

## ABO Conference, Bristol Beacon, Thursday 25 January 2024

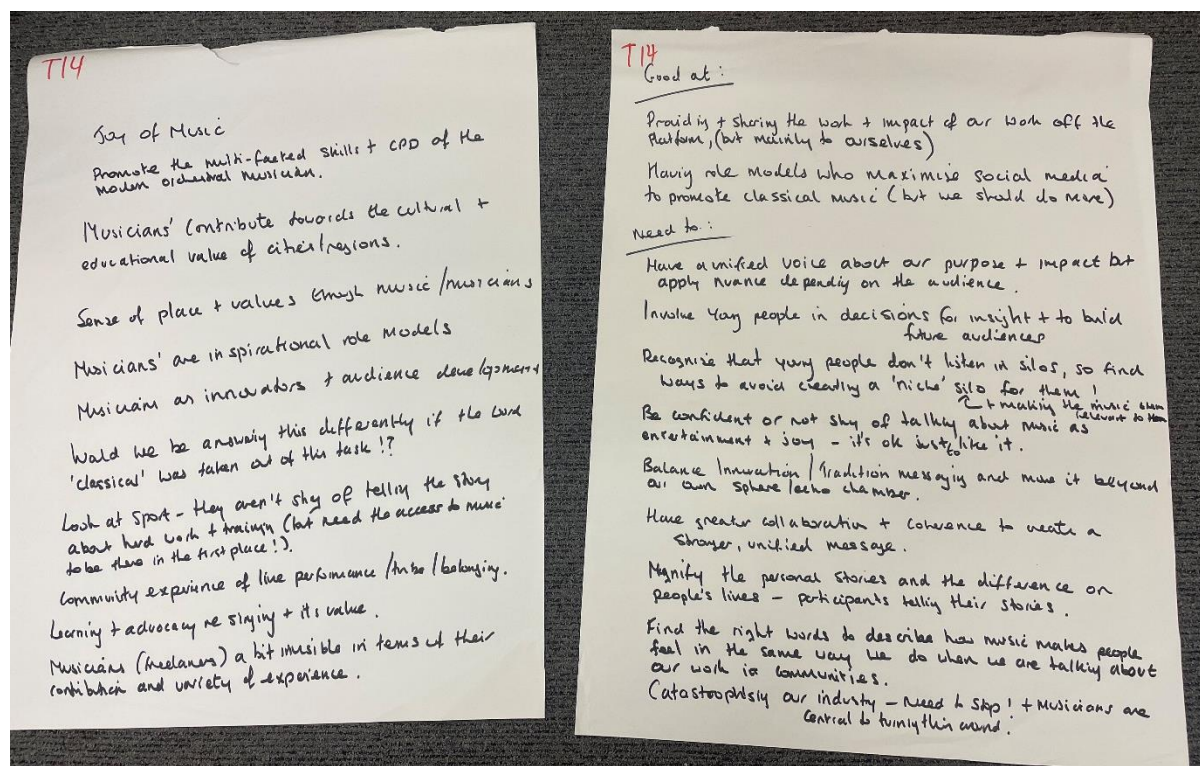
### DEEP DIVE: Building the narrative for classical music

It's time to speak out like never before. Classical music is experiencing existential cutbacks that others feel are justified. How do we turn the tide? Advocacy isn't just about lobbying. It's how we all talk about and account for classical music in everything we do. As the ABO embarks on its new advocacy campaign, this deep dive invites you to discuss what's working in the current classical narrative and what's not. Several guest speakers will pose initial provocations, laying bare the complexities and pitfalls of advocating for classical music today. Then it's over to you: together we will reflect on our current collective approach, define the values of music we need to emphasise better, and devise essential next steps to build the best possible case for the music we love.

