

Welsh National Opera is the jewel in Wales's crown. It is the only full-time opera company our nation has and our largest arts employer, created in the 1940's by a group of doctors, miners and teachers who wished to build a performing ensemble that would live up to our reputation as the "Land of Song".

WNO currently stands on a precipice, having received cuts from both the Arts Councils of Wales and England that amount to 25% of its yearly budget. This is clearly completely untenable. Unless further financial help can be found, WNO is being forced to make its orchestra and chorus, the beating heart of the company, part-time. It is scaling back its touring venues and has already offered voluntary redundancy to the rest of the company. This will result in a loss of vital skills across the organisation.

Without increased funding in the short term, WNO will be unable to continue to deliver its substantial offer of opera, education, and engagement and wellness programmes, providing artistic, community, educational, and health benefits across communities the length and breadth of Wales. The quality and output of Wales's flagship arts organisation will be severely diluted in the UK and beyond.

WNO is the largest touring opera company in Europe, enjoying a global reputation for excellence, and representing 'Brand Wales' on the world's stage. If WNO ceases to be a full-time company operating year-round it will be very hard to come back from that as the organisation becomes unable to retain its talent within Wales. What has painstakingly been built up over eighty years will be eroded and a vicious cycle will have begun.

The potential dismantling of one of Wales's finest national institutions would be devastating - for the nation, for the organisation and its 222 employees, and for home-grown cultural excellence. The world-renowned quality of WNO's output will be eroded, as the true ensemble nature of the company is undermined, with top musicians unable to sustain jobs in the orchestra and chorus on a part-time salary and no real freelance work in Wales with which to supplement their incomes. The cultural life of communities across Wales and England will be impoverished and diminished as a result.

Music and opera are needed now more than ever before. Not only do they have monetary value, existing in an ecosystem in which numerous other sectors and businesses benefit and bringing outward investment into our economy, but the value that they themselves bring to our lives as humans is immeasurable.

"The Arts are essential to any complete national life. The State owes it to itself to sustain and encourage them," stated Sir Winston Churchill during a time of extreme political upheaval and financial deprivation. The difficult financial landscape right now is widely recognised, but as we approach a General Election, our politicians need to stand up and demonstrate that they comprehend the necessity for our society to have a thriving Arts scene - one that can inspire, sustain, and nourish the imaginations, souls, and health of their electorate. We, as a people and as a nation, deserve no less.