

A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR MUSIC

SUMMARY

PROPOSAL FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL, 5-7 REGENT ROAD, EDINBURGH EH7 5BL
SUBMITTED BY THE ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL PRESERVATION TRUST, 3RD SEPTEMBER 2021

*The Royal High School on Calton Hill was originally conceived as a cultural beacon for an enlightened Scotland.
How better to preserve that spirit than by delivering it into the 21st century as a world-class centre for music education
and public performance, for the benefit of the whole of Scotland?*



ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL PRESERVATION TRUST



DELIVERING MUSIC FOR ALL

“Music, when created, played and listened to with integrity, allows us to strip away all that separates us and urges us to see and feel what unites us.”

The National Centre for Music presents us with an unprecedented opportunity to enrich the cultural life of Scotland and to serve as a beacon of true 21st century music education for the world to see. Thanks to the generosity and vision of Carol Colburn Grigor and Dunard Fund, we have the means, as well as the collective will and dedication from all walks of Scottish life, to realise a revolutionary vision.

We are entering a rare and beautiful moment in Scotland’s history, where a phenomenal combination of individuals and organisations are tirelessly working together to achieve the highest possible inclusivity and excellence in music, all equally committed to enriching our national story and legacy. Furthermore, we have a new governmental commitment to free instrumental tuition for Scotland’s young people. We are not working uphill and, when it comes to Arts and Culture, this is not to be taken for granted. We must embrace this moment.

The National Centre for Music will be a warm and welcoming place for all ages, abilities and backgrounds, where people can come together and be uplifted through participation in and appreciation of music. It will be home to a comprehensive celebration of musical traditions and interests from around the world and will embrace a diverse range of teachers, ideologies, pedagogies, students, pupils and audiences.

I have never been more optimistic about the potential of Scotland’s musical and cultural future.”

NICOLA BENEDETTI

A BUILDING IN SEARCH OF A PURPOSE

“... Calton Hill is important for Scotland and for the world. It is part of the heritage of a small northern European country that has, over the centuries, punched well above its weight... If there are reasons for people to feel proud of Scotland – and there certainly are – then these reasons are to be found here.”

Alexander McCall Smith, writing about The Seven Hills Project

The Royal High School on Calton Hill became part of Edinburgh's landscape in 1829. Designed by Thomas Hamilton, it stood proudly as a physical link between the city's Old Town and New Town. Today it is both an exceptional example of the neo-classical architecture for which Edinburgh is famous and a testament to the importance that Scotland has long placed on access to excellence in education. Since closing its doors to pupils in 1968, however, it is a building that has struggled to find a new purpose.

The RHSPT's proposal to repurpose this magnificent building as a National Centre for Music will:

- preserve, promote and sustain the architectural integrity of this Edinburgh World Heritage site;
- return the building to its original use as a school, but significantly expand it into a space for all to enjoy;
- align with the City of Edinburgh's planning aspirations now and into the future;
- provide St Mary's Music School with a home befitting its talents and aspirations; and
- put culture and music at the heart of Edinburgh's offering to citizens and visitors alike.

This document contains computer generated images of the Trust's proposals which have been prepared at various times during and after the planning application process. While they all substantially represent the current scheme, certain details have been altered since the images were prepared and other details may be altered as the design is further refined.



ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL PRESERVATION TRUST

“Let’s allow one of our greatest buildings to be repopulated by the people of Edinburgh, used and enjoyed by both citizens and visitors to the city, and part of a living, vibrant and forward-looking community.”

William Gray Muir, Chair, Royal High School Preservation Trust

The Royal High School Preservation Trust was established in 2015 with a stated ambition to conserve the Thomas Hamilton building on Calton Hill and protect its setting there; to find an economically sustainable and culturally suitable use for the whole site; and to establish substantial public access and usage.

By 2016, our proposal to create a new home for St Mary’s Music School in the former Royal High School building had received enthusiastic and robust support from significant heritage, city planning and education partners – including Historic Environment Scotland, Edinburgh World Heritage, the Cockburn Association, the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, the New Town and Broughton Community Council, and the Edinburgh Urban Design Panel, as well as over 3,000 members of the public. Our design scheme was granted full planning permission and listed building consent, valid until 2023.

The passage of time from 2016 to 2021 has allowed us to consult on and revise some aspects of our design proposal and to evolve our ambitions for the building into a vision for a National Centre for Music with clearly defined spaces for education, community engagement and performance, set in generous and fully accessible gardens.

Both increased funding to meet this expanded vision, along with an endowment to support the building in the long-term, have been pledged by Dunard Fund. This now stands at a total of £55m.

rhspt.org



Attributed to Thomas Allom (1804-72) & David Roberts RA HRSA (1796-1864) and supervised by Thomas Hamilton RSA (1784-1858).
View of the Royal High School and Burns' Monument, Edinburgh, watercolour and gouache on paper, circa 1830. Royal Scottish Academy collections.
©The Royal Scottish Academy of Art & Architecture

A VISION TO CONNECT BUILDING TO CITY TO PEOPLE

“The RHSPT scheme ultimately aims to connect the building to the city to the people, creating a place where communities can flourish, where heritage and innovation work side by side, and where enjoyment and education go hand in hand. By introducing a new foyer that directly links the street with the proposed concert hall at the heart of the building, we transform a difficult building, in terms of accessibility, into one that serves two distinct purposes at the same time – working school and public space.”

Carol Nimmo, Chair, New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) & Chair, Perfect Harmony Development Board

St Mary's Music School will continue to sit at the heart of our proposal in its own sensitively designed building, situated to the east of the site, comprising teaching rooms and residential spaces for boarders. This will ensure that the conservation and protection of the whole site is met through economically sustainable use and will allow for a significant expansion of the teaching and outreach opportunities the school can provide.

The public functions of the campus will be contained within the central Thomas Hamilton building. Three new public performance spaces, including the refurbished Assembly Hall will provide flexible venue spaces while a new multi-functional hub in the West Pavilion will offer café, gallery and visitor centre spaces.

Removing unsympathetic secondary buildings (added when the original school was running short of space) will create public gardens, significantly increasing public access and greatly improving the building's visual setting and its link with both the built and natural environment that surrounds it.

It is our belief that a National Centre for Music will take its place confidently in Edinburgh's cultural landscape, building on the city's world-leading strengths as a UNESCO World Heritage City, a festival city and a forward-looking city that strives to create a democracy of opportunity for all of its citizens.

This will be a place where people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds and experiences can come together and flourish through music. A place that will encompass the widest diversity of musical genres and interests, and embrace the widest diversity of teachers, students, pupils and audiences, all under one roof. A place with excellence at the heart of its teaching and accessibility at the heart of its engagement.



MAKING THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR MUSIC

“The vision for the National Centre for Music is to drive a transformation in the visibility, scale and reach of musical life in Edinburgh, creating opportunities for inclusion, participation and partnership that will resonate not only in the city, but right across the nation.”