Hosted by **James Murphy, Chief Executive, Royal Philharmonic Society** with provocations from **Dr Hannah French, Academic and BBC Radio 3 presenter; Amina Hussain, Principal Flute, Manchester Camerata, and Jonathan Deakin, Parter, McKinsey & Company.**

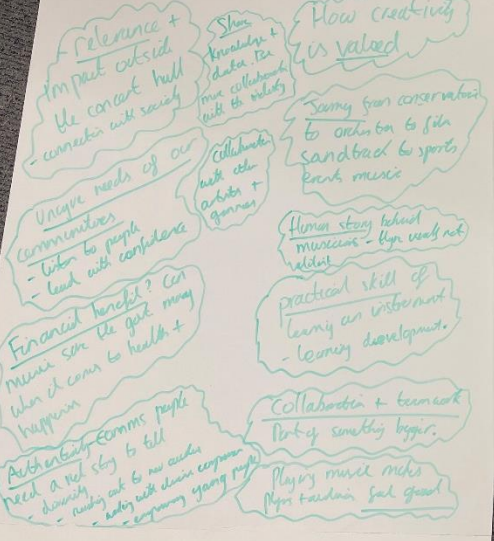
#### Questions addressed in these sheets:

1. How can we build the narrative we need for classical music to thrive?
2. What do you feel are our strengths in advocating and communicating about classical music?
3. Think big: what do you feel classical music and musicians bring to society that we are not communicating as well as we might?
4. Action time: to better amplify all the values we've defined in the previous question, what do you feel we could do:
  - a) each as individuals
  - b) within our organisations
  - c) together as a sector ...?

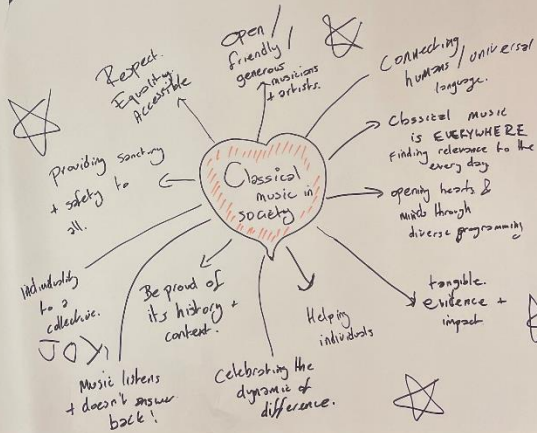


T5

# Society



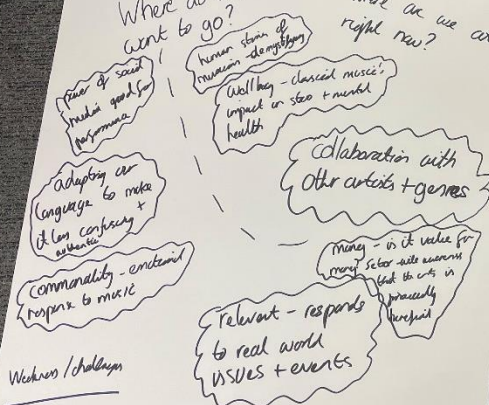
T11



T5

Where do we want to go?

Where are we at right now?



Wishes / challenges

- differing pressures - established + new audiences
- gatekeepers
- data capture

Strengths ☺

Weaknesses ☹

- when we DO take risks (Diversity)
- POWER of music
- work is good, but...
- hard to find / define strengths
- easier to talk about negative
- we take strengths for granted
- we over-complicate our stories, our LANGUAGE
- we don't tell it in a PUNCHY / CLEAR way
- barriers for audiences / young people
- this applies to presentation / composition / programming
- Press is so local (CLASSICAL LONDON)
- Inherited structures perpetuated by history

