

## **ABO calls on Liz Truss's new Government to invest in and support UK orchestras**

**September 2022**

The ABO welcomes Liz Truss to her new role as the UK's Prime Minister and sets out the hopes and expectations of the UK's orchestral sector from the new administration.

UK orchestras are a national and global success story. They are a vital part of a performing arts sector which contributes over £148 million to the UK economy. UK orchestras reach millions of people across the UK from all ages and backgrounds each year and use their international renown to take the best of British culture across the globe.

At a time of unprecedented economic and geopolitical challenges, we call on Liz Truss's Government to take a joined-up, cross Departmental approach to invest in and support the UK's orchestras to enable our sector to:

- 1. Build future resilience and sector recovery** – against a backdrop of reduced or standstill public funding, record rates of inflation, the energy and cost-of-living crisis and income sources which are yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, we urge UK Government to extend Orchestra Tax Relief and increase public investment in the sector. This will allow UK orchestras to:
  - Rebuild income streams and plan confidently for the future both in terms of scale and reach of projects and contribution to UK plc.
  - Protect and grow employment during a cost-of-living crisis, as a significant employer, with a highly skilled workforce of more than 3,000 permanent musicians and 10,000 freelancers as well as 2,000 administrative and technical staff.
  - Increase our sector's capacity to deliver on the Government's levelling-up and climate change agendas.
  
- 2. Carry the UK's creative excellence internationally** - UK orchestras were amongst the first live performance groups to tour internationally since the summer of 2021, but at considerable added cost related to Brexit, Covid and geopolitical factors. We urge UK Government to commit the political will necessary to apply the practical solutions the ABO has put forward to resolve post-Brexit touring challenges and to provide public investment for international touring to boost our members' export potential. Keeping UK orchestras on the road will:
  - Provide a vital international public relations role for the UK, using UK orchestras' international renown to take the best of British culture across the globe.
  - Increase our international reach - UK orchestras reach international concert audiences far in excess of 550,000 people in Europe, the USA and Asia, touring to 40 countries across the world with the numbers of concerts and

performances delivered abroad steadily rising year on year, pre-pandemic and pre-Brexit.

- Attract increased inward investment as global exporters, with UK orchestras having generated over £17 million of inward investment into the UK in 2019.
- Enhance the UK's soft power status.

We also urge the new Government to foster international cultural exchange by creating dynamic inbound migration and mobility routes into the UK for foreign artists.

**3. Extend our reach** – Orchestras and concert halls have been engines for civic pride and regeneration. Because of their collaboration with other parts of the creative industries, UK orchestras reach not only the millions who see them in concert halls, but the billions who hear them through film, TV, games, pop and rock concerts and at other events and locations. UK orchestras have also embraced the shift to digital, reaching wider and new audiences online. We urge UK Government to increase public investment in UK orchestras, as well as in local authority funding and infrastructure, and to extend cultural tax reliefs to include digital concerts. This investment will:

- Widen access to culture.
- Enable UK orchestras to deliver ambitious long term development plans and programming, increasing diversity and inclusivity amongst audiences across the UK and within our sector.
- Extend the sector's significant reach across the UK, which already spans audiences of over 4 million through over 3,600 UK concerts and performances per year. This success of the sector extends well beyond the concert hall - the UK's orchestras work with over 700,000 children and adults in education and community settings, from schools to care homes, and are an active participant in the government's ambitions for Social Prescribing.

**4. Build a future, homegrown and diverse talent pipeline** – UK Government must 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, secondary and higher 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. Delivering the ambitious policies set out in the refreshed National Plan for Music Education and sustained investment in music education will:

- Create more opportunities for young people from a wide range of backgrounds, building a diverse talent pipeline and future workforce.
- Develop a new generation of homegrown talent, building future resilience for the sector.
- Enable UK orchestras to reach thousands of children and young people across the UK – UK orchestras already reach 320,000 children and young

people, who attend or take part in education and outreach performances and events delivered by UK orchestras each year.

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. We urge Liz Truss's Government to invest in and support this thriving, diverse and innovative sector.

The ABO looks forward to working positively and constructively with this new Government.

### **About the ABO**

The Association of British Orchestras is the representative body for professional orchestras, and youth ensembles.

Its mission is to enable and support an innovative, collaborative and sustainable orchestral sector, and to provide advice, support, intelligence and information to the people who make UK orchestras a global success.

We represent 115 Full and Associate member orchestras ranging from internationally renowned symphony orchestras to chamber, opera and ballet orchestras as well as conservatoires and national youth orchestras and the wider classical music industry.