Kat Heathcote, Director, St Mary's Music School & Trustee, Perfect Harmony Development Board

The project will be a catalyst for Scotland to fulfil its potential as a world leader in music education, building on our strong national tradition of music education. BOP Consulting were commissioned by the RHSPT to review the music education sector in Scotland, interview key stakeholders and hold discussions with project partners. The shared conclusion is that a new National Centre for Music, working with St Mary's Music School and a number of other key partners can play a valuable role in:

- creating a new cultural venue that will add vibrancy to the city in terms of placemaking, design and diversity of use, in the iconic Thomas Hamilton building;
- fulfilling Scotland's potential to be a world leader in music education, based on the nation's strong tradition and heritage in performing, writing and producing a diverse range of musical output;
- bringing together key stakeholders to create a sustainable and joined-up plan for music education in Scotland, that responds to existing gaps in provision;
- developing the next generation of musical talent in Scotland, by providing a world-class musical and academic education for musically gifted children within the inspiring and inclusive environment of St Mary's Music School;
- advocating for resources and access for all into music education, building on all major political parties' pledges to scrap fees for instrument tuition in schools;
- providing opportunities for Continued Professional Development (CPD) and training of Scotland's music teachers;
- focussing on giving young people the skillset to manage a 21st century music career in areas such as leadership, production, promotion, management and technology;
- hosting research and development projects that bring together music organisations, non-music organisations and academics, contributing to fostering innovation in education; and
- fostering international links for musicians, music organisation and teachers.



IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT & IMPACT

“This project is an excellent fit with national and city policies. The Business Case identifies many benefits across placemaking, cultural, social and economic themes and at local, city and national levels. The wide range of beneficiaries include students, visitors, music and education organisations, the local community and the wider music sector in Scotland.”

Alex Homfray, Associate Director, BOP Consulting



PRESERVATION, REGENERATION AND PLACEMAKING

The Royal High School creates a physical link between the Old and New Towns of the Edinburgh World Heritage Site and the building is recognised as a key component of the Site's 'Outstanding Universal Value'. Its restoration and reactivation will support national and local placemaking policies by preserving and enhancing a renowned heritage asset and reactivating it for public benefit. The project will further strengthen Edinburgh's city 'brand' by bringing world-class culture and heritage together in a highly visible way, while a strong sense of place, and local engagement with heritage, can contribute to wider social outcomes of community pride and inclusion. The project will have a particularly strong impact for Calton Hill by creating year-round, all-day activity. Opening out its southern flank will help to transform Calton Hill into a safe and attractive place that will benefit local communities and enhance perceptions of the city.



PUBLIC ACCESS, COMMUNITIES AND WELLBEING

Access to music has been shown to make significant improvements to the lives of children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, children with learning difficulties, young people with NEET status, and young people in the criminal justice system. The new National Centre for Music will seek to engage and inspire disadvantaged children and young people, aligning with the City's priorities to reduce poverty and address inequality. Its programme will also pool the expertise of Centre partners including St Mary's Music School and the Benedetti Foundation to deliver evening teaching provision for adult education, partnerships with schools and local orchestras, teacher training and exchange opportunities.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

The project will contribute nearly £100 million to the Edinburgh economy over 30 years. The capital phase itself will generate over £30 million and the ongoing contribution to the Edinburgh economy will be in the region of £3.7 million per annum. The City's cultural policies highlight the central role that culture plays in driving tourism in Edinburgh and the importance of Edinburgh's festivals building up their year-round offer and partnering with other cultural organisations. The National Centre for Music can support such partnerships and also provide new infrastructure through the provision of a mid-sized venue specialising in classical, choral, traditional and jazz music, as well as showcasing gifted new and emerging musicians.



INTERNATIONALISM

A new National Centre for Music will provide a point of connection between music education and performance in Scotland, and best practice overseas. The combination of concert hall, teaching facilities and residential accommodation is ideal for hosting residencies by leading international groups and for further developing St Mary's Music School's successful summer school programme. The extended provision that will be offered here by St Mary's Music School will create additional opportunities for talented children from overseas to learn alongside their peers in Scotland and the UK.

SEEKING & SHARING PUBLIC OPINION

New research shows high levels of public support, both locally and nationally, for a new National Centre for Music at the old Royal High School in Edinburgh. In a survey carried out independently by The Diffley Partnership (through the ScotPulse panel, on behalf of the RHSPT), more than three quarters (76 per cent) of 1,622 respondents across Scotland agreed that a National Centre for Music is a suitable use for the building. And two thirds (66 per cent) of respondents across Scotland agreed that the old Royal High should be used for cultural rather than commercial purposes.

Support was greater still in Edinburgh, where 533 local residents were surveyed regarding the RHSPT's plans. More than four fifths (82 per cent) of them supported the building's use as a National Centre for Music while 72% favoured its use as a cultural rather than a commercial destination.

Half (50 per cent) of people across Scotland rated their favourability towards a new National Centre for Music as a 9 or 10 out of 10, and almost the same proportion of Edinburgh residents (49 per cent) gave the RHSPT's proposal for the site 9 or 10 out of 10.

An overwhelming majority, both across Scotland (85 per cent) and in Edinburgh (88 per cent), said that any proposal to develop the site should make a positive social impact. Some 57 per cent of Scots surveyed felt that the main benefit of creating a National Centre for Music at the site was that it would nurture Scottish talent; 40 per cent felt it would expand music opportunities for young people; 35 per cent thought it would be a sustainable use of the building; and 25 per cent that such a use was in keeping with the building's original use.

There was also positive endorsement of the areas of public benefit that the Trust proposes to deliver for children and young people through the plans. Nearly nine out of ten (88 per cent) of Edinburgh residents thought delivering more opportunities to access musical education were either 'essential' or 'important'. Almost the same proportion (87 per cent) thought it was important to see more opportunities for music performance while 84 per cent cited the value of opportunities to experience live concerts; 86 per cent wanted opportunities for children and young people to find work in the musical sector:

The survey provides a detailed update to research undertaken independently by Ipsos MORI for the RHSPT in 2017, which showed conclusively that 81 per cent of Edinburgh residents preferred its proposal for the site, compared with just 10 per cent who said they preferred proposals for an international hotel.


Results are based on a survey of 1,622 respondents, conducted 11-16 August 2021

88% 

NEARLY 9 OF 10 EDINBURGH RESIDENTS (88%) THOUGHT DELIVERING OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCESS MUSIC EDUCATION WERE EITHER ESSENTIAL OR IMPORTANT

87% 

FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SEE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSIC PERFORMANCE

86% 

WANTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE TO FIND WORK IN MUSIC

85% 

AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY, ACROSS SCOTLAND (85%) AND EDINBURGH (88%), SAID THAT ANY PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP THE SITE SHOULD MAKE A POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

84% 

CITED VALUE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE LIVE CONCERTS

57% 

FELT IT WOULD NURTURE SCOTTISH TALENT

IMAGINE A DAY IN THE LIFE...