T11

① TL

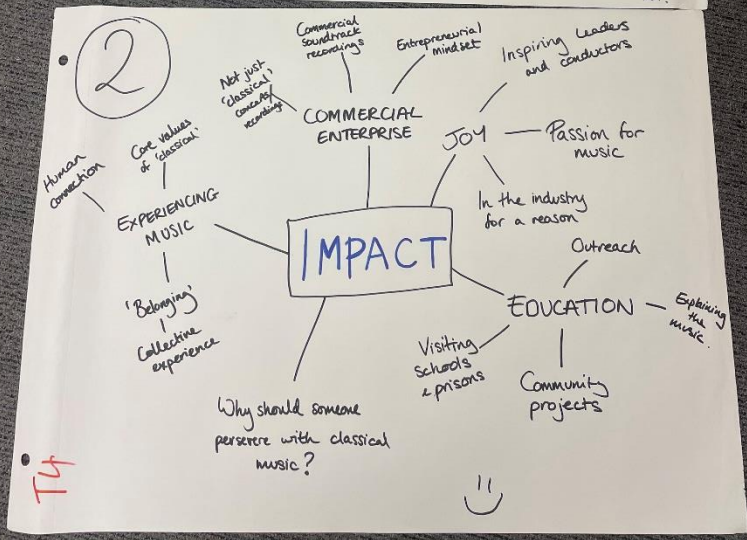
- + 'Relaxed concerts'
- + Pre-concert talks
- + 'Moments' - personal thoughts on the music
- + Digital videos on social to educate
- + Bringing the audience into the music
  - needs more work though!

- Don't ruin it for anyone else
- Intimidating concerts
- Clear communication on dress code, even if it is an 'occasion'
- Awareness that music is still being composed now.
- Apologetic on rules, rather than explaining them (unlike musicals/cinema).

:) SYMPHONIC?

CLASSICAL

Live  
Orchestral  
MUSIC



CONV #2  
TABLE 1

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC IS  
- ALREADY THE SOUNDTRACK TO OUR LIVES  
- FOR EVERYONE.  
- ON YOUR DOORSTEP...  
- AN IMMERSIVE LIVE EXPERIENCE  
- A BUCKET-LIST MOMENT... AND MORE.

WERE MORE  
INTEGRATED  
AND PRESENT  
THAN SOCIETY  
REALIZES

'CLASSICAL'  
IS TOO DIVISIVE.  
CLASSICAL IS A  
SOUND...

IMMERSIVE  
EXPERIENCES,  
RELATED FEELINGS.

COMMUNIQUE  
THE DANCE  
OF INSTRUMENTS

CLASSICAL MUSIC  
IS THE SOUNDTRACK  
TO OUR LIVES...

RPO RESEARCH ON  
ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.  
CALMING/  
HEALTHY/  
RELATIONSHIPS.

'COLLECTIVE VOICE'  
IS  
'COMPETITIVE'

BUCKET-LIST...

GENERATIONAL  
DIFFERENCES  
IN CLASSICAL  
MUSIC!

TOO MUCH  
COMMITMENT/INVESTMENT  
NOT A SENSE OF APPROACH.  
- CONSIDERING THE  
MAGIC OF LIVE

USING EVIDENCE  
SHOWS BETTER  
(as health)

BEING MORE OPEN  
KEEPING POSITIVE  
DEMONSTRATING IMPACT  
ADVOCATING TOGETHER.

DISCOUNT  
PROBLEMS  
LISTENERS  
INTERESTERS  
COME IT MATTER?  
MEMBERS

+ REPRESENTING  
+ AFFORDABILITY

- PROBSON
- DAVID (MILKMAN)
- ANDREW (GARDNER)
- MARCO (LISA)
- ANTHONY (HARRIS)
- HELEN (BBC PLAN)
- CAROL
- CHRISTOPHER (BBC)
- WISLA (LISA)
- OSCAR (MEL)
- DAVID (HELEN)
- ADAM (GARY)
- HELEN (BBC PLAN)

+ COLLABORATION  
+ ARTISTS AS  
ADVOCATES

SOCIAL  
+ MEDIA  
(Anna Lapwood)

T2

DES APPRECIATION OF 'CLASSICAL' MUSIC REQUIRE EDUCATION?

ARE WE TOO NAIVE GAINING WHEN CONSIDERING THE NOTION OF 'CLASSICAL' MUSIC?

NOTION OF 'CRAZINESS' - IS THIS HELPER?

FOCUS ON GIVING OUT RATHER THAN LISTENING TO THE AUDIENCE.

HOW DO WE TAP INTO VERY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF MUSIC?

