

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS PRESENTS  
**CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE  
CLASSICAL MUSIC INDUSTRY**  
7 OCTOBER 2003 ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL LONDON



# R E P O R T



## INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

"Classical Music is not a diverse medium," were the words that Simon Crookall, *Chairman, Association of British Orchestras, Chief Executive, Royal Scottish National Orchestra*, used to open the Association of British Orchestras' conference on 'Cultural Diversity and the Classical Music Industry'; an event intended to act as a catalyst to change this perception from both outside the industry, but more importantly, from the foundations of classical music in the country.

There is no 'quick fix' to the issue, especially as the majority of orchestral players, management and audience members come from a similar section of society, but here was a day set aside to encouraging debate, networking opportunities and forging links across the industry, from schools and community level work up to the highest quality of professional music making across the country.

Lord Moser *Chairman, British Museum Development Trust*, a life long supporter of music and member of numerous boards and governing bodies gave the keynote address.

## IS CLASSICAL MUSIC READY FOR DIVERSITY?

The United Kingdom is an ever-increasing multi-cultural society and orchestras throughout the UK have already taken great steps to integrate themselves into this society and become sustainable and useful resources for the community. "The greater challenge is to improve education and funding to continue the work and build on the success of existing projects and schemes," said Lord Moser.

Education as the key to widening participation was the overriding message from the keynote address and Lord Moser cited his own experiences of growing up in Berlin in the 1920's. There, music was as central to education as mathematics, physics and history, and from this early exposure, he came to realise that life without music would be a mistake.

This was a view shared by Jenny Lee, who was the first ever Arts Minister under Harold Wilson: "If from an early age, children become accustomed to arts as part of their everyday life, they are more likely to accept it and ultimately demand it."

Sadly this is a message that has since been lost in the successive echelons of power as musical education in schools has been in decline over the last twenty-five years. It is only due to the breadth of outreach projects already being undertaken by orchestras that many people are allowed to experience classical music first hand and for the first time. Indeed during this period, it is the education departments of orchestras that have been forced to replace musical training within schools. Given that orchestras are faced with a chronic lack of crucial support from Government and Arts Council funding bodies, this has become another drain on resources that should be used to promote quality performances rather than a substitute for a failing education system.

If we believe the rumours, the knock on effects of this can be seen in the concert halls. Classical music is thought of as being in the doldrums with dwindling audiences pulled from a small section of society. The perception being that music is a pursuit for the better off, for more educated people and not for the masses to enjoy. However, music is arguably the greatest creation of man and therefore more people should be able to experience it and ultimately enjoy it.

Lord Moser called for specific action to be taken in the following areas:

- **The need for a stronger partnership between education and orchestras.** The curriculum of primary and especially secondary education should outline the priorities of music and should be led by Government intervention.

Secondary to this, the role of a music teacher should be rethought. With a 12% decline in recruitment in the last ten years the incentive schemes to encourage teacher training should be widened to include music

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**The need for a stronger partnership between education and Youth Music.** The gaps between the community projects run by Youth Music and the work done in schools is vast and both have different approaches. Youth Music encourages and enthuses whereas many schools have music

To conclude, Lord Moser sent out pleas to key groups in a position to have a significant impact on the state of classical music in the country:

- 1) **To those in education** – not the teachers or head teachers, but to the system as a whole.

There should be a rethink from the highest level to the roots about the place of music in education to enable more children to explore all music genres and not be put off by the complexities of classical music. Why are there currently no specialist state schools in music in the country? There is a real need for better resources, which, ultimately, boil down to increased funding.

- 2) **To those in the Media**

Broadcasters have enormous influence on people's perception of music and can generate huge interest and enthusiasm for music without feeling the need to dumb down the content.

- 3) **To those with resources**

There has to be huge support from across society with income provided from box offices, individuals, corporations and above all, Government and the Arts Council. These last two have to review their role in this partnership.

There are high costs involved both in terms of time and money and therefore it is important to ensure that high standards of music making exist before outreach work is undertaken. Consequently, funding for orchestral and outreach work should not come from the same grant.