MUSIC AND MOVEMENT [PERFORMANCE SPACE]

Under 5s, along with their parents and carers, take part in an early morning Dalcroze Eurythmics class, delivered in partnership with a UK accredited teacher. Dalcroze encourages an understanding of music through rhythm, structure and movement, and classes are held several times a week and at weekends.



UPSKILLING FOR TEACHERS [PERFORMANCE AND TEACHING SPACE]

60 primary teachers from Dumfries & Galloway participate in an in-service training day with tutors from the Traditional Music Forum and Feisean nan Gaidheal. A further 20 teaching staff who couldn't travel to Edinburgh are joining in online. The training enhances their teaching with a new programme of songs for children and runs several times a year to support the delivery of the oral tradition of Scots and Gaelic song.



IT TAKES (MORE THAN) TWO TO TANGO [CONCERT HALL]

50 members of the local community (all over 70, all young at heart) are taking part in a Tango Tea Dance, held in collaboration with the charity Live Music Now Scotland. A group of young professional musicians perform for an hour while a tango dance teacher leads the dancers. This is just one of a series of eight classes encouraging people to keep fit and active through music and movement.



A MASTERCLASS IN STRING TECHNIQUES [EAST PAVILION]

Su-a Lee, Assistant Principal Cello of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Advanced Cello Tutor for The Benedetti Foundation, delivers an online tutorial, reaching players of all ages and helping them to explore and learn new techniques for string instruments.



SCO STRING & WIND ACADEMIES [NEW FOYER AND REHEARSAL SPACE]

As part of the SCO Academy (a successful programme run in partnership with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra since 2019), pupils from St Mary's Music School work with professional players from the SCO to deliver ensemble training for young musicians from in and around Edinburgh. This creates opportunities for young people who want to extend and explore their instrumental talent within an orchestral setting.



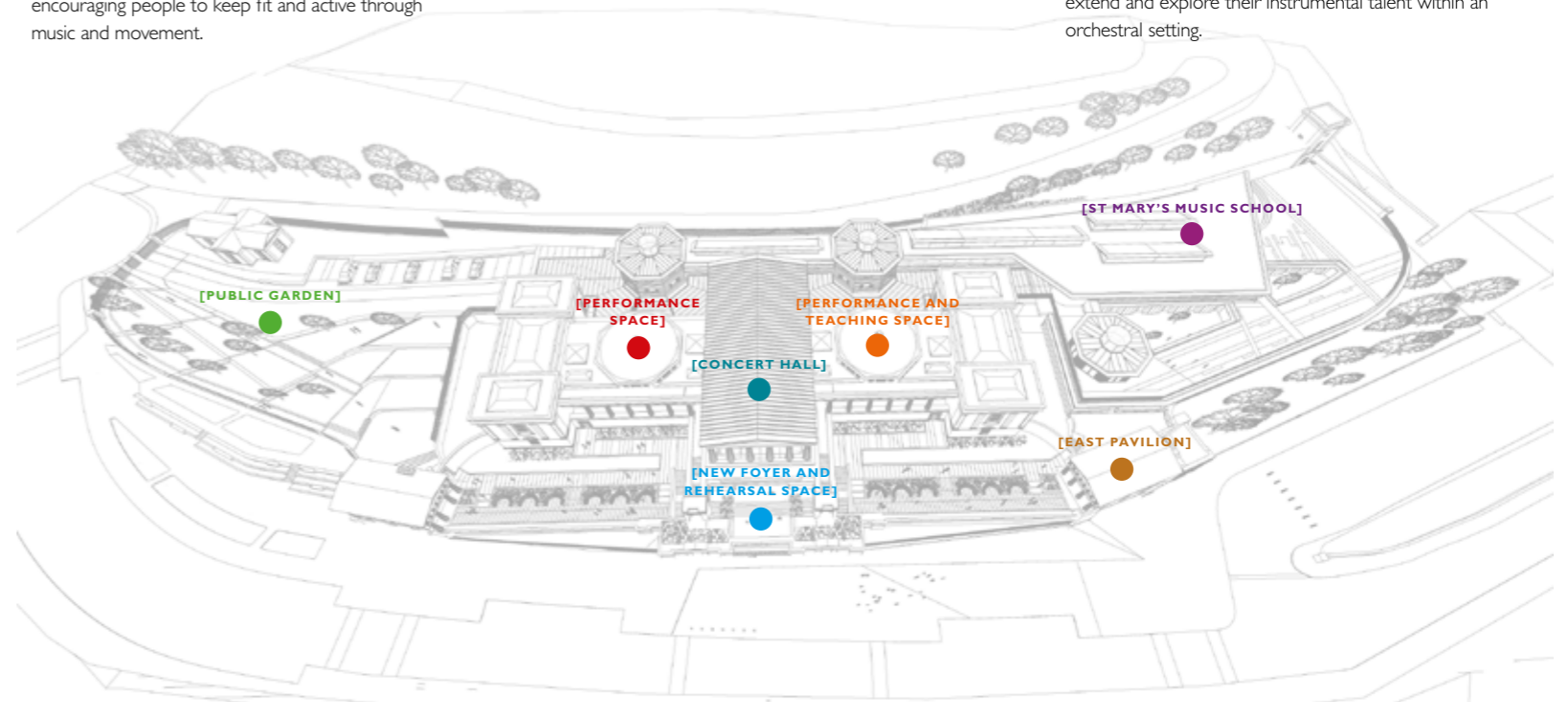
AND ALL THAT JAZZ... [PUBLIC GARDEN]

The St Mary's Music School jazz band are fitting in a final rehearsal outdoors in the Public Gardens, in advance of the free public performance they're giving in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh as part of the School's charitable and outreach activities.



A SPECIALIST MUSIC EDUCATION [ST MARY'S MUSIC SCHOOL]

With rehearsal rooms running along the southern edge and classrooms flanking the eastern perimeter, the new purpose-build music school is the beating heart of the National Centre for Music site during term time; a busy and exciting hive of academic and musical teaching, learning and activity.



ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN & ACCESSIBILITY SUMMARY

RICHARD MURPHY ARCHITECTS

“Our overall architectural objective is to allow Hamilton’s building and its setting against Calton Hill to be seen as originally intended, free of later additions. This setting has been compromised for about 150 years and our proposed new buildings are designed to be seen as a low-lying terraced landscape. Alterations to the main building are restricted to a new entrance, invisible from the street, but otherwise new work is located in areas of the building which have already been significantly altered by the PSA (Property Services Agency - a Civil Service led architectural office). A key part of our proposal addresses the curiosities of Hamilton’s very under-used external staircases, now revived as a major new entrance route for the public performance spaces.”

Understanding Hamilton’s vision

Whilst unquestionably one of Scotland’s greatest architectural masterpieces, Hamilton’s design for the Royal High School creates challenges which have defeated a number of attempts to find a satisfactory modern use for the building. The vast majority of Hamilton’s architectural energy was expended on the modelling of the front elevation rather than the practicalities of how a school might operate and the peculiarity of Hamilton’s design is that, despite this architectural energy, the front of the building was never used as an entrance. Rather, it became a ceremonial end of year exit for children leaving the school and departing to the wider world. The everyday school entrance was very understated on the north elevation, accessed from the west.

