

The Association of British Orchestras calls on Government to support 'An Orchestra in Every School' initiative

- ABO asks for nationwide access to live music and dedicated time in schools to live music making
- ABO pledges live music making experiences to over one million children and young people in the UK
- Reports show a sharp drop in Music A-Level entries and schools offering Music GCSE, alongside £161.4m 'black hole' in government funding for music education

Press Images [HERE](#)

8 May 2025: The Association of British Orchestras (ABO) has today announced the next phase of its new public engagement initiative 'An Orchestra in Every School' which aims to enable access for children and young people to live music making. As part of the initiative UK orchestras and ensembles, in collaboration with schools and music educators, will set out to deliver over a thousand live music making opportunities in 2025, with the aim of giving over one million children and young people the opportunity to experience the joy and power of live music, no matter their school resources, abilities or disability.

The ABO is calling on the Government to pledge its support for providing access to live music making for all children and young people. This pledge would take the form of a statutory minimum of two hours of active music making every week for all children and young people until the age of 16, and for all schools to have access to live music making.

A recent report from the Cultural Learning Alliance¹ found that, between 2010 and 2024, there was a **43 per cent fall** in the number of A level entries in Music, with **almost half (42%) of all secondary schools** no longer offering Music GCSE². Alongside this, a recent Demos report, commissioned by Music Mark found that the current government inherited a "black hole" in its music education budget, amounting to a **shortfall of £161.4m**³.

The Association of British Orchestras' Chief Executive, Judith Webster, said *"The sobering statistics found in recent research highlight why 'An Orchestra in Every School' is crucial. We know that making music as a group improves focus, enhances mood and strengthens social bonds⁴, and there is such a powerful emotion that comes from experiencing a live performance. That is why it's our aspiration for every school in the UK to either have an orchestra of its own - however they define that - or access to live music making..*

Findings show that opportunities for live music making have notable cognitive, emotional and social growth in children and young people⁵ and that is why more needs to be done.

¹ https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CLA-2025-Report-Card_AW.pdf

² <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf>

³ <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Demos-NPME-report.pdf?x48237>

⁴ <https://songdivision.com/oxytocin/>

⁵ <https://artisfoundation.org.uk/news/how-music-in-schools-boosts-child-development/>

We know firsthand from our member orchestras how impactful live performances can be for children and young people. We are committed to our ambitious target of supporting one million children and young people access opportunities to make live music; the government has said in the past that live music is a vital part of a child's education and we look forward to seeing their support during these formative school years.

If there is no live music in your school, you could contact an ABO member orchestra directly, ask the head teacher to connect with Music Hubs and Services, and find out if there are any musicians in your school community and could come into school. For more information about how to make those connections, We have compiled some resources that can be downloaded from [our website](#) to help people take action. There are so many different ways to get live music into schools and lots of different resources."

Barry Farrimond-Chuong MBE, CEO, Open Up Music said: *"Through our National Open Youth Orchestra and Open Orchestras programmes, we create regular opportunities for hundreds of young disabled students to make music each year. 'Orchestra' can sound formal, but at its heart, it's about belonging – a place where young people, often excluded elsewhere, can build confidence, form friendships, and share a love of music. Every young person should have the chance to play an instrument and be part of an orchestra – it can be truly life-changing."*

Nicholas John, Headteacher of Acland Burghley, said: *"Acland Burghley School is proud to be the home of the Orchestra in the Age of Enlightenment (OAE). Having the orchestra as an integral part of the school has been impactful on our students, who are growing and thriving as a result. Thanks to the OAE, our students have access to high quality experiences in music and other areas, and we have seen impact in GCSE music outcomes, student attendance and wellbeing, and increased extra-curricular and career related opportunities for students."*

Bridget Whyte, CEO, Music Mark, said: *"As the UK Association for Music Education supporting both schools and those that work with them, Music Mark is excited to support the ABO's new campaign. We are committed to facilitating the development and delivery of a great music education for all children and young people in and out of the classroom across the UK. Playing in and listening to live instrumental ensembles is a vital element of inspiring students to develop musically as well as encouraging collaboration. Every school should provide opportunities for young people to experience music making in ensembles and with their peers."*

Barbara Eifler, Chief Executive, Making Music, said *"Making Music is delighted to work with the Association of British Orchestras on this campaign. We have over 1,000 orchestras all over the country, in rural and urban communities, from Shetland to Penzance, in our membership, comprising tens of thousands of adult hobby musicians who are passionate about the enjoyment and benefits they have had throughout their lives from gaining access to live music-making in their childhood, usually at their school. They are therefore passionate about helping to make sure that the next generation also has such opportunities. Where there isn't a professional orchestra near a school, there is bound to be a leisure-time music group, and we encourage checking our website [Find-a-Group tool](#) to make a connection."*

Florence Lockheart, Editor, Classical Music Magazine, said *"Classical Music magazine is proud to support the ABO's #AnOrchestraInEverySchool initiative, not only for the clear benefits that collaborative music making brings to young people, but also to encourage the*

next

generation of professional musicians and preserve a future talent pipeline for the classical genre. Building an understanding from a young age that playing – and listening to – orchestral music is for everyone, regardless of background, also plays a vital part in building the classical audiences of tomorrow and securing a viable future for the sector."

ABO member orchestras have already been working with schools across the UK to support educators with the provision of live music making through workshops, training sessions and live performances, which encourages student engagement. Through their outreach, the ABO members demonstrate the accessibility and openness of orchestras, with many members of mixed ability enjoying live music making in a group environment.

