

## New research shows that access to live music making is the key to success in any career path

- A new survey has found that people who followed a career in the sciences, education and finance found it particularly beneficial to have access to music education in schools
- The research found that those who had access to music education or played an instrument in school reported that music built skills such as focus, teamwork and presenting in their careers
- But GCSE and A-Level Music entry data suggests that children and young people are not routinely offered access to these subjects, despite a growing demand <sup>1</sup>
- The ABO is calling on the Government to provide for nationwide access to live music and dedicated time in schools to live music making ahead of the Curriculum & Assessment Review (Autumn 2025)
- The ABO and its members pledge to offer live music making experiences to over one million children and young people in the UK in 2025



L-R Scottish Chamber Orchestra c. Stuart Armitt; Ulster Orchestra c. Ulster Orchestra

**22 September 2025, London.** The Association of British Orchestras (ABO) is highlighting the breadth of career opportunities for those studying music at school to raise awareness of the social and economic impact music education has on the UK and its industries. As part of the #AnOrchestraInEverySchool initiative, the ABO and its members are reaching out to children & young people who will be choosing their GCSE and A-Level subjects for the 2026 academic year and beyond, to show how impactful taking part in live music can be regardless of your chosen profession.

A recent survey conducted by Making Music in collaboration with the ABO<sup>2</sup> found that many transferable skills including practice and perseverance (89%), focus and concentration (87%) and teamwork and collaboration (85%) proved vital in respondents' career paths. Over three quarters (76%) of those surveyed found that performance and presentation were essential skills that they developed through music education, with one respondent saying *"I benefited enormously from getting over stage fright at a young enough age to make a difference, as otherwise I would have been too shy to be a doctor"*.

The research also found that:

- Close to half (48%) of respondents use the transferable skills developed through music education in non-music or STEM<sup>3</sup> professions, while 28% found their transferable skills valuable

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ism.org/news/modest-recovery-in-gcse-music-entries/>

<sup>2</sup> Making Music & the Association of British Orchestras, 'Music education - Skills for work', 900 respondents aged 18+ (September 2025)

<sup>3</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

in their STEM career. Feedback from respondents showed that the benefits of access to live music making from a young age offered *“a more rounded human experience [...] helping with cognition, social skills and teamwork, physical awareness and proprioception [a strong sense of self-movement].”*

- 79% respondents play in an ensemble, orchestra or band, while 72% regularly go to concerts and 78% listen to music at home – many of those surveyed believed that having access to live music in their life has helped them achieve a positive work-life balance.
- 14% of respondents have gone on to have a career in healthcare, and 20.5% in education. The most common sectors in which respondents worked were financial services, medicine (including consultants and specialists), emergency services and religion..
- Of those surveyed, 37% studied Music to A-Level qualification or equivalent (16+), while a third (32%) studied music education in secondary school (11-16) without formal assessment. Just 2% had access to live music making during primary school years only (4-11). Several respondents have fond memories of their music education at a young age, with one saying *“Absolutely everything I do in my job has been inspired by my amazing primary school music experience. I have modelled my practice on all my experiences and role models in school”*.

A second survey of 2000 adults, conducted by the Orchestra in the Age of Enlightenment and Opinium, revealed that 64% of respondents believe that cutting arts in schools harms children’s confidence and communication, with almost half (45%) describing the arts as one of the most valuable parts of their school experience, a figure climbing to 61% for Gen Z<sup>4</sup>.

Sophie Lewis, Chair, the Association of British Orchestras, says: *“There are numerous benefits to having access to live music making experiences from a young age, whether that is academic achievements, developing confidence, creativity and improvements to mental and physical wellbeing”*<sup>5</sup>.

