hynt, the national access scheme for theatres and arts centres in Wales and therefore I'm writing to you to express my concerns about the potential future operations.

Cardiff Council have announced in the press this week that they are taking to Cabinet in December a proposal to hand St David's Hall, The National Concert Hall of Wales over to Live Nation / AMG to become the newest Academy O2 venue.

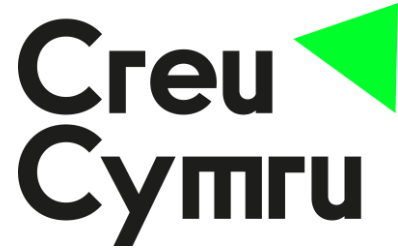
St David's Hall were a vital venue in the creation and launch of hynt in 2015, with the Wales wide scheme based on the approach and learning at St David's Hall, the New Theatre and Wales Millennium Centre. Hynt is an Arts Council of Wales initiative managed by Creu Cymru in partnership with Diverse Cymru.

Hynt's strength is in offering an equitable offer across Wales. Using the social model of disability, and an application process designed through peer led consultation, hynt removes barriers and takes decision making away from box office and customer facing staff.

The relationship with St David's Hall, as a founding venue member of hynt, is very important to hynt. The staff in all departments have engaged well with the scheme and we have a positive relationship with management and box office, which enables us to share learning and support the venue and its visitors.

Hynt users could be faced with the possibility of not being able to use their hynt card or again prove their disability status once it is in new ownership.

St David's Hall plays a pivotal role as the National Concert Hall for Wales presenting world class orchestras, ballets, opera and choruses, not to mention the amount of young people and community members that benefit from performing on the stage themselves. Community and amateur organisations will have no way of showcasing their work on a large scale because they simply won't be able to afford the hire fees and on costs. If community groups can use the Hall, audience members for this work could be faced with large booking fees and unreasonable prices for secondary spend items.



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Although the change to an Academy venue will require the confirmed removal of all stalls seating and a flattening of the floor to increase the capacity in the auditorium to 2500, Cardiff Council state there will still be some provision for Classical Music and community participation and that this significant change will in no way endanger the acoustics of one of the top ten acoustic concert halls in the world, which attracts attenders from every postcode in Wales and the most attenders from S W England of any Cardiff venue.

The Council have not given any indication of how the future provision of classical music will be secured in Cardiff nor identified a budget for this. This is highly regrettable given St David's Hall is the only venue in Wales suitable for performances by a full symphony orchestra.

There is also the brilliant work of Arts Active to consider. This is unlikely to be a priority for a commercial operator, but I would hope that the Council explore other ways to continue that vital educational and community work.

I understand that Cardiff Council are having to make difficult decisions about what they can and can't fund but they are in danger of giving away the profitable side of St David's Hall to a commercial operator which still paying for time for the community / classical programme.

The impact of audiences, communities, and staff need to be part of any decision making. Protecting jobs, skills, opportunities, education, and access must not come at the expense of a cost cutting exercise.

Of significant concern is the speed at which this momentous decision regarding Cardiff's and indeed Wales' cultural offer, with minimal consultation and without robust investigation into alternative opportunities of securing funding for a suitable future of the National Concert Hall of Wales.

I believe that the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee should be looking at the speed at which this momentous decision regarding Cardiff's and indeed Wales' cultural offer, with minimal consultation and without robust investigation into alternative opportunities of securing funding for a suitable future of the National Concert Hall of Wales.

Diolch am eich amser.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,

Louise Myles-Payne
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