



## ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS CONFERENCE

**MANCHESTER & SALFORD, 29-31 JANUARY 2020**

*CONFERENCE THEME '2020 VISION' TO FOCUS ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & SOCIAL CARE OVER THE NEXT DECADE*

The annual **Association of British Orchestras (ABO) Conference**, the UK's leading classical music forum takes place in venues across Manchester and Salford this week (29-31 January).

Jointly hosted by the **BBC Philharmonic** and **The Hallé**, with **Classic FM** as Principal Media Partner, **Classical Music** as Print Media Partner, and **Help Musicians** as Charity Partner, the 2020 conference will bring together delegates from all areas of the sector to explore the key issues facing the UK's classical music industry today and in the future. The annual **ABO/Classical Music Awards** will also take place, presented for the first time in partnership with **BBC Radio 3** at MediaCityUK, recognising excellence in the fields of orchestral, concert hall and artist management.

Using Arts Council England's 10 Year Strategy for 2020-2030 as a springboard for discussion, the conference's theme is **2020 Vision**. 400 delegates from the UK and abroad will be asked to look ahead to the next 10 years and to imagine the challenges and opportunities orchestras will be facing in 2030. Topics will range from diversity in the workplace and inclusive practice to climate change and social care, inviting speakers, panellists and delegates to discuss and scrutinise what lies ahead for the orchestral sector and how the industry can work together to ensure an ambitious and sustainable future.

Amongst the speakers, **Helen Whately MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism discusses the political future for classical music on the opening day of the conference. Hosted in partnership with ABO Principal Media Partner **Classic FM**, the UK's most popular classical station, the session will also announce the findings of [The State of the UK's Orchestras 2019 report](#) which reveal that 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%.

***Director of ABO, Mark Pemberton**, comments: "We're thankful to the BBC Philharmonic and The Hallé for hosting our "2020 Vision" conference and inviting hundreds of delegates to gather in their home cities of Manchester and Salford to discuss and debate the big issues facing our sector over the next decade. Topics under the spotlight include climate change, diversity and inclusion— all crucial priorities as we look ahead to the next ten years. Brexit has of course also dominated the ABO's*

*thinking over the past year and in the week in which we leave the EU, we will be looking at ways in which we can continue to ensure the best possible outcome for our sector. Despite these ongoing challenges, it is however reassuring to learn from our State of the UK's Orchestras 2019 report, released today, of the incredible resilience of our orchestras. It has been a decade of uncertainty with challenges still to face but there is much to feel encouraged about as our orchestras manage to sustain the world-class quality of what they do and continue to make the UK's creative sector the envy of the world."*

Speakers across the three-day conference include **Darren Henley OBE**, Chief Executive, Arts Council England; conductor and Music Director of The Hallé, **Sir Mark Elder**; **James Purnell**, the BBC's Director of Radio & Education; **Richard Morrison**, Chief Culture Writer, The Times; **Barbara Keeley MP**, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Classical Music; and **Rebecca Allen**, President of Decca Records Group UK. Events will take place in venues across the two cities including the BBC Philharmonic Studio and BBC Quay House in MediaCityUK, Salford, and at Chetham's School of Music's Stoller Hall, Hallé St Peter's, Hallé St Michael's and The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester.

The ABO continues to build on its three-year partnership with its Charity Partner, **Help Musicians**. In a exploration of emerging findings from their ongoing research project commissioned by Help Musicians, **Susanna Eastburn MBE** and **Jane Williams** will lead an interactive session investigating the professional landscape for music creators entering the profession in the next 10 years. The conference will also shine a spotlight on the next generation of orchestral musicians as **Catherine Arlidge MBE**, Artistic & Education Director of the National Children's Orchestras of Great Britain, invites **students and young musicians at the UK's leading education institutions and national youth ensembles** to discuss what they think orchestras will mean to them in 10 years' time.

In a session chaired by Chief Culture Writer of The Times, **Richard Morrison**, panellists including world-renowned conductor and Music Director of The Hallé, **Sir Mark Elder** will discuss what the industry needs to do in order to adapt to Arts Council England's ambitions for the next 10 years. The ABO and Musicians' Union will for the first time co-host a session as they discuss the **ABO/MU Manifesto for British Orchestras** – launched at last year's conference – and invite delegates to explore what needs to be done by employers and the union to make the 10 point plan a reality over the next decade. One of the joint commitments in the ABO/MU manifesto is to oppose all forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment, and in a session chaired by Deborah Annetts, Chief Executive of the **Incorporated Society of Musicians**, discussions will take place on how to ensure that by 2030 those problems are eradicated from the industry.