Charles Clarke *Secretary of State for Education and Skills*, and David Miliband *Minister of State for School Standards*, are rumoured to be producing a national strategy for music. Lord Moser hopes that this will tell us what the government expect to be provided and what they in turn will provide to make the strategy possible.

## PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY?

The chair, Professor Lola Young *Head of Culture, Greater London Assembly* and the four panel members each spoke about their views of how the Classical Music sector can progress into the twenty-first century in particular regard to their field of expertise.

Lola Young recently published the GLA's Cultural Strategy. It saw excellence, creativity, access and value as the four main aims of the strategy but that they should all be underpinned by the inherent cultural diversity in London, in terms of its community and society and the contributions these can make to achieving true cultural diversity. It recognised that this diversity is not only contemporary, but that by looking at the historical figures and the problems they faced, we can see that many of the solutions we need today have been often been attempted in the past.

In her opinion, partnerships truly work when there is effective communication at all levels to enable the key issues of employment, audience development, training and governance to be tackled across the music industry and in the wider society. Ultimately, classical music needs to be seen to be more approachable to enable these issues to be addressed.

The panel consisted of Kim Evans, *Executive Director of Arts, Arts Council England*, Professor Edward Gregson, *Principal, Royal Northern College of Music*, Stephen Maddock *Chief Executive, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra* and Roger Wright *Controller, BBC Radio 3* and thus presented views from across all spectrums of the industry

The over-riding message from all the speakers was the need for workable partnerships across the industry to enable experiences to be shared and built upon and to pool resources. Kim Evans acknowledged that it is the duty of the fund-holders to support and enable cultural diversity and without such support the Classical Music Industry cannot

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hope to face the needs of the twenty-first century. She emphasised the Arts Council's commitment to cultural diversity and through its project, 'decibel' that aims for a long-term increase in funding for cultural diversity across the arts. She cited a recent study into the working practices of the theatre industry as a positive step forward in their bid to eliminate institutional racism and encourage greater diversity within its workforce and questioned the delegates as to whether the classical music industry should do the same.

Roger Wright claimed that cultural diversity is vital at BBC Radio 3 and given the breadth of its programming it is already doing a great deal to promote diversity. BBC Radio 3 views diversity as an exciting means of celebrating the people who live in the United Kingdom and through programmes such as 'World is our Street', highlight some of the world musicians in this country. He thought that cultural diversity should be an inbuilt part of any programming and artistic planning and to treat it separately was a mistake. Given that the UK's population has increased by 4% in the last ten years and its ethnicity has increased by 54%, the balance had to be shifted. With the population's cultural diversity increasing, the number of people with western classical music at the top of their musical rating will decline and it is up to orchestras to increase accessibility and take live music into communities to demonstrate the adaptability and potential that they can offer.

This theme was continued up by Stephen Maddock who, at the CBSO, is involved in a three-year project called *Harmony* which aims to highlight the connections between western classical music and other cultures. Given that Birmingham will become a white minority city in the next fifteen years, the project is not just a token gesture towards non-western music in selected concerts. The project reaches across the whole institution and affects the planning, marketing, education work and staffing of the orchestra and will culminate in the latter part of the 2003/04 season with an Indian theme. This will bring Indian music into the concert hall and complement it with music based upon, or inspired by, the same cultural tradition. Education projects will give schools and the community the chance to explore the influences of both genres and see where their culture lies within the finished work.

The reasons for this project were listed as:

- A desire to expand the repertoire
- The CBSO has a long tradition of innovation
- A desire to service the community
- Break down perceptions of classical music
- To increase income by tapping into new resources

This last reason is surely one of the major factors in the desire to increase diversity. As current audience figures dwindle, a new audience needs to be found and the increasing numbers of middle class families from ethnic minorities seem to be an obvious new target.

Edward Gregson welcomed the symposium and said that ten years ago, such a conference would not have taken place. He felt it was due to the funding demands of the current climate that the issue has become increasingly important. He saw education as being at the heart of the problem / challenge but that it was too easy for everyone at their own level of the education family tree to pass the buck.

