



**SOCIETY FOR
DANCE RESEARCH**

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Tristram Hunt
Director
Board of Trustees
V&A Museum

London, 29 April 2021

Dear Dr Hunt,

We are writing to support the call for a consultation with collaborators and stakeholders external to the museum about the future of the Theatre & Performance department. We are a British association of dance researchers for whom access to the V&A collection and advice from its staff is essential. In alliance with an international coalition of theatre/performance scholarly associations and major theatre archives, we signed the letter to *The Times* on 25 March 2021, which you might have seen. It articulated the concerns of theatre and performance colleagues working in museums, libraries and universities around the world. We imagine that you have had many letters already from concerned individuals who share your regard for the outstanding collections you hold in trust and the knowledgeable staff that care for and interpret them.

We ask you and the Trustees to reconsider your decision to close the Theatre & Performance department and merge it with Furniture and Fashion. To do so overlooks the multi-faceted nature of the collections and the leading role the department plays internationally in developing best practice in archiving, curating and interpreting the intangible cultural heritage of the performing arts. As you know, UNESCO recognises theatre and performance as a discrete category of heritage and we ask you to follow its lead and to consult with fellow museum professionals, archivists and researchers on how best to preserve the department's expertise.

We are particularly concerned about the future of the dance collection. As an ephemeral art, any record of it (programmes, costumes, set designs, reviews, etc.) may turn out to be essential to understanding its essence and history. We fear that merging the Theatre and Performing collection along with Fashion and Furniture may entail a drastic reduction of the staff with the necessary knowledge to understand its unique nature and value. Please reconsider your plans and find an alternative solution that preserves the dance collection with the expert care and knowledge that it requires and deserves.

We look forward to hearing your response.

Yours sincerely,

The Executive Committee
The Society for Dance Research