*“We know there is significant social and economic value to offering music education in schools – the skills developed benefit not only for the UK music industry<sup>6</sup> but for all industries. The Making Music data shows that live music making in all its forms develops a range of skills that can be utilised in any career path – as the data shows, professions range from a cardiovascular surgeon or a software engineer to a police officer or train driver. It is vital that children and young people have the opportunity to consider music education and for schools to provide access to necessary resources for the development of future generations. We look forward to the forthcoming Curriculum & Assessment Review and hope to see recommendations for a change to accountability measures and to assessment, and a mandatory entitlement to studying music.”*

Laura Baxter, Creative Learning Director, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, says: *“Music touches hearts and minds, it celebrates and challenges, and it connects and moves us. Access to high-quality music education, and all the knowledge, joy and connection that brings, opens doors that help children and young people move from school into the world around them and to do so confidently, creatively and in community with others.”*

Giles Wilmore, Director of Community, Manchester Camerata, says: *“For more than ten years, Manchester Camerata has worked closely with Webster Primary School to bring live music-making into the classroom – helping embed creative music making across the curriculum. We work with pupils from Key Stage 2 up to Key Stage 4 and every project is designed to fit with the school curriculum. Pupils*

<sup>4</sup> <https://oae.co.uk/an-urgent-call-to-put-creativity-back-at-the-heart-of-education/>

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

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/TIM-Report-2024-reduced.pdf>

*immerse themselves in a theme - ranging from the environment to the Second World War and learn how to create lyrics, melodies and harmonies to form their own songs. All of this is guided by one of our resident composer and Manchester Camerata musicians.*

*“The response from pupils and teachers has been fantastic. We see children grow in confidence, focus and teamwork and many tell us how much they look forward to music sessions. Some of the older students have even said the workshops have encouraged them to think about choosing Music as a GCSE option – hopefully stating them on their career in the arts.”*

Lucy McCullagh, Head of Community Engagement and Grants, Ulster Orchestra, says: *“We work with partners to try to widen access to music for everyone, and to challenge the perception that you can only participate if you pass a test or are deemed 'musical' by a teacher. Our Crescendo project works with over 1,000 children aged 4-11 in 4 schools and its non-selective, whole-school ethos is cited by teachers and families as a source of pride within the wider community.*

*“The teachers we work with believe the Crescendo project also means that students who would never have dreamt of being able to afford this opportunity for live music making, would continue learning new skills and increasing in confidence. This also expands their opportunities at GCSE, as they can now choose GCSE Music, which otherwise would not have been the case as they would not have been able to meet the performance skills criteria.”*

Rebeka Peake, Senior Producer, Programmes and Engagement, Wales National Opera says: *“The Curriculum for Wales includes the Expressive Arts as a statutory area which gives it the much-needed gravitas it deserves. It also puts the creative process at the heart of delivery which we believe, in tandem with the National Music Service Wales, will help support and encourage more meaningful opportunities for live music making in schools. Our projects span a variety of focuses, from creative composition and musical storytelling, to side-by-side opportunities with our orchestra for young instrumentalists, and free symphonic concerts for school pupils. This Autumn, WNO’s annual Schools Concerts are specifically designed to support the Curriculum for Wales and National Curriculum in England.*

*“The benefits of engaging in music-making are far-reaching, teachers and pupils consistently report not only growth in musical skills and knowledge, but also notable improvements in confidence, literacy, and expressive language, particularly through our singing and composition projects. Enhanced social engagement is another key outcome, with music often acting as a catalyst for connection and collaboration among students.”*

The growth in the number of GCSE Music entries over the last two years shows that there is increasing demand for music education – however, a lack of resources in schools means that children and young people rely on finding alternate ways to access live music making, through online tutorials or self study. The State of the Arts report, published by Campaign for the Arts and University of Warwick in 2024, found that funding pressures and performance measures like the ‘EBacc’ (introduced in 2010) and ‘Progress 8’ (introduced in 2016), have contributed to a widespread marginalisation of the arts in English state-funded secondary schools. The Labour Government has pledged to address this as part of the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review<sup>7</sup>.

Through the #AnOrchestraInEverySchool initiative, the ABO and its members have pledged to deliver over a thousand live music making opportunities in 2025, with the aim of giving over one million

<sup>7</sup> Campaign for the Arts & University of Warwick, The State of the Arts, Campaign for the Arts & Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, July 2024  
<https://www.campaignforthearts.org/reports/the-state-of-the-arts/>

children and young people the opportunity to experience the joy and power of live music, no matter their school resources, abilities or disability. These activities take the form of workshops, training sessions and live performances, all of which encourage student engagement.

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

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#### Notes to editors

Images are available [here](#)

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



#### **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.



#### **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.

For more information on Making Music, visit <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/>

# CLASSIC *f*M

## 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

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.