



ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGO: 0001 Wednesday 29th January

Resilient UK orchestras earning 23% more from ticket sales and tours after emerging from decade of financial uncertainty

The UK's orchestral sector has emerged from a decade of financial uncertainty by harnessing vital public investment to perform more international concerts, reach new corners of the globe and develop a resilience which has seen them boost earnings from ticket sales and tours by 23%, a landmark survey reveals today.

The State of the UK's Orchestras 2019 report also shows how our orchestras last year played live to 4.25 million people in the UK and delivered an incredible range of other activities – from performances with children to education or training sessions for all ages - which involved almost 700,000 people.

The 2019 report, an update on key statistics for the orchestra sector last delivered in 2016, is based on a survey of members of the Association of British Orchestras (ABO) and will be launched in Manchester today [Wednesday] at the ABO's annual conference.

ABO director Mark Pemberton said: "Our orchestras have spent a decade tackling an incredibly challenging financial climate in which key sources of public funding have frozen or dried up altogether and they have had to make incredibly difficult decisions on the way.

"The 2019 survey shows how they have made the very most of what the funding they did receive to explore new markets and build their resilience and keep doing what they do best - giving hundreds of thousands of children, young people and adults the chance to hear and take part in the highest calibre music. Orchestra Tax Relief has also made an enormous difference, helping to rebuild confidence and restore growth to the sector."

Headline results from the survey show:

- 7% increase in the number of concert performances given by UK orchestras outside the UK compared to 2016
- UK orchestras had a total income of £148.6 million – the sum reflects a 23% increase in earned income (ticket sales and tours etc) as well as increases in overseas sponsorship and contributed income (donations and grants) since 2016. The total income figure is up 17% on the previous survey (after removing Orchestra Tax Relief which has been introduced since 2016).
- Our orchestras consolidated new markets in Far East countries with visits to Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore as well as Japan, South Korea and China
- Attendance at UK concerts and opera/ballet with orchestral performances is holding steady compared to 2016 with 4.25 million people attending UK concerts or other performances (1% rise on 2016)
- There are signs of growth amongst the sector’s ‘newest shoots’, with some newer chamber ensembles increasing the number of concert performances they gave.

Other survey findings show how our orchestras continue to extend their reach by delivering new recordings and broadcasts. In fact, 2019 saw a 15% increase in recordings for CD or paid audio download and an even bigger rise – 18% - in the number of recordings for radio/free audio streaming or download.

Mr Pemberton said: “These figures don’t just prove the incredible resilience of our orchestras. They point to something even more fundamental – the fact that through all these challenging times they have managed to sustain the sheer quality of what they do. Without this, these achievements would be impossible.”

Note to editors

1. The ABO represents the collective interests of professional orchestras, youth ensembles and the wider classical music industry throughout the UK. Its mission is to enable and support an innovative, collaborative and sustainable orchestral sector by providing advice, support, intelligence and information to the people who make British orchestras a global success.
2. The ABO surveyed the UK’s professional orchestras about their activities, audiences, incomes and musicians between July and November 2019. Responses were received from 44 of the 65 ABO members. Actual numbers for activities in the 2019 dataset are based on returns from all 44 orchestras, and finance numbers are based on responses from 38 orchestras. However, the % change figure (the difference in performance between 2019 and the last survey in 2016) is calculated slightly differently. For comparisons of non-financial data we have used the returns of 40 of the 44 orchestras which also completed the 2016 survey. Financial comparisons are based on the returns of a smaller core sample of 31 of the 44 orchestras.
3. A longer technical note for this survey is available on the [ABO website](#)
4. The ABO's primary event each year is its annual conference. It is a major gathering of the classical music industry in the UK, with over 350 delegates drawn from orchestras both from within the UK and abroad,

plus funding agencies, venues, agents, publishers and suppliers. We travel to a different UK city every year where we are hosted by orchestras based in that city.

The 2020 conference takes place in **Manchester/Salford** from **Wednesday 29 January - Friday 31 January** and is jointly hosted by the **BBC Philharmonic** and **The Hallé**. The last time the ABO conference took place in Manchester was in 2007. The theme of this year's conference is **2020 Vision**. As Arts Council England finalises its 10 Year Strategy for 2020-2030, and the other nations review their cultural strategies, the 2020 ABO Conference is an opportunity to look ahead to what the landscape for orchestras will be in 2030. From inclusion to programming, workforce to funding, broadcasting to the environment, what do orchestras need to do to guarantee a sustainable and vibrant future? Delegates will be hosted in venues across the city including BBC Quay House in Media City, Salford; at Chetham's School of Music, Hallé St Peters and St Michaels in Manchester; and will attend concerts given by the Able Orchestra in the BBC Philharmonic Studio, and the Hallé Orchestra at Bridgewater Hall. In a first for the Conference, we will also take delegates off site to visit a dementia project in action.

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