Internally, the building poses circulation challenges as the main floor is dominated by the central Assembly Hall and the two classrooms to either side. These extend between north and south elevations so that there is no east-west circulation at the main level. Only two staircases were constructed by Hamilton and these merely connect the different levels of the two end wings to the main levels in the centre of the building.

Hamilton’s original vision was for a building that would be part of a much wider setting of the whole of Calton Hill. This has been compromised by the construction of the Wilson Building and an early photograph shows the school sitting centrally to the retaining wall which can clearly be seen stretching out to the east, terminating in the Belvedere, and to the west, in effect continuing beyond the Gatehouse out to the west along Regent Road, all the way to Waterloo Place. The Royal High School, through this device, visually claims for itself the whole of the hill. It also gives the ‘Acropolis’ of Calton Hill a horizontal base which detaches it from the city below very much in the manner of the gigantic retaining walls found all around the Acropolis itself in Athens.



Marrying public accessibility and the teaching environment

The building needs to respond to the twin briefs of public performance spaces and the particular requirements of a music school for both students and teachers. It is important that the two groups' territories are clearly delineated and each of them functions on its own terms.

Our scheme proposes a solution whereby the building's public function is divided into casual visitors (to cafe and gardens) and the concert-going public. Casual visitors would enter the site from the west, and Hamilton's Western Pavilion is envisaged as a small cafe serving larger numbers externally in the proposed new garden which replaces the car park. This space is situated in the proposed landscaped edge to Regent Road and also the proposed formal terraced gardens in front of the main facade.

The concert-going public enter using the sequence of staircases Hamilton designed as a ceremonial exit staircase. These lead to a slightly lowered new terrace, new entrance and new foyer formed under the main hall. The new opening has been carefully located so as not to be seen from Regent Road. The foyer contains a bar, access to the school kitchens and two new staircases on either side, replacing those constructed by the PSA in the 1970s. It will be lit dramatically by a roof light inserted into the floor of the external colonnade. The floor of the Assembly Room was completely remodelled by the PSA and we intend to replace it with a number of variable height floor sections giving great flexibility in staging performances but avoiding a flat floor which would otherwise prejudice Hamilton's original design.

Creating the school function is a much greater undertaking. Within Hamilton's existing building, administration is placed in the western rooms, and some teaching spaces and the refectory in the eastern rooms. We propose that the main performance spaces in the centre will also be used by St Mary's Music School and the new foyer will be used as a gym space. Externally, all the buildings to the east will be demolished and replaced with what appear to be terraced gardens but are in fact bedrooms to the front and classrooms to the rear, each with landscaped roofs. The buildings are deliberately low lying and emphasise the horizontal, to complement Hamilton's composition. Only an octagonal pavilion of practice rooms sits above the landscape, and this aligns exactly with the adjacent octagonal roof lights of Hamilton's roofscape.

Along the northern edge, adjacent to the retaining wall, is a single-storey line of practice rooms and small teaching rooms. Our current thinking is to allow these to extend to the current site of the western classroom block building, which we intend to demolish. A larger practice room will terminate this row of rooms and announce the activity of the school to visitors to the garden. A new proposal for a reception gateway building, of the same size and proportions as Hamilton's pavilions, will clearly delineate the threshold of the school itself.



Addressing potential design revisions

St Mary's Music School requires a significant number of purpose-build music practice rooms, capable of being readily supervised, within the secure part of the campus. Our consented design includes a pair of two-story octagonal practice rooms and, while welcomed by many, these were the most widely questioned part of the consented scheme, largely because they would partly obscure the north elevation of the original building when viewed from the walkway up Calton Hill.

The CEC Planning Report noted that: "The new practice rooms proposed at the rear interrupt views of the building on approach from the west of the site and from the path to Calton Hill. This prevents the north façade from being read coherently." And HES, in their Consultation Report, similarly observed: "As currently designed, this proposed new building would prevent the north façade being read coherently, with octagonal pavilions introducing an uncharacteristic series of interlocking spaces."

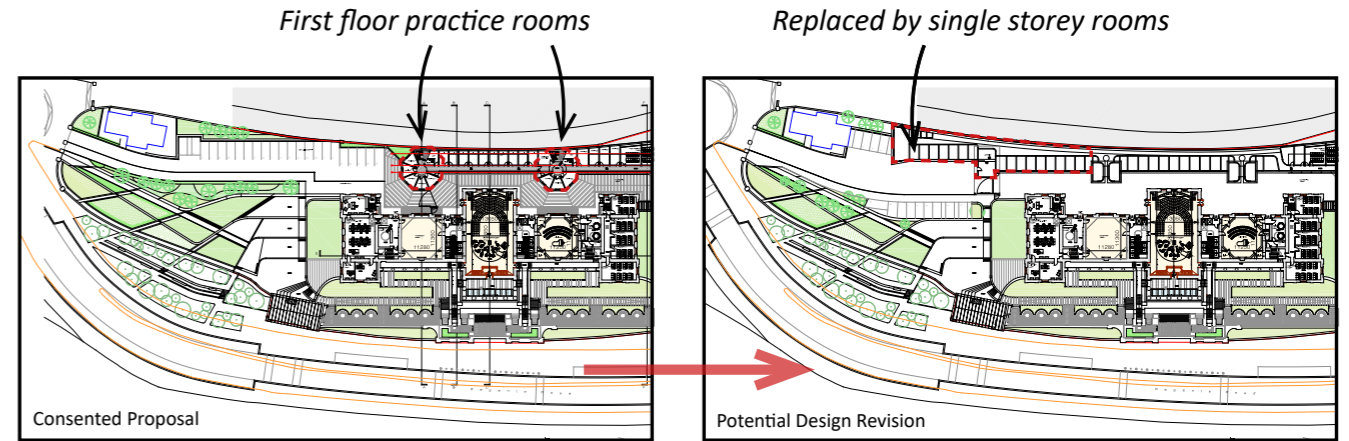
The location of these practice hubs was, in part, dictated by a desire to avoid any new development to the west of the Hamilton building. However, the newly issued development brief acknowledges that limited single-storey development may be possible in this area and, taking advantage of this, we have proposed a potential amendment to the consented scheme. This would remove the octagons and push a low-lying entrance pavilion out to the north west of the building.

The new entrance pavilion would be elegantly proportioned, following the lead of Hamilton's original flanking pavilions, and this solution would offer a number of advantages.

- A clear, distinctive and contemporary entrance to St Mary's Music School.
- A significant enhancement of the view of the north façade of the Hamilton building.
- The creation of a cleaner and more usable series of outdoor spaces to the north of the Hamilton building.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this potential amendment."

