



# ABO

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS

## BOARD RECRUITMENT PACK

### Co-opted Director

March 2026

## Overview

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Board member of the Association of British Orchestras (ABO).

The ABO Board is made up of 8 Nominee Directors who are elected by the membership, and 4 Co-opted Directors who are appointed by the Board. **There are currently 2 vacancies for Co-opted Directors.** Co-opted Directors are appointed positions and may be member representatives (any member type except Full Members) or external appointments.

The performing arts sector has come through unprecedented challenges in the last few years and more recently a decline in public investment in the arts coupled with rising inflation, and yet music continues to play a vital role in the life of the nation. This is the context in which the ABO Board is seeking new membership to expand its expertise, particularly through representation from the fields outlined later in this document.

The Board believes passionately in creating an inclusive culture, where voices from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences ensure that the ABO is truly representative of its membership. This enables the ABO to fulfil its mission to support an innovative, collaborative and sustainable orchestral sector by providing informed advice, support, intelligence and information to the people who make British orchestras a global success.

This pack will provide you with key information about the ABO, the role and responsibilities of a Board member, particular skill sets and experience the ABO Board is seeking from new members, and how to apply. At the end is a short section of FAQs which may answer some of your immediate questions; however, we also welcome a dialogue with interested candidates. If you would like to speak to one of our friendly Board members or a member of the ABO team, please just get in touch (see 'Next Steps')

*CBSO with The Orchestral Qawwali Project - Credit: William Pavli © City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra*





Left: NYOS performing at Usher Hall, Edinburgh - April 2025 Credit: Sally Jubb © National Youth Orchestra of Scotland  
Right: Flock Premiere at Sound Festival – Credit: Sound and Deliver © Red Note Ensemble

## About the ABO

The ABO, founded in 1948, is the national body representing the collective interests of more than 65 professional orchestras and ensembles throughout the UK, with other categories of membership including youth ensembles, conservatoires, venues, broadcasters and artist management. Our 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.

Day-to-day operations are led by Chief Executive, Judith Webster, along with a small, dedicated staff team.

The key **Strategic Objectives** of the ABO cover three areas of activity: **Connecting, Championing and Developing**. Using the framework of the mission statement, we deliver on these key objectives through:

- **Connecting** members to other members and the wider industry through networking opportunities, keeping our members well-informed and up-to-date with best practice to help build resilience and financial sustainability.
- **Championing** orchestras and the wider membership, raising their profile and influence with key stakeholders and the British public, through political engagement, the media, social media and stakeholder bulletins. We will track and influence the development of legislation and government policies both in the UK and internationally and advocate the value of public and private investment in the orchestral sector.
- **Developing** the skills and knowledge of our members' staff, including providing and signposting to high quality professional development opportunities and nurturing emerging leaders.

The ABO's current aims and objectives actively contribute towards five key strategic priorities: Equity, diversity and inclusion; Learning & Development; Green orchestras; Health and wellbeing; Innovation & digital. These are supported by membership services activity including Data and Sector Intelligence; Communications and Policy.

You can find out more about the ABO at [www.abo.org.uk](http://www.abo.org.uk), including a list of current Board members. You can also download the ABO's annual reviews detailing what an average year of activity for the ABO looks like here: <https://abo.org.uk/about-us/mission>



*London Philharmonic Orchestra with Edward Gardner © Mark Allan, Courtesy of the London Philharmonic Orchestra*

## **Board member responsibilities**

Every Board has certain legal and financial responsibilities, alongside the more creative and exciting tasks of shaping future strategy by embracing the full range of experience and expertise of Board members. We are happy to accept applications from people who do not have previous experience of sitting on a Board: each Board member is given an induction to the organisation and the responsibilities the role entails, with training offered to fill in any knowledge gaps.

Key responsibilities include:

- Developing, setting and upholding of the vision, mission and values of the ABO by participating fully and frankly in Board discussions, bringing the benefit of an individual's particular knowledge, skills and abilities to bear
- Strategic planning, evaluation and decision-making
- Supporting the CEO and the ABO team in their work
- Acting as an ambassador for the ABO
- Introducing the ABO team to professional, political or community networks
- Attending events on behalf of the ABO
- Reviewing budgets, management accounts and statutory accounts
- Risk management
- Reviewing and development of all internal controls, financial and operational
- Reviewing of staffing structures and resources, including senior management recruitment and remuneration
- Oversight of reporting to regulators and funders
- Ensuring compliance, transparency and accountability in line with governing documents, and legal obligations
- Board succession planning

## Key Information

Time commitment	Four Board Meetings per year, and the Annual ABO Conference which Board members are encouraged to attend. From time to time, individual Board members also work with the executive team on strategic projects directly related to their professional experience and may be required to sit on or lead specific working groups. Board members are encouraged to attend ABO members' performances and events.
Meeting Location	London and occasionally regional, with hybrid offered as standard. The annual conference is held in a different UK city each year.
Remuneration	ABO Board member roles do not have any financial remuneration; though reasonable travel expenses may be claimed when agreed in advance. The ABO encourages sustainable travel options.
Board terms	The period of appointment for Co-opted Board members is an initial three years, renewable for a further three years, to a maximum of six years.
To apply	Please send your CV and a letter of application by email to Judith Webster ( <a href="mailto:judith@abo.org.uk">judith@abo.org.uk</a> ). Deadline for nominations is <b>10am on Monday 30 March 2026</b> . See 'Next Steps' for full information.

