



ABO

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS

ABO News
Spring 2026

Welcome to the latest ABO News, showcasing the impactful and innovative work of ABO member orchestras across the country, on and off the stage.

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News from the ABO

#AnOrchestralInEverySchool Campaign

As part of the ABO's #AnOrchestralInEverySchool campaign, new research shows that access to live music making is the key to success in any career path. A survey found that people who followed a career in the sciences, education and finance found access to music education or playing an instrument in school helped build skills such as focus, teamwork and presenting in their careers.

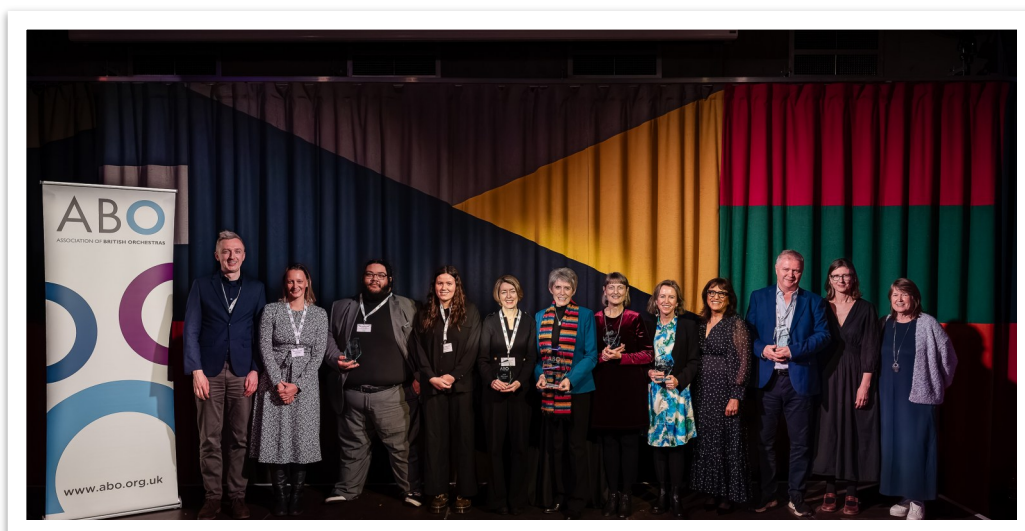
Data also found that 78% of 18-43 year old surveyed believe it is important that British orchestras provide music opportunities through youth orchestras and after-school programmes, with a high proportion of Gen Z (18-27 year olds) and Millennials (28-43 year olds) believing that listening to or participating in classical music has a positive impact on health and wellbeing in the community (72%).

ABO Annual Conference 2026

The ABO Annual Conference 2026, held from 4-6 February in London, brought together over 400 delegates from across the UK and international orchestral sector.

Hosted by the Southbank Centre and its six Resident Orchestras, the event convened industry leaders, funders, venues, and partners for three days of strategic discussion and collaboration. The programme explored key questions facing the sector, from the role of orchestras in creative health and music education to political engagement, devolution, digital visibility, and inclusive leadership.

Highlights included keynote sessions on organisational purpose, interactive discussions on artistic leadership, extensive networking opportunities through the ABO Marketplace, and sector-wide conversations on innovation and future challenges. The conference also featured a strong focus on policy engagement, with contributions from political and sector leaders, alongside a reception at No. 11 Downing Street. The event concluded with celebrations of sector excellence, including the [ABO and ABO Impact Awards](#), and a special "Classical Mixed Tape" performance.



Recipients of the 2026 ABO Award and ABO Impact Award © Julian Guidera



Orchestras in Education and Development

More than 10,700 children and teachers to experience live orchestral music for free from January as part of **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's** ['Explore the Orchestra' tours](#) in Portsmouth, Exeter, Bristol, and Poole. The Orchestra leads continuing professional development sessions for teachers in advance of the interactive events, along with resource materials to prepare pupils to get the most from the concerts.

Birmingham Contemporary Music Group is running a fun and practical CPD session exploring composing music in the primary school classroom as part of their award-winning [Listen Imagine Compose Primary project](#). This event is for primary music teachers, music leads and classroom teachers. No previous musical experience is necessary.

The **Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO)**, Cirrus Logic and the University of Glasgow have announced an [innovative new placement for a fifth-year student](#) on the University of Glasgow's Master of Engineering (MEng) course in Electronics with Music. This is a unique opportunity for students to assist the RSNO's in-house audio team on recordings of Scotland's National Orchestra for film, television, and classical release, while benefitting from the knowledge and expertise of Cirrus Logic's best-in-class engineers.