[Richard Murphy, Managing Director, Richard Murphy Architects](#)



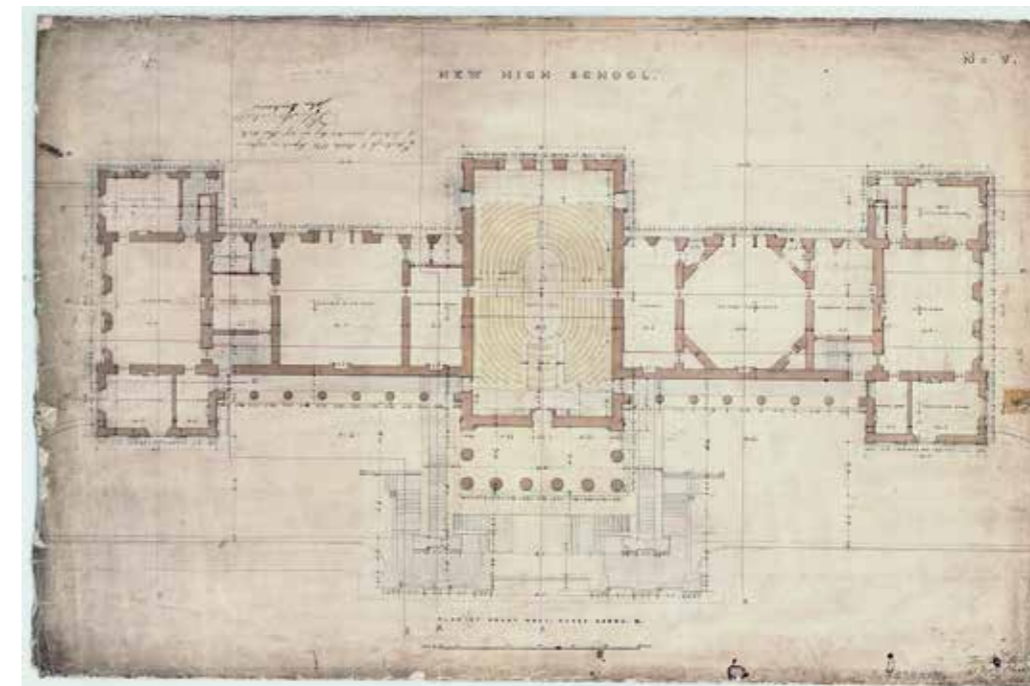
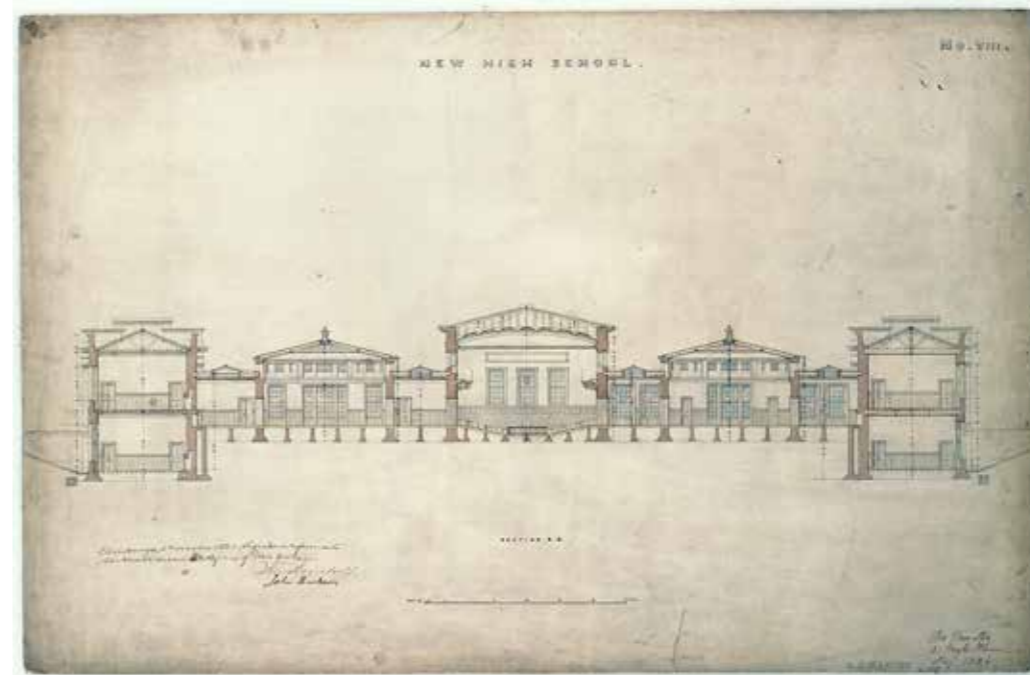
CONSERVATION & CULTURAL HERITAGE SUMMARY

SIMPSON & BROWN

“Thomas Hamilton’s Royal High School is one of the most important - perhaps the most important - of Scotland’s many fine Greek-revival buildings. Its reputation is, quite literally, international, and the way it is developed will rightly attract close scrutiny not only in Edinburgh and Scotland, but across the globe.”

The building’s iconic status reflects Hamilton’s supremely confident and controlled design of the main front of the school to the south, and the way that this is viewed when approached along Regent Road from the east and west. Any development proposals must ensure that the visual integrity of this front is scrupulously preserved. But in a design as superbly conceived as this, it is not just specific views that must be respected. This is a building that needs to be understood in the round and in relation to its dramatic setting on the flank of Calton Hill, one of Europe’s great set pieces of picturesque urban design. This means that any new building on the site should be handled with the utmost care, so that neither the building itself nor its relationship to its surroundings are subjected to intrusive or insensitive change.

RMA’s designs for a new National Centre for Music skilfully meet these demanding criteria. By concentrating new development on the more enclosed east side of the site and staggering its height to follow the line of the landscape, a large volume of new accommodation has been incorporated with minimal impacts on any significant views of Hamilton’s masterpiece. Furthermore, the removal of an undistinguished late nineteenth-century building will open up views to Hamilton’s belvedere. Lost to view since the 1890s, this was a key part of the architect’s design for the wider setting and an intentional counterpoint to his monument to Robert Burns directly to the south. Its recovery will be a major heritage gain.



