



ASSOCIATION OF **BRITISH ORCHESTRAS**

**** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

New ABO Chair “brings wealth of experience”

**MICHAEL EAKIN ELECTED CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF
ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ORCHESTRAS**

Four new board members join as ABO prepares for annual conference

Chief Executive of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Michael Eakin, has been elected the new chair of the Association of British Orchestras (ABO), the national body representing the collective interests of professional orchestras throughout the UK. He replaces Simon Taylor who left the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at the end of the summer to run the National Concert Hall, Dublin.

The former Regional Executive Director of Arts Council England North West, Michael became Chief Executive of Liverpool Philharmonic, including ABO members the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in 2008. He becomes Chair of the ABO at a crucial moment as cuts in public subsidy start to bite and the ABO itself loses its Arts Council funding support.

Michael Eakin said:

“I am honoured and pleased to be elected as Chair of the ABO. Whilst there are some big challenges to come for the sector, particularly with local authority funding settlements and the establishment of the new Music Education Hubs, I am looking forward to working with the other members of the ABO board in championing and celebrating the incredibly rich and diverse work that the UK orchestras do every day, both at home and abroad.”

Mark Pemberton, Director of the ABO, said:

“We are delighted at Michael Eakin’s election as chair of the ABO. He brings a wealth of experience not only as chief executive of one of our leading regional symphony orchestras but also from his time as regional director of Arts Council England North West. With board members drawn from the symphony, BBC, opera and chamber orchestras, supplemented by co-opted board members representing the voice of the musicians, concert halls and youth orchestras, I’m confident we have the depth of skills and experience that will help the ABO navigate its way through the difficult climate for arts funding we find ourselves in.”

Four new Directors were also elected to the Board. Mick Elliott, new Chief Executive of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra; Simon Funnell, Managing Director of London Mozart Players; Peter Helps, Chief Executive of Derby's sinfonia ViVA; and Anna Rowe, Chief Executive of the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

They join fellow Board members: Peter Harrap, Chorus and Orchestra Director, Welsh National Opera; Andrew Jowett, Director, Town Hall and Symphony Hall Birmingham; Carol Main, Director, Live Music Now: Scotland; Kathryn McDowell CBE, Managing Director, London Symphony Orchestra; Chi-chi Nwanoku MBE, Principal Double Bass, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; Gavin Reid, Director, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra; and Leonora Thomson, Director of Audiences and Development, Barbican.

Ends.

For further information and interviews with Michael Eakin or Mark Pemberton, please contact: Keith Motson, Membership & Communications Manager, ABO on keith@abo.org.uk or telephone 020 7557 6770 or 07818 038254

Biography for Michael Eakin

Michael Eakin

Michael Eakin took up the position of Chief Executive of Liverpool Philharmonic in 2008, heading up an organisation which includes the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and associated choirs and ensembles, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, and an extensive Learning programme.

Michael joined Liverpool Philharmonic from Arts Council England, with whom he had been Executive Director North West since 2001. In that position he led a growth in Arts Council investment across the North West, and worked closely with the Liverpool European Capital of Culture bid, planning, and delivery processes.

Previously, he was Director of Arts and Leisure for Reading from 1997, with a portfolio including the arts and theatre services as well as libraries, museums and archives, sport and leisure, and tourism.

His initial career was in theatre and concert hall management, including several years as Director of the major regional presenting theatre and concert hall, The Hexagon, Reading. Here he programmed across several artforms including a significant orchestral concert series. Between 1990 and 2011 he also led the establishment in Reading of the UK's major annual world music festival, the WOMAD Festival, in partnership with the WOMAD organisation.

He is a former Vice President of the Theatrical Management Association (TMA).

Michael was born in Belfast and educated in Northern Ireland, The Wirral, and Cambridge. He is married with two daughters.

November 2011