**Orchestras** will say, "We can only take what the conservatoires give us."

**Conservatoires** will say, "We can only take what the schools give us."

**Schools** will say, "We could do more but we need more funding."

**Government** will say, "We are funding music and giving money for these reasons so sort it out."

He felt it was time for all the groups to engage in delivering their responsibilities and by increasing the number and strength of partnerships between conservatoires and orchestras, orchestras and schools and conservatoires and schools, real progress can then be made.

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He emphasised the fact that there is no discrimination from conservatoires as to the background of applicants. The only discriminating factor is talent but the fact that the majority of applicants are white and middle class highlights a problem further down the chain. The fact that music in schools has declined over the last fifteen years needs to be redressed as music is an art form that “frees the body, ignites the mind and engages the soul”.

He pointed out that the training conservatoires offer is of much greater relevance than the Victorian traditions prevalent ten years ago. Given that in today's climate, musicians need to acquire a variety of skills to respond to the demands of activity away from the concert platform, the need to diversify is paramount but not at the expense of retaining the highest standards of musicianship.

## **DIVERSITY IN PRACTICE: SPACE & LOCATION**

Roger Lewis *Managing Director and Programme Controller, Classic FM* began the session by emphasising that the United Kingdom has an ethnic minority that is 7.9% of the total population and that is increasing annually.

Mark Stephenson *Artistic Director, London Musici* felt orchestras should lobby hard to get the government to realise that music-making of the highest calibre was a justifiable end in itself. Quality classical music should be presented to people outside classical music rather than a fusion of classical music and non-western idioms.

Michelle Abbey *Audience Development Officer, London Philharmonic Orchestra* spoke about the work she is doing in identifying key workers in local communities and discovering what they want from a partnership or projects.

In the last six months, the LPO have had 500 first time concertgoers at events mainly from Lambeth and Southwark. They had no special treatment at the concert other than being made to feel welcome. The message was taken to them person-to-person and it developed and strengthened relations in the community far more than an indirect approach using fliers and letters. Clearly it is a long-term strategy but the foundations are there to be built upon.

Katherine Zeserson *Director of Community Music, The Sage Gateshead* outlined the two components vital to their work. The first is programming, which includes appearances from the Northern Sinfonia as well as jazz, folk and world musicians and the second is the building itself. The building was always intended to be a local resource and with 25 participation rooms, 3 performance spaces and a public concourse it can allow people to feel part of all that is going on. The audiences are not local people and never have been but by providing classes and meeting groups they are encouraging more locals in. A mother and toddler group is thriving and by exposing them to jazz, folk, opera and classical music it is removing the barriers to enjoying a range of music from an early age. The important aspect of community work is passion and it is a common denominator between both performers and audience. Performers are passionate about their art and the audience can pick up on that and develop a passion to learn.

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## AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT LABS

The seminar separated into three groups and discussed new routes for audience growth potential with people not currently involved with classical music or orchestral concerts. Each group looked at a different topic and had to come up with key recommendations for orchestras to consider when planning new strategies.

### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

“Reaching out to communities? How accessible is classical music both physically and metaphorically? How deep do outreach projects go?”

- Programming:  
Take existing programming choices to new venues  
Tailor new programmes for existing venues  
Devise new programmes for new venues
- Early engagement with potential audiences increases awareness and therefore interest in classical music - so plan accordingly.
- Cross-fertilise music with other art forms. Integrate dance and art with music for more appeal.

### POSH AND PAST IT

“What message does mainstream classical music send out? What are the factors which contribute to attendance or non-attendance? What needs to change?”

- Take music out to the community - Marketing – postcards, billboards
- Concerts - Change performers' dress code - Change programme to suit target audiences - Change the timing of concerts
- Collaborations – Film - Dance
- Structure orchestras in a more integrated manner. Everyone be aware of planning and strategy of other areas of the orchestra
- Above all ensure that diversity doesn't mean a reduction in excellence

### WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

“Expectations and perception of classical music and orchestras – the venue, the audience, the marketing, the experience? What is its relevance to diverse communities? How can orchestras make the attendance of such events more appealing – communication and actual experience?”