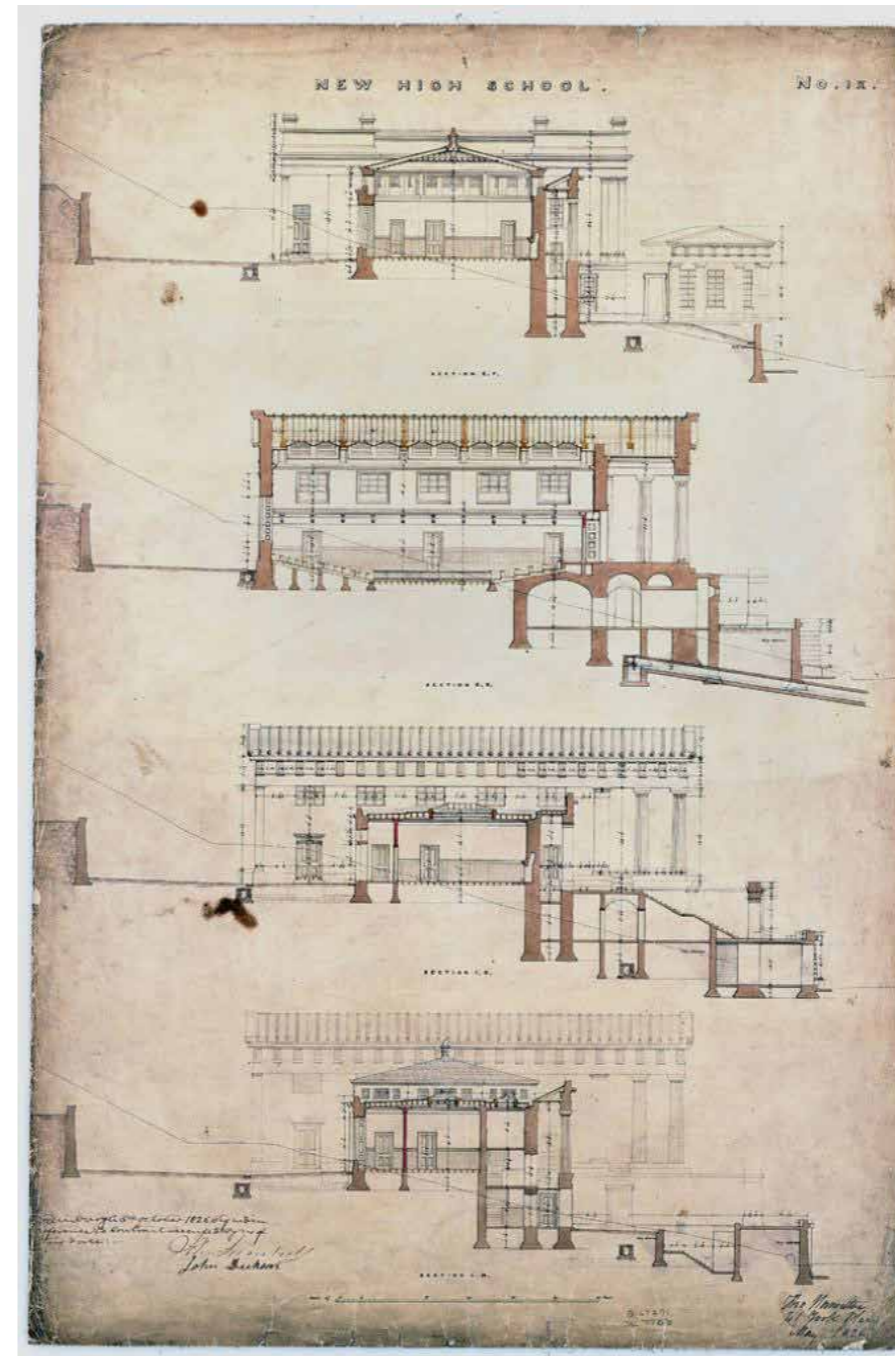
A fitting affirmation of civic heritage

The ingenious use of courtyards and skylights to light the new building has reduced the amount of externally visible glazing to an absolute minimum. This will, in combination with green roofs, ensure that the new work blends seamlessly into the surrounding landscape. Where the new school is visible to the north and west, massing is controlled to maintain views of the building's north side and its fascinating roofscape. The new work has also been carefully designed to harmonise with the original building while remaining distinctively and elegantly contemporary.

Hamilton's main building will be meticulously restored, with masonry, roofs, windows, doors and interiors conserved to the highest possible standards of materials and craftsmanship. His most important room, the Assembly Hall, will see harmful later interventions reversed and lost original features reinstated, while its use as a concert hall will enable its unique character as a place of assembly and performance to be preserved. The introduction of a new but carefully concealed south entrance, together with a dramatic foyer and staircases, will make the challenging layout of the building workable without the need for intrusive external additions or further internal alterations.

No less important, however, than respecting the building's architectural quality is sustaining its historic significance as a symbol of Scotland's commitment to recognising and supporting the talents of its people, regardless of wealth or privilege. It was this concern that motivated the citizens of Edinburgh, in the 1820s, to make their public high school into such a magnificent building. It would be hard to imagine a more fitting affirmation of this heritage than the transformation of Hamilton's masterpiece, almost exactly two centuries later, into Scotland's new National Centre for Music."

John Sanders, Partner, Simpson & Brown



LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT SUMMARY

OPTIMISED ENVIRONMENTS (OPEN)

“The proposals for the landscape and external environment will significantly enhance the overall setting and provide a respectful, engaging and dynamic space, encouraging biodiversity while providing a series of landscaped spaces for public and educational enjoyment.”

The main challenge for the immediate building setting is to marry and respect the picturesque context of its wider location and consider this in light of the building's return to education use but with a significant public interface. The solution is a series of carefully designed spaces linking the west (city entrance) side of the site through to the east in a journey designed to reflect the transition from a more public interface to that of a more intimate student experience.

The **West Approach Garden** is the main point of arrival and begins the experience of revealing the building and its uses; the aim is to create a space that allows for integration of its users, provides places for outdoor learning and areas that can be used as a 'fourth' performance space. The landscape design harnesses the natural beauty of Calton Hill sweeping down into the site, enhances biodiversity and accessibility and embraces opportunities for sustainable design in an age of climate emergency.

The **Southern Terraces** offer spectacular views out of the site towards dramatic land and cityscapes, characterising the very essence of Edinburgh. They are important to the south elevational setting of the building and need to remain visually uncluttered as well as provide access to and from the main building by using changes in level to provide a series of ramped terraces and seating areas. The bottom terrace sits just behind the existing parapet wall, giving views and shelter at the same time.

A **Roof Terrace and Playground** for students will make exciting and innovative use of a large proportion of the roof of the new school building, offering an excellent environment for educational, health and wellbeing activities. The location is not only private but offers an incredible vantage point. Sensitive landscape design will integrate the roof terraces into the natural landscape of Calton Hill while introducing an innovative blue/green sustainable structure, enhancing the performance of the new building and the site as a whole.”

Pol MacDonald, Director, Optimised Environments (OPEN)



A ROBUST MODEL FOR FUNDING, MAINTENANCE & STAFFING

“The National Centre for Music will be established as a new charity, independent of the Royal High School Preservation Trust and St Mary’s Music School. Dunard Fund will provide the Centre with an endowment of £10 million, enabling the Centre to provide for the long-term maintenance and preservation of the building; to employ a small staff team; and to provide seedcorn funding for the partnership programme.”

Alex Homfray, Associate Director, BOP Consulting

It is proposed that the Royal High School Preservation Trust will hold the head lease for the building from City of Edinburgh Council and will, in turn, lease the building on a peppercorn rent to The National Centre for Music. St Mary’s Music School will be a tenant of the new Centre, similarly enjoying a peppercorn rent. Initial modelling of indicative balanced budgets for both the Centre and the School demonstrates the sustainability of this proposed model and further definitive financial modelling will be carried out at the detailed design stage of the project.

