

REACHING FURTHER

British Orchestras
in the Community

[#orchestraseverywhere](#)

IMAGE: Joyce

ABO

Foreword

When people think of Britain's world-renowned orchestras, most imagine an ensemble performing in a concert hall or recording studio. What they don't realise is the incredible, transformative work orchestras are doing in communities across the country.

Our orchestras reach hundreds of thousands of people every year – almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million - through innovative education programmes in schools and community centres, therapeutic music workshops in hospitals, homeless centres and prisons, and world-class performances with disabled children, socially deprived communities, firefighters and more.

The effects of these projects are undeniable. Participants report better health, an increase in confidence and self-esteem, improved social skills, and a sense of purpose and belonging. Not to mention the chance to express themselves creatively and develop musical talent with world-class musicians.

With over-stretched local services struggling to meet the needs of the UK's diverse communities, orchestras often step in to help people across society, a contribution seldom recognised.

We've travelled up and down the country meeting people whose lives have been changed through working with a British orchestra, and found incredibly inspiring stories, some of which we've shared here.

Next time you visit a community centre, school, hospital or care home, take a moment to think what an orchestra might be involved in there, and the difference they're making to people's lives.

Mark Pemberton
Director, Association of British Orchestras



British orchestras changing lives across the UK

Every year, orchestras across the country reach out beyond the concert hall to all corners of the United Kingdom delivering innovative and often life-changing experiences for many thousands of people.

Orchestras give their time and talents in hospitals with terminally ill children, in care centres with dementia sufferers, in homeless shelters, and to school children, working with pupils from socially deprived backgrounds and those with hearing loss.

Over the last year, British orchestras held more than 10,000 education sessions and events for children, young people and communities reaching well over 600,000 people – half of whom were children. British orchestras are extending their reach to more people than ever before.

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Here are just a few of the examples of how orchestras are reaching further, every day, by working with:

- the homeless to find new direction through music (*LPO/Sixteen*)
- deaf children to help them enjoy music in partnership with schools and local councils (*LPO*)
- special schools and adults with learning disabilities (*LPO*)
- up to 60,000 children undergoing treatment in hospitals in East London, many suffering from chronic, life threatening or terminal illnesses (*LSO*)
- residents from different backgrounds – recording music with Nepalese, multigenerational and military communities (*London Sinfonietta*)
- children's hospitals, care homes, bereaved children and vulnerable youth, running musical residencies (*RLPO/CLS/sinfonia VIVA*)
- people living with dementia and their carers through creating new orchestras, singing and dance workshops (*Philharmonia/Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/BBC Concert Orchestra*)
- prisoners to perform and create their own cross-genre compositions (*Scottish Ensemble*)
- firefighters and other local heroes – nurses, dinner ladies, refuse collectors (*BBC Philharmonic - Salford Tales*)
- young children (3-7 years old) in socially deprived urban and geographically isolated communities across the UK (*City of London Sinfonia*)
- adults suffering from mental illness (*Southbank Sinfonia*).

Connected to Communities

Working with schools and communities is at the heart of most orchestras' activities. Their education and learning departments exist to open up an orchestra's repertoire, and music-making in general, to a wider audience. This connects orchestras to their communities, builds audiences for the future, delivering a range of proven benefits from increased well-being to academic achievement. Sharing resources and expertise across communities, inviting people to experience and share in performance, often for the first time, is part of British orchestras' ethos. One orchestra reaches over 16,000 students every year offering special resources to teachers and partnering with Music Education Hubs to distribute 4000 free concert tickets to South London schools. [LPO]

" **This project has improved my life. It's given me new direction and taught me how to develop myself. I've now got reasons to get out of bed in the morning.**"

Orchestras' outreach and education programmes work with a wide range of audience groups, from school children of all ages to prisons and young offender institutions, from youth orchestras to residential homes. Many have had little or no prior involvement with classical music or orchestral instruments. Projects often aim not only to develop musical skills, but also to use music to develop good communication, confidence, leadership skills and teamwork.

"The project challenged my creative side, writing lyrics to a song with input, support and encouragement from young people, carers and musicians."