With **climate change** at the top of the news agenda, the industry's environmental impact will be scrutinised and possible strategies explored for becoming carbon-free over the next decade. Sessions focused on **health and social care** will also ask how by 2030, orchestras can become a more integral part of the wider health, wellbeing and social care ecology in the UK, and in a first for the ABO Conference, delegates will be taken off site and into the community to visit a dementia project in action, joining people living with dementia and their carers in a group music-making session with a music therapist and musicians from **Manchester Camerata**.

In a fascinating comparison between elite athletes and elite musicians, **Southbank Sinfonia** and **Commonwealth Games gold medallist fencer, Claire Bennett** will explore the key concepts that drive elite athlete level performance and how they can be transferred to musicians working at a similarly high level.

All of these themes and topics for debate will be drawn together in an address by **Darren Henley OBE, Chief Executive, Arts Council England**, in the closing session of the conference which will be followed by an “in conversation” session chaired by **John Summers**, Chief Executive, The Hallé.

Live performance will feature throughout the conference including the **Able Orchestra** who make their North West of England debut at the BBC Philharmonic Studio at MediaCityUK, two showcases from **students of Royal Northern College of Music** and an all-Beethoven programme from **The Hallé conducted by Sir Mark Elder** at The Bridgewater Hall broadcast live on **BBC Radio 3** on 30 January.

**Able Orchestra**, an inclusive ensemble of professional orchestral musicians, digital artists and young musicians including disabled people who use assistive technology will join musicians from **The Hallé** and the **BBC Philharmonic** alongside young people from Nottinghamshire and Manchester to perform a new work specially commissioned from young **Manchester-born composer Oliver Vibrans**. Building directly from the performance, the following day there will be a discussion chaired by **Sarah Derbyshire MBE of Orchestras Live** sharing perspectives and ambitions for inclusive practice in the music profession.

In the first in a series of sessions supported by **Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy** and chaired by **Michelle Wright**, Chief Executive, Cause4, a panel discusses how society, the economy and consumer behaviour might change over the next decade. Other topics explored in the series include how to create happy and diverse workforces, and interactive sessions led by **Jessica Schmidt of Orchestrate Inclusion** will invite participants to explore ways in which they can cultivate a culture of inclusion within their own departments and organisations.

Delegates will also be offered insights from the worlds of recording and broadcasting as BBC’s Director, Radio & Education, **James Purnell** outlines his vision for the division responsible for the majority of the BBC’s classical music, and President of Decca Records Group UK, **Rebecca Allen**, joins a panel chaired by **Sam Jackson** from ABO Principal Media Partner **Classic FM**, to explore recent trends in demand for recorded music as the record label celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary and looks ahead to its centenary in 2029.

The annual **ABO/Classical Music Awards** take place on 29 January in partnership with **BBC Radio 3** at MediaCityUK and will be presented by the station’s presenters **Elizabeth Alker** and **Tom McKinney**. The **ABO Award** which is bestowed to an individual or organisation who the ABO membership feels has made an outstanding contribution to the orchestral life of the UK, will be presented at The Bridgewater Hall in a pre-concert reception sponsored by the ISM before The Hallé’s all-Beethoven concert programme on 30 January.

Delegates and speakers from all over the world will travel to Manchester and Salford from countries including Finland, Norway, Singapore, Sweden and the USA, and in the year in which the ABO has been working in partnership with the British Council to help celebrate **UK-Russia Year of Music**, a significant delegation from Russian orchestras and concert halls will travel to Manchester to join **Cathy Graham**, Director of Music, British Council, in a session which will look at how the sector works in Russia, what we can learn from each other, and how to develop beneficial relationships between our countries for the future.

The 2020 ABO Conference schedule is available [on the ABO website](#) and delegates are invited to use the new **ABO Conference App** which contains the full schedule, delegate list, speaker biographies and more information about the conference.

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For further information and images please contact:

[victoria@victoriataylorpr.com](mailto:victoria@victoriataylorpr.com) / 07900183560

### NOTES TO EDITORS

#### **About the Association of British Orchestras (ABO)**

The ABO is the national body representing the collective interests of professional orchestras, youth ensembles and the wider classical music industry throughout the UK. The ABO's 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. Recent initiatives include Resonate in association with PRS for Music Foundation and BBC Radio 3, which supports the best orchestral music of the last 25 years, and Find Your Way which identifies and offers training to future sector leaders. The ABO campaigned successfully for Orchestra Tax Relief and continues to lobby for the sector at the highest levels.

[www.abo.org.uk](http://www.abo.org.uk)

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