CELEBRATE THE SKILL LEVEL INVOLVED - THIS IS IMPRESSIVE! DO WE PRODUCE TOO MUCH?

DO WE CAPTURE THESE MOMENTS OF INSPIRATION/TRANSFORMATION?

DO WE TRUST ARTISTS TO EXPLORE?

WHAT ARE THE RISKS IN TO WHAT CAN BE A DIVERGENT/DIFFICULT SUBJECT? TOO LONG?

### CONVERSATION 1

IS THERE ENOUGH TIME & SPACE ALLOWED FOR ARTIST/AUDIENCE EXCHANGE?

STRENGTH = PLAYERS FALLING DOWN = NOT GIVING THEM THE TOOLS TO DO IT.

WHAT MAKES AN 'EVENT'? WHY MAKE THE EFFORT?

DO WE MORE OFTEN TRY TO IMPART KNOWLEDGE THAN CONNECT EMOTIONALLY?

WHAT BRINGS THE 'WIN' FACTOR?

STRENGTH = BRILLIANCE/YOUTH & NEW TALENT FALLING DOWN = NOT ENOUGH OF IT!

T2

BRING BACK THE FUN?

BREAKING DOWN CULTURAL BARRIERS - E.G. 'SEASON' CONCEPTS IS COMMERCIAL CONCERTS ETC.

HOW DO WE RECONSTRUCT THE PERSONALITY/CONTEXT OF THE MUSIC IN A NON-ACADEMIC WAY?

MUSICIANS & MUSIC BRING: - CURIOSITY - COMMUNITY - CONNECTION

THE PROBABLY OF OUR MUSICIANS IS NOT CELEBRATED - THEY CAN FEEL THEIR HANDS TO ALL SORTS OF MUSIC.

LEAVING COMPOSERS - HOW DO WE BRING VISIBILITY OF THEM?

VOICES IN INDUSTRY MIGHT SAY 'MAYBE PUBLIC FIGURES THEY BEEN NOT 'PROPER'.

### CONVERSATION 2

MOVEMENT! MUSICIANS & AUDIENCE BE PHYSICALLY NERVOUS!

IS SPORT A PART OF THE NATIONAL PSYCHE?

BACK TO EDUCATION - WE'VE SEEN IT & DANCE & SPORT - NOT MUSIC!

WHERE ARE THE PERSONALITIES IN CLASSICAL MUSIC?

WHAT ARE MUSICIANS DEMONSTRATING? - STRENGTH - INTEGRITY - DISCIPLINE

WHY IS THIS MUSIC RELEVANT TO MY LIFE?

BUT CLASSICAL MUSIC NOT SPORT

FEELING OF BELONGING TO P. CLUBS/TEAM.

IS IT THE WORK OF 'WINNERS' & 'LOSERS'?

COMPARISON TO OLYMPIANS

WHY IS MUSICIANSHIP / ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT NOT CELEBRATED LIKE THIS?

NOTION OF 'ELITE' MUSICIANS VS AUDIENCE

CONVERSATION 1 TABLE 10

"Classical" music  
↳ Industry & genre?

This is just the "Business"

WHAT IS SUCCESS?  
+ WHOSE DEFINITION?

Use tools of advocacy  
↳ Inform the music will change lives

"Trad" & Core arias can be brought along with change  
New + core arias can co-exist

BBCSO still

Self-interest of our advocacy?  
↳ too consumed by internal issues...?

Advertising concerts ⇒ LCO  
↳ Update details of composers/pieces

Delivers experience first & foremost

Packaging gives context & relevance

"Opera gala" ← Not always good  
↳ less success!

Success! → new arias

Strengths 73

Education work in schools

More than just a platform work

Ability to spread message with digital <sup>transparency</sup> <sup>through</sup> <sup>marketing</sup> <sup>strategy</sup>

Passing on of music through conversations

Generational change see non platform in a better light

Understand audiences through focus groups

Be clear about the target music

Strong first timers coming though - something is working in communication - is it digital?

Use of other art forms to bring people in? Story helps more than the music

Collaborations with other venues - museums - libraries

Stronger mentoring More relevant

How can we be better?