'An Orchestra in Every School' is a national call to ensure access to high quality music education and creative subjects for all children and young people, investing in music education and skills development. The initiative is part of the ABO's #MusicThatMovesYou public campaign, in which was launched in May 2024 and highlights the value of UK orchestras in our everyday lives, cultural heritage, communities and economy.

Along with campaign partners [Classic FM](#), [Music Mark](#), [Live](#), [UK Music](#), [Musicians' Union](#), [Independent Society of Musicians](#), [Classical Music Magazine](#) and [Making Music](#), the ABO and its 200 member orchestras, ranging from small non-professional ensembles to some of the world's most recognised national orchestras, will share – and celebrate – the incredible work that UK orchestras do on and off the stage.

To find out more about how you can support 'An Orchestra in Every School', access the free toolkit, and find your nearest ABO member orchestra, please visit:
<https://abo.org.uk/what-we-do/championing/anorchestraineverschool>

For more information on the Association of British Orchestras' campaign, please contact Midas: hannah.bright@midas-group.com | amelia.knight@midas-group.com | henrietta.richardson@midas-group.com | (0)20 7361 7860

Follow the latest developments from the ABO via social media:
abo.org.uk | [Instagram](#) | [X](#) | [Facebook](#) |
[#AnOrchestraInEverySchool](#)

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Association of British Orchestras

The Association of British Orchestras is the national body representing the collective interest of professional orchestras, youth ensembles and the wider classical music industry throughout the UK. Their 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.

Classic FM

Classic FM is the UK's most popular classical music brand, reaching 4.7 million listeners every week. Classic FM's programmes are hosted by a mix of classical music experts and household names including Dan Walker, Alexander Armstrong, Jonathan Ross, Margherita Taylor, Myleene Klass, Aled Jones, Stephen Mangan, Alan Titchmarsh, Charlotte Hawkins, John Humphrys, Moira Stuart, Ritula Shah and Zeb Soanes. Since its launch in 1992, Classic FM has aimed to make classical music accessible and relevant to everyone and in doing so, introduce an entirely new audience to the genre.

ClassicFM.com is the UK's biggest classical music website and has 2.5 million unique monthly web and app users. Classic FM has 7.5 million combined social media followers. Classic FM is owned by Global. It is available across the UK on 100-102 FM, DAB+ digital radio and TV, on [Global Player](#) on your smart speaker, iOS or Android device and at ClassicFM.com. Source: *RAJAR / Ipsos-MORI / RSMB Q4 2023*.



Music Mark

Music Mark, the UK Association for Music Education, is a membership organisation, Subject Association, and an Arts Council England Investment Principles Support Organisation (IPSO) advocating for excellent musical learning in and out of school. It supports their members through training and resources, connects them with the wider Music Education network across the UK, and influences on their behalf at a national level. They champion a diverse, accessible, and government-supported music education provision to inspire and enrich the lives of all children and young people in the UK.



LIVE

LIVE (Live music Industry Venues & Entertainment) is the voice of the UK's live music and entertainment business. LIVE members are a federation of 16 live music industry associations representing 3,159 businesses, over 34,000 British artists and 2,000 backstage workers. LIVE works to ensure that the interests of live music in the UK are understood and communicated to Government, policymakers, regulators, the public and the wider music and entertainment industries.

LIVE was initially formed in response to the unprecedented pressure and devastation faced by the industry due to COVID-19 and is structured around four pillars: lobbying, economic analysis, messaging, and skills & diversity. Its work is driven by a series of sub committees on topics including festivals & outdoor events, venues, touring, people and sustainability.



UK Music

UK Music is the collective voice of the UK's world-leading music industry. We represent all sectors of our industry – bringing them together to collaborate, campaign, and champion music.

Musicians' Union



Musicians' Union

The MU is the trade union for UK musicians and represents over 34,000 musicians working in all sectors and genres of music. As well as negotiating on behalf of its members with all the major employers in the industry, the MU offers a range of services tailored for the self-employed by providing assistance for professional and student musicians of all ages.



Independent Society of Musicians

The Independent Society of Musicians (ISM) is the UK's professional body for musicians and a nationally recognised subject association for music education. Since 1882, we have been dedicated to promoting the importance of music and protecting the rights of those working in the music profession. We support over 11,000 members who work across all genres and disciplines with legal advice, comprehensive insurance, professional development and specialist services. The ISM is a wholly independent, non-profit making organisation.



Classical Music Magazine

Classical Music is the only dedicated magazine and website for the classical music

industry in the UK, with features, news and reviews for performers, agents, managers, promoters along with anyone with an interest in the music world. We provide unique insight into what's going on in the sector, with regular coverage of festivals, competitions, courses and concerts, as well as key career information for musicians and details of new appointments. You'll also find the latest job vacancies on our recruitment platform RhinegoldJobs.co.uk, from performing and administration roles, to teaching positions and conducting vacancies.

Classical Music has remained at the heart of the profession since its foundation in 1976 and continues to keep readers at the forefront of the latest developments in the industry.



Making Music

Making Music is the UK association for leisure-time music, with 4,000 music groups in membership, comprising around 228,000 hobby musicians. Making Music offers members practical support and resources, peer-to-peer connections and networking, and is the voice of the sector to policy makers and other stakeholders.