Sinfonia Cymru's [A Song to Change the World](#) school project is Inspired by British composer and suffragette, Dame Ethel Smyth, and her opera 'The Wreckers'. Ahead of the experience, a resource pack is available with two short songs to sing during the show, listening guides, a snapshot of Dame Ethel Smyth, the musicians and instruments in the show, and three additional class activities.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra © Corin Messer



2026 marks the 13th year of collaboration between King Edward's School and **Bath Philharmonia**. Their Gala Concert, [Voices of Change](#), will take place on 17 March and will see Bath Philharmonia, work 'side-by-side' with KES's talented orchestral musicians, in an imaginative and highly accessible programme.

In May, the **London Symphony Orchestra** will be performing to a sold out Jerwood Hall for a [Musical Storytelling concert](#). LSO musicians retell a children's story through music, offering younger children a chance to experience a live performance.

The **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's** [Notelets](#) concert series for children under 6 give children the freedom to dance, sing and learn about musical instruments for the first time. There is a chance to meet the musicians and have a go at some of the instruments after every concert, and a free 1 hour craft workshop before the concert is included.

Opera North's school partnership programme [In Harmony](#) now engages over 3,200 children and young people in full-time education every week, delivering an inclusive programme of music education and performance opportunities at four infant schools, eight primary schools, and one secondary school. Of these students, approximately 42% are in receipt of free school meals and 22% have special educational needs.

The **BBC Philharmonic Orchestra** has been welcoming KS4 and A Level school groups from the Greater Manchester and Blackburn areas to MediaCityUK studio to watch selected [rehearsals during the 2025 - 2026 season](#). Students have been able to observe the communication between conductor and musicians, and witness the detail that goes into the preparation of the live music.



Diverse & Inclusive Orchestras

The **Hallé** and Bridgewater Hall invite blind and visually impaired audience members to a free [touch tour](#) prior to some Hallé concerts. touch tours include an introductory description of the hall and its facilities, as well as the orchestral layout for that particular performance.

Scottish Opera's 2025/26 Season offers specially created [Access opera performances](#) of *La Bohème* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. These performances are aimed at anyone who is more comfortable at a shorter show, struggling to get to evening performances, living with dementia or Long COVID, or would simply benefit from the relaxed atmosphere.

The **Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO)** has launched a new community choir in Dundee dedicated to new parents and carers. [RSNO Buggy Choir Dundee](#) will give new parents/carers the chance to join together in a relaxed environment with their babies to partake in adult-focused group singing to boost emotional and mental wellbeing.

Applications to audition for one of the **National Open Youth Orchestra** [Regional Ensembles](#) are open for 11-25 year old disabled, neurodivergent and non-disabled musicians. Regional NOYO Ensembles offer an inclusive environment in which disabled and non-disabled musicians can develop their skills at an advanced level, without the barriers that can make progress difficult for young disabled musicians.

Manchester Collective's 2026 EXPERIMENTA programme is for music creators who may have been blocked by social and economic barriers to the classical music space. It exists to amplify underrepresented voices by providing room for artistic risk-taking and creative play. Find out more, and watch a video about the programme [here](#).

National Open Youth Orchestra





The Hallé's
touch tours

As part of International Women's Day, the **BBC Concert Orchestra** performed their **Pioneers of a Century** concert exploring three composers who have made an indelible mark on music recent and current Ruth Gipps, Peggy Glanville-Hicks and Cécile Marti. Find out more about the concert and these composers [here](#).

On 3 April, the **City of London Sinfonia** will be hosting their latest [Come and Sing! concert](#): a joyful, uplifting choral celebration that brings singers of all experience levels together for a day of shared music making led by CLS's exceptional musicians.

Chineke! Orchestra will be performing the original score by Ivor Novello-winning-artist Laura Mvula for An Evening with an Immigrant, poet and playwright Inua Ellams' powerful solo show telling his story commissioned and created especially for Multitudes festival. Read more [here](#)

Sinfonia Cymru's [Memo Mornings](#) is a series of relaxed one-hour concerts at Memo Arts Centre, Barry. Featuring small groups of three to five of the best young classical musicians, there are no formalities at these one-hour concerts, and you can enjoy tea and cake along with the performance.



City of London Sinfonia's
Come and Sing Concert



Green Orchestras

As part of a [celebration of David Attenborough's 100th birthday](#) on 8 May, the **BBC Concert Orchestra** will be performing original compositions from some of Attenborough's best-known landmark series in an event at London's Royal Albert Hall. The event will take audiences on a journey through a century of exploration and discovery in the natural world, featuring dramatic wildlife stories alongside spoken reflections from public figures and leading advocates for the natural world.