Linkage between radio & orchestras about messaging

Better communication regarding research being carried out by Radio3

Lack of knowledge re classical music

Sharing what is working across organisations?

What is working regionally? Can that be replicated?

How do we get out of our silos?

Are we competing enough with other music genres?

How

STRENGTHS

STORYTELLING EXCELLENCE

HAVING BREADTH

HAVING CONTENT/RESOURCE

EDUCATION TRADITION

FALLING SHORT

"EXCELLENCE" - ELITIST - REMOVING THE OBSTACLE

"CLASSICAL" LABEL

NOT DESCRIBING BREADTH → EMOTION

CONVERSATION 2 TABLE 10

Quality <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>music</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>issue</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>brand</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>best</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>best</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>best</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>best</sup>

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Need to control what we can do it well with experience

Awareness of world-class/jazz

Value (£) of classical music  
↳ + value will bring to lives

Ask MORE QUESTIONS!

Why do audiences think they don't come?

What are barriers?

What do people want? - of prog - of perf

Separate out access + preference/taste

This music is everywhere

Why doesn't some ppl aware of it/engaged?

Where's the dialogue?

What does each ensemble bring to the party that's distinctive?

Everyone trying to do the same... (ACE influence?)

Stop trying to push one genre above another

ALL music is great music

We're not embracing popularity where it exists

That ppl are already consuming it

We communicated well enough

Social awareness

much can be done from time to time

1/2

CIVIC ROLE OF ARTS ORGS  
CONFIDENCE IN ART FORM  
MUSIC & HEALTH  
↳ CONSCIOUS CHOICE

STORYTELLING & EMOTION  
FUN & ENTERTAINMENT  
AS A SIDE EFFECT/WELLBEING

HISTORY  
JOURNEY IN DURATION  
EXPERIENCE

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE  
- NOTICED SINCE COVID  
WHETHER CONDUCTOR TAKES TO AUDIENCE

CREATING EMPATHY  
GETTING SOMEONE THROUGH  
THE DOOR TO HAVE A  
TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE  
\*THERE IS NO DOOR  
WE DON'T MAKE THE DISTINCTION  
WITH LIVE

THEY ARE PEOPLE  
NOT SUPERHEROES  
YOU COULD BE  
ONE TOO!

HOW DO WE BREAK  
DOWN THE BARRIER?

NOT TELLING THE STORY  
IT'S EASY TO HIDE  
~~TRAINING~~  
SHOULD WE ASK MORE  
IN RECRUITING  
BE MORE ANNA WOOD

STRENGTHS

When under pressure  
we really pull together  
and shout loudly

Good at communicating  
joy - some people are  
good at this

There's real power in  
the collective expression of  
what we do.

Be pro-actively positive  
and everyone must do  
it for it to have the  
impact it can have

OUR FOCUS  
SHOULD BE:

we are actually  
good at talking to  
our audiences!  
be confident!

WEAKNESSES

Negative tone of all  
that we say and are  
public about.

Media only seem to  
want negative stories  
↳ find different channels  
↳ tell the human story

Too inward looking  
Measure our value  
How?

No single represent-  
ative  
body or narrative

Table 13

Value of outreach - we do well.  
We have data but don't use it enough.  
Soft power of music  
Music is a tool for comms. Audience quotes

Room for improvement

Value of music itself, not just its use.

More data + the right data (testimonials  
are useful)  
"data champions"

Harder to communicate value of on-stage  
work

Need to link on-stage + outreach/access work  
more.

Follow up on audiences for soundback events  
+ convert to other events 'games/movies'

Marketing focused more on selling tickets -  
could link w/ artistic planning more

Overall mission/strategy not siloes.

Data needed re mental health impact

Venue data crucial - can't get it!  
why its useful to venues too

Table 13

Building a community thru  
music

link to leisure  
time music → advocates!  
making!

they are our  
advocates!

role of music  
& creativity in  
preventing understanding  
problem solving

Celebrate  
heritage  
purity of  
ensembles +  
specialisms.