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Innovation and Partnerships

Orchestras are constantly forging new partnerships to extend their reach, bringing new ideas and adding to the cultural offer in the area they serve. Through corporate sponsorship and work with local authorities, orchestras are constantly innovating and helping local authorities meet priorities on education, widening opportunity and participation. One orchestra uses digital installations to tour communities with limited means for engaging with cultural opportunities in their own region. [Philharmonia]

"There are so many instruments I can try! I wouldn't get this opportunity anywhere else."

British orchestras continue to lead the world in creative music-making and participatory projects and are pioneers of innovative approaches. They are using new techniques and technologies to engage communities in different ways, making music relevant and moving well beyond traditional schools concerts and workshops. One project in a young offender's institution gives the opportunity for inmates to perform and create their own compositions, helping keep them focused and motivated to improve their situation, and look towards a brighter future. [The Sixteen]



"I can't imagine how things were a year ago. Through the orchestra, I've found a supportive group of new friends, those you can laugh and cry with!"

Reaching Children and Young People

In schools, orchestras support and supplement existing provision, resulting in marked improvement to children's social skills, verbal communication and attainment. Outside formal education settings, orchestras' projects are helping young offenders get back on track, bereaved siblings cope with their loss and strained communities come together.

A child's first experience of music is one of the most exciting of their young lives. Before they've even mastered the art of speech, the rhythms and melodies of music can excite and engage children – bringing out their creativity and musicality. Britain's orchestras deliver a vast array of projects to babies and pre-school children, proven to have lasting positive effects – both in the education and social development of children, and on their health and wellbeing.

“The children in hospital love the visits from musicians. Illness and hospitals can be frightening for them, and the music really calms them and puts a smile on their faces.”

“The musicians made me laugh and put everyone at ease. We forgot our problems and loved playing together.”

Nurturing Talent and Passion

Where talent is identified, orchestras are there to nurture and develop it. Through partnerships with music colleges, music services and their own youth development schemes, orchestras ensure future players are inspired by the very best musicians and develop their musical skill by working with professional orchestral players. One orchestra ran a series of workshops for contemporary songwriters, designed to help new artists add orchestral instruments into their music. [RSNO]

“It was amazing how the orchestra empowered young people to take the lead.”

Within their education work, orchestras are committed to making music education a continuous process; ensuring enthusiasm and talent is not lost as children move through different stages of their lives. Whether destined for a career in music or not, orchestras offer opportunities to people of all ages and all abilities, allowing a lifelong passion for music to be fulfilled.

“Participants loved their interaction with the orchestra. One of our lads is now a budding guitar player.”

A Worthwhile Investment

Orchestras have been offering life-transforming opportunities to communities for many years. But they can only continue to do so with the support and security of the public investment upon which orchestras depend. Whilst support from private and philanthropic sources plays a significant role in extending orchestras' reach, it is the core funding from central and local government that sustains the high standards upon which further investment can be generated.

In short, the public investment in orchestras provides leverage for other income, enabling them to be creative, adventurous and always relevant to people with diverse needs. It also means that long-term relationships can be built between orchestras and communities, thereby increasing the value of these partnerships.

The final word...

We thought we'd give the final words to Joyce, Richard, Lenka, Patrick, Susan and Martin - and their family members and supporters. They are among the many thousands of people with whom orchestras work every day. They are also the people who have kindly given their time - and permission to be featured - in our #orchestraseverywhere initiative.

"I was at risk of losing my home. The joy of music helped me through"

Joyce

"Being deaf, I never thought I'd enjoy music. Now I'm performing for my school"

Lenka

"Richard's diagnosis turned his life upside down. The orchestra gave him hope."

Pam, Richard's wife

"The music helps ease Patrick's pain"

Patrick's father

"From a background of limited opportunity, our students discovered their natural talent"

John Scurr primary teacher

"I never thought you could make beautiful music playing station equipment"

Martin



Joyce



Patrick



Lenka



Richard



John Scurr pupil



Martin

#orchestraseverywhere

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