A detailed maintenance plan will similarly form part of the next phase of business planning but initial modelling is based on projected maintenance and conservation budgets for category A buildings over a 30 year maintenance cycle. Provision has therefore been made to cover a combination of ongoing and periodic major works with a net present value of £7.5 million.

Following a set-up period, where the focus will be on delivering the capital project and setting up the Centre’s music education partnerships, the staff will be led by an Artistic Director, responsible for developing and realising the Centre’s vision. Four staff members will cover the artistic and educational programme, conservation and facilities management, communications, and administration.

While the Centre’s income will provide a contribution to its partnership programmes, it is envisaged that fund raising will be undertaken with partners for specific programmes, allowing the Centre’s activities to grow and flex from a financially secure base, as new programmes develop.

National Centre for Music budget – sample year

Income		£
1.	Endowment income	500,000
2.	Accommodation rental	120,960
3.	Rental of performance spaces	10,500
4.	Partnership Programmes	375,000
Total Income		1,006,460
Expenditure		
5.	Staff costs	228,000
	Administrative expenses	15,000
	Marketing & communications	10,000
6.	Facilities management	215,000
7.	Partnership programmes	475,000
Total Expenditure		943,000
Surplus/ deficit		63,460

Notes

1. 5% return from endowment of £10 million.
2. Eight weeks rental during school holidays, for 48 rooms at £50 per night, assuming 80% occupancy.
3. Estimate of £7,500 for Edinburgh Festival rental, based on prevailing rates for performance spaces, plus three further weeks at £1000 per week.
4. Notional sum to represent fundraising with partners: assumes five programmes a year at an average of £75,000 each.
5. Artistic Director; Conservation and Facilities Manager; Programmes Manager; Communications Officer; Administration Assistant.
6. £200,000 provision for long-term building conservation and £15,000 for gardening.
7. £100,000 contribution from endowment income, to be topped up via fundraising with partners.

A PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP

“[The Centre will] offer a level playing field where young disabled people and other learners can work together and develop a mutual appreciation of each other’s musicality, creativity and technical ability... [it will] offer a space where expertise – whether it’s playing music using accessible technology or playing a cello – is equally valued and understood in terms of human expression. This would be a unique place in the world.”

Lucia Capallaro, Learning & Participation Manager, Dunedin Consort

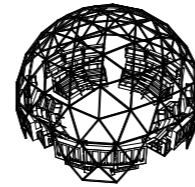
Perhaps the most important function of the National Centre for Music will be as a platform for fresh collaborations both within the building and online, as well as out in the wider community. This will allow us to deliver excellence in accessibility and inclusion; develop innovative expression and educational pathways; and foster wellbeing and a sense of place. We envisage two main types of partnership making this happen.

Core partners will shape the core offer of excellence and inclusive music education and advocacy. The National Centre for Music will have equal partnerships with its proposed core partners – these will include St Mary’s Music School, the Benedetti Foundation and IMPACT Scotland.

Core partners are independent organisations who will therefore have their own partnerships with some of the programme partners as well as with, for example, local schools or international academies. By mutual agreement, core partners may lead on some National Centre for Music initiatives and programmes.

Programme partners will work with the National Centre for Music to push boundaries and excite new audiences. The Centre will have a role to support such partners functionally – through coordination and creating connections; and strategically – by ensuring alignment with shared outcomes.

The National Centre for Music will also establish broader partnerships with organisations whose remit focus on greenspace, built heritage, and health and wellbeing, for example. As the Centre takes shape, partners will be able to advise on its development and the Centre will facilitate interaction and cross-pollination of ideas.



#PIANODROME



BENEDETTI
FOUNDATION



CORE PARTNER

ST MARY'S MUSIC SCHOOL

“We will be able to educate more people. We will open our doors to Edinburgh, to Scotland and internationally and a whole range of musical activities will happen. It will allow us to become much more of a community asset than we can be at present.”

Dr Kenneth Taylor, Headteacher, St Mary's Music School

St Mary's Music School is Scotland's only specialist music school, founded in 1880 to educate the choristers of St Mary's Cathedral with instrumental teaching introduced in 1972. It is one of nine Music and Dance Scheme Schools across the United Kingdom, offering the finest training to nurture exceptional talent in young people aged between 9 and 19 years.

St Mary's Music School has a vision to be recognised as a national cultural asset with a world-class reputation among specialist music schools, providing an exceptional educational environment for gifted young musicians and making a vital contribution to musical excellence on the national and international stage. The School's mission is to open its doors to outstanding young instrumentalists and choristers from Scotland and beyond – regardless of their means or circumstances – allowing them to flourish and excel, musically and academically, in a safe, supportive and inspiring environment.

Throughout its history, the School has provided innovative pathways to excellence that are at the heart of its teaching. In 1978, the School and St Mary's Cathedral were amongst the first in the UK to develop a coeducational chorister education, while Saturday Music Classes for children aged between 4 and 12 years is a long-established programme that introduces children to singing and to instrumental and theory classes, with an emphasis of having fun while learning. Since 2018, the School has worked in partnership with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra to develop the SCO Academy, where children already playing to a high standard (ABRSM Grade 5 or above) can rehearse and perform alongside pupils from St Mary's Music School and the professional musicians of the SCO.

Moving to a new home on Calton Hill will provide St Mary's Music School with state-of-the-art facilities and performance spaces, enable specialist music education to be offered to a significantly increased school roll of around 120 young people, and deliver performance and teaching expertise to a much wider local, national and international community, in collaboration with a broad range of partners.

stmarysmusicschool.co.uk



CORE PARTNER

THE BENEDETTI FOUNDATION

“By harnessing each organisation’s specialisms and enabling true partnership working, the National Centre for Music has the potential to be a game-changer for music education in Scotland.”

Laura Gardiner, Director, The Benedetti Foundation

The Benedetti Foundation is an independent charity set up by the world-renowned, Scottish-Italian solo classical violinist, Nicola Benedetti.

The Foundation’s principal aim is to unite, inspire and educate through the creation of energetic and innovative workshops and video content. It aims to deliver and model high quality music education, be accessible online, increase dialogue between the performing and education worlds, advocate for the music education world, and break down barriers to access.

Since its foundation in January 2020 – a time of nationwide cuts to music education and the music teaching profession as well as threats to the existence of some local authority music education – the Foundation has worked with over 25,000 participants of all ages, across 94 countries and from every local authority in Scotland.

The Foundation works closely with young people to build discipline, professionalism, concentration and perseverance, as well as to address the deeply important emotional, social and psychological challenges that young people face. Activities range from in-person and virtual large-scale sessions to short, focused workshops; and from teacher training for both instrumental and primary classroom practitioners to supporting students and recent graduates entering the world of teaching.

Current initiatives include large scale, inspirational events such as Building Foundations: Exploring the Physicality and Psychology of Playing which include short daily challenges, live practice and improvisation sessions, wellbeing sessions, and interviews hosted by Nicola. Online ‘Mini Sessions’ provide in-depth and detailed explorations of a wide variety of topics, ranging from technique, physicality and wellbeing to personal and professional development for both students and teachers. The Foundation’s Ambassador programme provides a safe and supportive environment for students and recent graduates to share ideas, learn from and with each other, engage and be proactive.