We're friendly +  
welcoming but that's  
not coming across.

rethink programming  
+ presentation. Disrupt  
the (or) bourgeois model.

engage musicians in  
shaping new approaches.

↳ Concert formats - 2 hour  
formats. Think back to  
lockdown innovations.

Flexibility! + business model.  
= rethink.

less prone to  
music unique  
to human spirit v AI (database).

Musicians' own  
creativity - 15a in  
so city. 'Active  
Citizenship'. New  
answer for music education  
- conservatoires.

Question assumptions  
& constructs behind  
venues + promotion.

T16

## Narrative

### Doing well

- the power of big moments 'Proms, Panto etc'
- the Branch that have a 'whole world' vision
  - consistent comm that are human
  - voices from the stage
  - communicating the whole experience

### Doing Better?

- more need for authentic voices
- more effort inviting people in
- ally our voice to what is working well in the sector of theatre

T16

## Big things.

T16

- Data.
- not good enough at talking about the whole experience.
  - but not just with words → video → other criteria
  - an 'event'
- meditative thing - whole hall breathing together.
  - but its not like this for every one - shouldn't assume.
- Anna Lapwood - drawing people in.
  - social - conversation
  - warmth / human - celebrate
- mindfulness - explore more.
- A 'moment' every night of the week -
- Does always need to 'prove' benefit ~~strongly~~ the conversation ~~about~~ too far.
- Health/Education -

T6

## WHAT WE BRING TO SOCIETY

- soft skills, listening
- connection
- partnerships
- soft power
- place making, community building
- emotion
- excellence
- A communal experience, being as one
- actions
- entertainment!
- international links
- expertise, skill
- opportunity → happier, healthier, fairer
- surprise!
- cultural dialogue
- economic benefit
- good value to audiences!
- Life changing experiences that you don't have to understand
- identity/tribe
- wellbeing
- family events

## DIFFICULTIES

- Answering 'is this for me?'
- Overcoming elitism
- Being 'apologetic'
- Feeling like an imposter
- Not knowing 'rules' of concert-going

T6

## STRENGTHS

- Taking pride

- Music itself!
- Education / those working in it
- Passion, excitement (jaded!)
- Tradition, ritual
- Quality. Willingness to make things happen
- We do brilliant work!
- Individual feedback
- Looking onwards, listening, responding to societal change
- Music being a catalyst, provoking
- Provocation!
- Knowing the communities we serve
- Adapting to change, being flexible

## WEAKNESSES

- Feeling jaded, worn down.
- Doubt. Difficult conditions
- Being 'elitist'
- We need to celebrate what we do!
- Social media, filming = mass communication
- Live events
- Accessibility
- Feeling / depicting emotions



**T7**

COMMUNITY AND ADVOCACY  
 WORKING TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN RESOURCES

Listen and communicate!

accurate medical messaging  
 pay fairly  
 TALK TO THE MU

Can negotiate with good skills  
 AND TRAINING NEEDS  
 KNOWLEDGE OF SPACE

CONSIDER NEURODIVERSITY AS A BARRIER TO COMMUNITY DELIVERY FOR SOME MUSICIANS

QUALITY OF PRODUCT IS A STRENGTH

Abandon Slipped & develop a progressive discussion forum for music.

Contract flexibility

Acknowledge Sessions, help musicians to contribute ideas. Make paid time available for this (esp. freelancers)

**CONVERSATION 2**

Providing a strong freelance pool.

They bring a diversity to communities around the nations.

'Keyworkers' and ensuring the necessity of Art.

Whether professional or as a form of recreation, music making provides a communication channel and inclusive setting.

A way of expression for neurodiverse + helps self-esteem.

Art can be thought provoking and uncomfortable.

How music making compliments health care - mental/physical. The therapeutic nature of it.

Music brings people together that transcends belief/politics/day-to-day grind.

A shared experience with others.

We need to celebrate the joy of music making.

With burnout + cuts we are jaded and take it for granted.

Music is undrive and makes people feel.

Good music-making is good music-making Full stop. Irrelevant of genre or title.

**T7**

Music communicates the human experience. FEEL SOMETHING! We bring excitement.