- Reduce concert going experience barriers  
Staff – increase personnel cultural diversity – management – front line staff  
Different venues – less formal environment  
Change the language used to describe music in marketing material
- Merge music genres
- Improving accessibility to classical music in the broadest sense will ensure that greater cultural diversity occurs automatically.

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## DIVERSITY MEANS BUSINESS

Representatives from BT plc, Ford Motor Company and HSBC Bank spoke of the way in which their companies have embraced diversity and equality as a growth strategy and to improve working relations within the company. As well as highlighting specific areas of success for their particular firm, they also gave more general comments about the benefits and problems of implementing cultural diversity strategies.

Pam Farmer *HR Manager, Equality and Diversity, BT plc* spoke about working outside your comfort zone when tackling cultural diversity for the first time and how mistakes will happen. Racism and discrimination are a huge part of diversity and so the industry as a whole has to ask if it is ready to accept complete integration. The other question that has to be asked is how you deal with the mistakes. Do you publicise them or keep them well hidden in the hope that others don't notice?

Roger Putnam, *Chairman, Ford Motor Company Ltd* since 2002 acknowledged that Ford had made mistakes and were starting from a poor track record of cultural diversity but emphasised that the key to a successful diversity strategy is inclusion rather than just representation. As the ethnic population is becoming increasingly important, embracing it is essential and offers tangible results:

- Opportunity to grow your talent base
- Opportunity to develop your workforce fully
- Opportunity to sell your product to more people

Hilary Wiseman *Head of Diversity, HSBC Bank plc* said "diversity is about understanding the customers and ensuring that your services and products are accessible to all". HSBC have expanded by taking over existing companies with local knowledge and therefore, almost by default, have become a very culturally diverse company. The important thing is to listen to the specific needs of each different group and deliver what you are renowned for in a way that is appropriate to their needs.

## DIVERGENT THINKING – OPENING DOORS

*Nitro at the Opera* is a forthcoming project at the Royal Opera House that is a collaboration between western singers and composers on apprenticeships at the ROH and ethnic composers. It is building on the success of *Nitro Beat* which was a "work in progress platform" with new works and music being shown whilst still in their infancy. *Nitro at the Opera* will consist of two chamber operas plus arias and songs composed by black composers. It is providing a platform for pre-existent composers to show the high quality music that is being written whilst at the same time serves to change what happens within the institution to increase accessibility and the approachability of the venue as a whole. The project gives links directly to funding bodies through its ethnic and black community contacts that would otherwise not be available.

The ROH recognise that ultimately the project is aimed at audience development and to increase the diversity of the audiences at the House but the ROH wanted "actions rather than just words" whilst implementing its own cultural diversity plan.

## THE SOUND OF THE UNDERGROUND

Beverley Mason *Managing Director, meddar psyden creative industries associates* gave the call to action to round off the day.

Diversity is of great concern to British Orchestras and as there is no 'quick-fix' method, we must ensure that staffing and funding are all ready for the long haul that the commitment to cultural diversity will require.

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“Before we can really proceed, we need to ask what kind of society we really want to live in. Unless we have a personal answer to that, we cannot drive our profession.”

There are moral and legal reasons for improving cultural diversity but we should want to embrace race equality as a means of making classical music accessible to all communities and orchestras are in a position to set the environment of valued participation right across all levels of society. It is their responsibility to take the best of their work and communicate that with passion to other communities and to then listen to the response. We need to find out what is important for these communities.

Embracing cultural diversity is not a revolution within the industry, but merely evolution. There has to be a gradual re-branding of classical music to take on the responses of other cultures and to open up organisations and encourage people to belong and take part in projects and work. By ensuring that innovation is the goal for the future there can be greater communication and exchange of cultures with different communities.

Music education is the key and we have to ensure that classical music is a part of that education by aiming for a more connected approach between community leaders, educational institutions and the government. The ABO and its members should lobby hard for a more connected approach to music education and be a platform from which to proceed.

**Association of British Orchestras**

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