

Dear Mr Johnson MP, Mr Corbyn MP and Ms Swinson MP

Supporting British Orchestras

As the leaders of the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties, I am writing to set out the hopes and expectations of the UK's orchestral sector from the next Government. I hope you are able to find the time to respond to this letter so that I can share your remarks with my members ahead of the General Election.

The Association of British Orchestras (ABO) is the representative body for professional orchestras and youth ensembles in the UK. Our members include internationally renowned symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles, and opera and ballet companies, as well as national and local youth orchestras and the wider classical music industry.

Britain's creative industries are the envy of the world and serve as a source of national pride. Our orchestras are a key part of this. Each year, our members play to nearly 5 million people in over 3500 concerts and performances in the UK, and tour to around 35 countries across the world.

This means that orchestras bring in a sizeable return on their public investment, and provide a vital inward investment and public relations role for the UK, which will be especially important over the coming years. However, since 2010, ABO members have seen significant cuts in public investment from funding agencies, devolved governments and local authorities. Without the implementation of Orchestra Tax Relief in 2016, there would have been a serious threat to their continued financial sustainability. **We hope that you will commit to maintain and increase public funding and creative industry tax relief for British orchestras.**

British orchestras have benefited for decades from freedom of movement of talent and for touring, and Europe is the largest marketplace for UK orchestras. Our members reported 96 visits to 26 different EU countries in 2016. Depending on the final arrangements after we leave the European Union, Brexit may create significant challenges to this trade. **The ABO therefore calls for the next Government to negotiate a relationship with the EU that maintains frictionless movement of goods and people to enable continued cultural exchange.**

Finally, should you lead the next Government, **we urge you to instruct your ministers to deliver the ambitious policies that are needed to develop an effective pipeline for home-grown talent.** Your Government will need to ensure that sufficient funding is available to enable opportunities for sustained and equitable access to instrumental tuition. Central to this must be investment in music education to provide all young people, regardless of economic or social circumstance, throughout primary and secondary education, with opportunities to perform in youth orchestras. We want in turn to see our most talented young musicians securing places at our world-renowned music conservatoires, and going on to employment in our orchestras.

I would like to wish you well for the campaign ahead, and the ABO looks forward to working positively and constructively with all parties in the next Parliament.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pemberton
Director