*"Honey, I Shrank the Orchestra" with CCC's Essential Orchestra © Children's Classic Concerts*



## **Who are we looking for?**

The ABO Board has not included a person specification in this pack, as we want to cast our recruitment net widely. Finding people who have skills and experience beyond the immediate networks we regularly connect with.

The ABO Board recently undertook a skills audit which identified areas of expertise that are less well represented. These will also be considered in the recruitment process.

They are:

- Advocacy – government and local government
- Music and health/wellbeing in the public sector
- Social impact creation and measurement

We are also looking for candidates with a few key attributes, including:

- strong collaboration skills
- an ability to engage with a wide range of stakeholders
- a willingness to give a suitable amount of time and consideration to this role

The ABO strives for an orchestral sector that is fully inclusive, representative and reflective of the communities that we serve and actively encourages nominations from individuals with diverse backgrounds and/or those who identify as disabled, that are underrepresented in the sector and our organisation. We will ensure that everyone is treated equally regardless of gender, race, ethnic or national origin, religious beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, age and disability.

The ABO welcomes any discussions regarding accessibility arrangements or alternative application methods.

## **Eligibility**

Consistent with our ambition to increase representation, we would be pleased to accept applications from anyone within and beyond our membership. Co-opted Directors can be from external partners and organisations that will contribute skills and experience that fulfil a need within the ABO governance, as well as from current ABO members of any type excluding Full Members (provided their organisation is not already represented on the board).

Directors do not need to have worked for an orchestra or have musical knowledge to fulfil their Board duties, however a passion and love for orchestral music and belief in its role in and value to society is essential.

The ABO welcomes suggestions and discussions of suitable candidates for Co-opted Director positions.

## FAQs

Please see below some questions we've been asked in the past. If we haven't answered your question below, you can arrange an exploratory call with an ABO Board member or staff member (see NEXT STEPS)

### Do I need to have worked for an orchestra to be an ABO Board member?

The ABO Board consists of nominated and co-opted Directors. Nominated board members are directly elected from within the ABO's current Full Member organisations. Co-opted board members are professionals appointed by the Board via an application and interview process. They can be from the ABO's wider membership (not Full Members) or any external organisation or individual able to contribute skills and expertise for the benefit of the ABO.

The ABO allows only one representative from any one organisation to sit concurrently on its Board. If your orchestra/organisation is already represented, then you will not be able to apply during their time of office.

### Will I need to have musical knowledge to fulfil my Board duties?

No. All we ask is that you have a passion and love for orchestral music and believe in its role in and value to society. If your organisation is a current ABO member, and you have the endorsement of the organisation's CEO, or equivalent, you may apply regardless of your role or musical background.

### Will I need to have experience of sitting on a Board?

No. A comprehensive induction will be offered. We are keen to bring different voices from the orchestral sector onto the Board.

### I don't 'fit' the type of person who attends orchestra concerts

UK orchestras work with a wide range of diverse communities and audiences annually. We want to ensure we have a broad range of voices in the room, acknowledging that constructive differences of opinion and lived experiences bring greater clarity and lead to better decision making.

### If I have additional access needs will ABO consider my individual circumstances?

The ABO welcomes applications for Board membership from everyone with the professional skills and enthusiasm to contribute and will make all possible adaptations to accommodate an individual's personal needs, to ensure that they play a full and active role as a Board member. Please contact us in advance by phone/email if you wish to discuss any access needs, or any other issues or queries in your application.

*Sinfonia Viva's production of "Peter and the Wolf"*  
Credit: Ali Johnston © Sinfonia Viva



### What if I cannot afford to travel to London for meetings / conferences?

The ABO will consider remunerating reasonable and pre-agreed travel expenses to attend Board meetings and business. All Board meetings are hybrid as standard to enable remote attendance.

### Is it possible to have a conversation with someone before I apply?

Yes, we welcome and encourage interested candidates to seek an initial phone conversation with an ABO Board member or the ABO's Chief Executive. We also request that, if you are from an ABO member organisation and are not the Chief Executive or equivalent, you secure the endorsement of your CEO before formally applying, since you will be representing your organisation when on the Board.

### Will there be an induction for new board members?

New board members will be supported through an induction as part of an enabling approach to board and executive joiners. Your ideas and views will be welcomed and you will be introduced to the ABO team and board members on joining.

## NEXT STEPS

We hope that this pack is helpful in describing the role and expectations of an ABO Board member.

To apply to be a Co-opted Director, please email Judith Webster on [judith@abo.org.uk](mailto:judith@abo.org.uk) with your CV and a letter of application stating what you believe you will bring to the board, in relation to the areas of expertise that are currently less well represented (see "Who we are looking for"). The deadline for receipt of applications is no later than **10am on Monday 30 March 2026**.

Interviews will be scheduled on one of **15, 16 or 17 April 2026**, either in person or online. Shortlisted candidates will be given the opportunity to observe a board meeting, prior to any confirmation of appointment.

Once appointed, new Board members will be able to meet the Chair and Chief Executive, as well as visiting the ABO office in Somerset House for an introduction to the ABO team. Board members will also receive an induction pack with copies of relevant company and Board documents, previous annual reports, accounts, minutes of recent meetings etc.

## ABO Contacts

If you would like an initial, informal telephone conversation with a current member of the Board or the ABO team, please contact us to arrange a call as follows:

Sophie Lewis, Chair

[s.lewis@nco.org.uk](mailto:s.lewis@nco.org.uk)

Judith Webster, Chief Executive

[judith@abo.org.uk](mailto:judith@abo.org.uk)



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