On the 12th and 13th of March **Britten Sinfonia** performed Mayrhofer's *Recycling Concerto*, in which percussionist Vivi Vassileva played an enormous battery of percussion made from repurposed rubbish. Watch the trailer [here](#)

Gregor A Mayrhofer's *Recycling Concerto*
performed by Britten Sinfonia



The **London Philharmonic Orchestra** is putting the spotlight on our planet with their [Harmony with Nature](#) concert series, which celebrates the beauty of the natural world through music, whilst exploring our place in protecting the planet. Each concert will also feature a pre-concert talk featuring some of today's leading scientists and storytellers invite us to discover a fresh perspective on this season's music.

Orchestras in Community & Healthcare

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra's [Resound programme](#) takes music beyond the concert hall and out into communities, from schools to hospitals, prisons to community venues. During 2026, over 15,000 people nationwide will benefit from engaging in at least 175 Resound sessions, and the RPO continues to drive creative partnerships with a network of 25 organisations.

Scottish Ensemble has been confirmed as one of the first organisations who will benefit from use of the McLellan Galleries during Glasgow Life's development of the Galleries into a new flexible cultural space for the city. Alongside Glasgow Film and Articulate Cultural Trust they will be bringing creative energy to the Galleries, helping to preserve its heritage and turn it into something new – a unique cultural offer for audiences and local communities. Read more [here](#)

On 24 April, **Manchester Camerata's** [The Beautiful Game](#) concert will feature familiar football anthems, chants and music inspired by the world's favourite sport. The performance will take place on pitch at the National Football Museum to celebrate the sport that proudly embodies the culture and identity of the cities and communities that shape our nation.

English Symphony Orchestra's [dementia friendly concerts](#) bring their talents to members of society who are living with dementia and other life debilitating conditions. The next concert is on 5 May and will feature the ESO Wind Quartet.

Scottish Chamber Orchestra will be marking the end of their 5 year residency in Craigmillar, Edinburgh with [Tapestry](#), a vibrant showcase of the Craigmillar community's creativity and heritage. The residency has included an annual schools' programme for nursery, primary and secondary school pupils and year-round creative projects for all members of the community.



Scottish Chamber Ensemble's ReConnect programme



ESO dementia friendly concert



Orchestras Making Change

BBC National Orchestra of Wales' musicians spent time in Regency House Care Home as part of a [Creative Music Making Programme](#). And have brought together under 5s and care home residents through music, play, and the arts with their [Intergenerational Music Making](#) project. Videos of both projects can be found [here](#).

[Reimagining the Classics](#) is **Streetwise Opera's** ambitious new project for 2025-2026, created in partnership with **Opera North** and **English Touring Opera**. Streetwise Opera has been working with people with lived experience of homelessness, collaborating with leading composers and directors in reinterpretations of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Pagliacci*. The performances will sit alongside major productions in Nottingham, Manchester and London in spring 2026.

[REST](#) is a work for chamber orchestra commissioned from composer Emily Levy for **City of London Sinfonia** which seeks to explore and present versions of the UK's response to migrants and refugees over the past 80 years. Attached to the commission are community projects with partners working to support refugees and migrants that will create safe space for individuals to share their stories and to co-create moments of music which reflect that lived experience.

Philharmonia's [Philharmonia debates...](#) series of free discussion sessions aims to big questions around music and identity. Experts from the music world and beyond give their take on each topic and then encourage discussion in small groups.

Scottish Ensemble have enhanced their collaboration with the cancer care charity Maggie's, which started in 2017, with announcement that Scottish Ensemble will be Maggie's Music for Wellbeing Partner. [Read more here](#)





Digital Orchestras

A film of the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's** [Breaking Bach](#) project is available to stream now. Part performance and part rehearsal room story created in collaboration with Marquee TV, the film follows the ensemble of young street dancers, the musicians of the OAE and choreographer Kim Brandstrup as they combine of the worlds of JS Bach and Hip Hop.

Aurora Orchestra's award-winning creative learning programme, [Aurora Classroom](#), provides free digital resources for schools, training for teachers, and a world-class programme of live activity for children and young people. Through their digital resources teachers can explore fully planned 10-week units of work or build their own music lessons from a library of hundreds of activities and audio excerpts.

Orchestras for All's online [Music Leadership Training](#) is a continuing professional development (CPD) programme that equips music leaders with the vital tools, strategies and practical conducting techniques they need to start or develop an instrumental ensemble in their school or local community.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's [Digital Concerts](#) are broadcast live on Wednesday evenings, filmed in full HD with multiple cameras and stereo sound. Concerts are presented by a team of presenters and are prefaced with informative artist interviews, and tickets include a downloadable complimentary programme and access to digital pre-concert talk.



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