1st September 2015

Clerk to the Education and Culture Committee
Scottish Parliament

Dear Colleague

Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill

We write as stakeholders in, and friends and supporters of, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The Conservatoire is a unique cultural and educational institution and we believe that its status merits singular consideration when considering governance arrangements. We are therefore concerned about the intention to introduce legislation that aims to achieve greater consistency of approach to governance across what is a diverse higher education sector.

Membership of the Conservatoire’s Board encompasses the skills and insights required to guide the development of a national cultural asset – it includes appropriate representation from the cultural sector. We would therefore question the wisdom of what is being proposed in terms of mandated membership for certain groups and the election of the Board’s Chair, which strike us as being overly prescriptive. An election process would inevitably lead to the unwelcome politicisation of the role of Chair and, quite possibly and quite unnecessarily, sow the seeds of division in a small and tightly-knit community.

Our level of engagement with the Conservatoire is positive and we welcome the Conservatoire’s initiative in inviting key stakeholders to its AGM, which presents an opportunity to hold the Conservatoire’s Board, and its Chair, to account in a transparent manner.
We greatly value the pivotal role that the Conservatoire plays in Scotland’s cultural life. It is a Scottish success story and its governance should be judged on what it delivers. On that basis, we would fundamentally question the need to introduce new legislation in respect of the Conservatoire’s governance at all.

Yours sincerely

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Director  
*Edinburgh International Festival*

Roy McEwan OBE  
Chief Executive  
*Scottish Chamber Orchestra*

Kenneth Osborne  
RSNO

Alex Reedijk FRC  
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Laurie Sansom  
Artistic Director & Chief Executive  
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Christopher Hampson,  
CEO/Artistic Director  
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