What does classical music + musicians bring to society?

Support of audience + students

De mystify our buildings + what we do in them.

De mystify w/ our musicians.

make our space omniwbts space. WELCOME.

related with project - education - contact - musicians - versatility of

children in classical music

connecting in younger life

↳ impactful moment + emotional response

access -??

↳ tip, 18 - telling the story + what's happening on the concert platform

**T8** Strengths

Digital

Reaching people where they are

Children in Classical music

connecting in younger life

↳ impactful moment + emotional response

access -??

↳ tip, 18 - telling the story + what's happening on the concert platform

Are we the right people to put the message out to those who are outside of the sector?

Orchestral vs. Classical

↳ What's classical music's pants?? Why aren't we championing this?

Is antipathy to our sector public or just pay/makers?

Who are we addressing to?

Why do we feel we need to advocate?

Why are we special?

How do we do passion without preaching?

we rely on an audience to tell our story

↳ experiment with audience reception format

What brings people into the room?

sector competitiveness - e.g. for funding - with other genres

operational snobbishness

operational barriers

Classical term = limiting

Telling the story re what's happening on the concert platform

Sense of exclusion

Music saved my life - how?

Falling Short

What do we bring to Society to shout more loudly about?

Fun - Joy

Communicate how - guidance of how to experience classical music e.g. what to wear - how do I fit in?

when does a musician feel fulfilled? Celebrate the human response

EXPERIENCE - not just listening

Time for yourself

Authenticity

Not just a listening experience - by performance element - a cognitively theatrical experience

Where we're unique:

- we're present in people's everyday lives - what's their reality -
- game
- TV + Film
- milestone events

Imagine a life without classical music

Personalties

- how do we connect with individual virtuosity
- lots of research about live experience
- what's the aim? - to get people in front of orchestras & in whatever format

Community with other live experience - we're no different!

Space for all

Replicate methods used at specific events to connect e.g. screen close ups

What can we do?

use clear, bold, easy, simple language

Pinus Music Platform - how the word & what we take for granted

Talk to our audiences more - especially young generation

- Embrace Amateur music making passion
- safe, progressive online discussion forum
- All opinions are valid - Don't tell people what they should think
- Think about people more than music
- Make comedy YouTube
- Translating sneezes
- Make internal cultures more inclusive - our values - will lead to more diverse audiences
- create spaces where musicians can thrive
- Share insights & insight with ADO
- Share positive language re our impact + value
- See past the challenge content
- Don't have an ambition + expectations for the sector
- Be fearless to make changes we need to

Express Joy of music

- Reason to create being surprise audiences
- Share session notes + content with members

Write us on the sector

Be careful re classical music language

Use positive language re our impact + value

See past the challenge content

Don't have an ambition + expectations for the sector

Be fearless to make changes we need to

Not good at: crossover between going to a show or going to see an art form

promoting the experience of when you hear classical music

How do we connect with the orchestra - passionate about

Make it fun

Are we too close to this that we don't realise its power?

We are immune to the experience?

Eternity for younger people

Live vs radio - different experience

How are players actually doing this?

Connection between players working together - spectacular - can't be captured by radio

Non UK orchestras show affection to each other post concert

See this emotion with youth orchestras

Sharing our emotions - audience of orchestras - inhibited by expectation of what is expected.

Asked about by opera not being amplified

Players talking about music.

Society asks the orchestras etc. - this is yours

Connection with the person by providing a prior relationship through LCS

You have come to us. - you value us through LCS

Being accessible.

Opera + Ballet - live music - do people notice that not an option anymore to have the orchestra?

pit orchestras

We are value for money !!

Negatives

The Economic impact of what we do - not gathering the evidence, not knowing, guessing - but the value is there

Should be doing proper research to give a stronger argument

Need this type of knowledge within organisations.

Is this regressive? economic value vs intrinsic value

Comparison cited re environments - moved into economic

Is this how we persuade government?

Importing the Evaluation - how can we better be using as an industry standard?

Touring - what is the social & economic value you bring?

Standardising approaches to community music