[benedettifoundation.org](https://www.benedettifoundation.org)



CORE PARTNER
IMPACT SCOTLAND
& DUNARD CENTRE

“Dunard Centre and the National Centre for Music would provide a complementary infrastructure, creating a geographical hotspot in Edinburgh that is exciting and enables great potential. There are any number of collaborative opportunities around different projects and with an even wider range of partners.”

Joanna Baker, Executive Director, IMPACT Scotland

IMPACT (International Music and Performing Arts Charitable Trust) Scotland is responsible for the development operation of Dunard Centre, a new all-purpose performance venue in Edinburgh's St Andrews Square, due to open in 2026. Broadening access to music is at the core of Dunard Centre's mission and it aims to present acoustic music from Scotland and around the world, at the highest level and through all genres, in a new 1,000-seat concert hall. Dunard Centre will also provide a permanent home for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) who tour Scotland and the world as proud ambassadors for Scottish cultural excellence, providing as many opportunities as possible for people to hear music.

Conceived as a hub to connect with music of all kinds and communities of all kinds across Edinburgh, Dunard Centre will function all day and, as well as providing a concert hall, will have multi-purpose rooms and foyers. The staff will include an education and outreach team working with partners to deliver programmes.

The new National Centre for Music would have access to world-class musicians performing at Dunard Centre, providing opportunities for masterclass and exchanges, while Dunard Centre's facilities would showcase programmes for the Centre such as St Mary's Music School summer schools. Both buildings developing along similar timelines offers further opportunity to create synergy, such as through the exploration of the digital partnerships, broadcasting and cultural programming.

impactscotland.org.uk/project



PROGRAMME PARTNER DRAKE MUSIC SCOTLAND

“The National Centre for Music has the potential to enable Scotland to have the most inclusive music education in the world. It can drive new ideas in terms of programming, access, technology and sustainability. From this point of view, perhaps the unique offering here (alongside education and the iconic central location) is the playfulness, innovation and collaboration which smaller venue with multiple smaller spaces and partners of all shapes and sizes can provide. The National Centre for Music links architecture, performance and environment to produce a new kind of organisation and institution.”

Thursa Sanderson, Chief Executive, Drake Music Scotland

Drake Music Scotland was founded in 1997, at a time when there was no progressive music education in place to help young people with additional support needs build their skills; there were also few music teachers working in special education schools. Drake Music Scotland’s vision is to transform people’s lives through the power of music and it is Scotland’s leading organisation in creating music-making opportunities for children and adults with disabilities and additional support needs.

Working in partnership with the National Centre for Music would help to raise the profile of Drake’s many initiatives and will see opportunities emerge for building on training and CPD programmes with others who are developing skills in similar areas and in music education more widely.

drakemusicscotland.org



PROGRAMME PARTNER PIANODROME

“We rethink what the piano is and can be in today’s society – our work uses the materials we find around us to create welcoming spaces and opportunities through installations, events and workshops. We want to make people feel at home. Environmental sustainability, partnership working and widening access to music-making are central to our activities and practice. Working alongside the new Centre’s partners, facilities and networks would help us to continue to break down barriers and broaden our impact.”

Matt Wright, Director, Pianodrome

Edinburgh-based Pianodrome CIC was formed in 2017, founded on the belief that ‘no piano is junk, no person is unmusical’. The world’s first Pianodrome, a 100-seater amphitheatre made entirely from disused pianos, was created with the help of over 100 volunteers and installed at Edinburgh’s Royal Botanic Gardens in August 2018, attracting in excess of 18,000 visitors.

Pianodrome is part of a large network of makers, artists, performers and volunteers; it leads outreach programmes and supports artists through various initiatives including Pianodrome Sessions concerts. Pianodrome Sessions partnerships include Intercultural Youth Scotland, Tinderbox Collective and Chamber Music Scotland, with a focus on widening access to music performance opportunities for young people and people from diverse backgrounds.

pianodrome.org



PROGRAMME PARTNER
**TRADITIONAL ARTS
& CULTURE SCOTLAND (TRACS)**

“Working in partnership with the National Centre for Music would enable an increased knowledge of traditional music among musicians of other genres, students and teachers, giving them a broad sweep of musical experience. TRACS would help join the dots, enabling physical and digital promotion of, and access to, traditional music, helping create a much greater profile and relevance of traditional music to the music community of Scotland.”

David Francis, Director, TRACS

Over 20,000 people take part in traditional music education in Scotland and 18,000 of them are under the age of 18. TRACS is Scotland's national network for traditional arts and culture across the art forms of music, dance and storytelling and its network includes over 100 organisations from across Scotland. TRACS brings together the Traditional Music Forum, the Scottish Storytelling Forum and the Traditional Dance Forum of Scotland.

The Traditional Music Forum is a key participant of the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Music and a major area of its activity is non-formal music education. It works with other advocacy bodies in the Music Education Partnership Group, which succeeded in persuading the Scottish Government to waive fees for instrumental music tuition in the 2021/22 school year.

tracscotland.org



PROGRAMME PARTNER
NEVIS ENSEMBLE

“The iconic space [of the former Royal High School] is symbolically important, giving [partners] the ability to reach communities and wider organisations in a way [music organisations] working more disparately maybe can't.”

Jamie Munn, Chief Executive, Nevis Ensemble


Nevis Ensemble is a 40-piece street orchestra founded in 2018, whose mission is 'to make music for everyone everywhere'. Nevis Ensemble performs around the country, runs partnership projects and trains early career musicians.

Nevis tours places that would not normally host performances – public spaces and supermarkets; scenic spaces such as St Kilda and Ben Nevis; and community and social settings including psychiatric wards and care homes for veterans – every year, the orchestra aims to perform in at least half of Scotland's 32 local authority areas. Projects are always delivered in partnership and participant-led, with the aim of creating new music, alongside Nevis musicians and composers, which can then be orchestrated for the full ensemble. The Ensemble work with a number of different groups, including women seeking refuge from domestic violence, refugees, people experiencing homelessness, young carers, those in the justice systems and older people living with dementia.

Nevis also provides much sought-after performing and freelance skills for new musicians and, from 2022, will create 40 two-year fellowships which will strengthen this training and development even further.

nevisensemble.org



A close-up portrait of Michael Spitzer, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing glasses and a blue button-down shirt. He is smiling warmly at the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

“Each of us is born with the capacity to be an active musician, and every culture on this planet has music. Music is millions of years older than language. It is an umbilical cord to Mother Nature and arguably the most important thing we did as a species.”

For our children in particular, music is a magical space for imagination, freedom, and joy. A National Centre for Music on Calton Hill would provide a spectacular space for this to happen. It would be a world-class centre and a further jewel in Scotland’s musical crown.”

MICHAEL SPITZER
Author of *The Musical Human*;
Professor of Music, University of Liverpool

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