



**\*\* UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 HOURS, WEDNESDAY 25  
FEBRUARY 2009\*\***

**“Keep being excellent and we’ll support you in downturn”, public  
tells British orchestras**

**Stress-busting concerts beat sports events and computer games as more than half  
say we should support arts despite the recession**

The British public overwhelmingly value orchestras, despite the economic downturn. 74% agree they provide high quality live music, and two thirds say orchestras are an important part of our cultural life, even in the recession, according to a new ICM poll released by the Association of British Orchestras today.

The new figures put concert-going above sports events and computer games as activities people prefer to do in the downturn and 37% of people believe tickets sales increase because concerts relieve stress. More than 53% say it is important to support the arts in the downturn.

A third of the public (35%) also say that orchestras will sell tickets in the recession when they appeal to a broader audience.

Mark Pemberton, Director of the Association of British Orchestras said:

“The public are telling us that the arts and orchestras matter even in the midst of an economic downturn. British people know we have superb orchestras of the highest quality. This poll shows that, in a recession, excellence and wide appeal go hand in hand.

“But, despite these encouraging figures, we know we have to continue to work hard to put on popular and challenging programmes and to reach out to communities which have not traditionally seen themselves as concert goers. Orchestras are doing a great deal to make themselves sustainable and maintain their reputation for excellence, and the public is responding.”

**Ends.**

**Note to editors**

The Association of British Orchestras’ annual conference runs from 25-27 February at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff. This year’s theme is SUSTAIN: the orchestra’s future in a changing climate.

For examples of orchestras' outreach work, images, more details about the ABO conference, or to talk to someone from the ABO and/or the orchestras, please contact:

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### **Polling summary**

ICM interviewed a random sample of 1039 adults aged 18+ via online between 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2009. Surveys were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Further information at [www.icmresearch.co.uk](http://www.icmresearch.co.uk)

**Question 1 a): In times of recession, which of the following are you most likely to do?**

**Question 1 b): Which others are you likely to do at times of recession?**

Eat meals out 27%

Buy tickets to a concert/play/opera/ballet 16%

Buy a new computer game 12%

Subscribe to a TV package (e.g. Sky, Setanta) 9%

Buy tickets to a sports match (e.g. football) 7%

Buy a new mobile phone 7%

None of these 55%

Don't know 5%

**Question 2: Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the last 6 months some orchestras have experienced strong ticket sales compared to the same period last year. Which of the following do you think describes the reason for this increase?**

People enjoy the experience and it takes their minds off individual stress 37%

The concerts are appealing to a broader audience 35%

Orchestras are promoting their concerts better 19%

It's good value for money 14%

Appeals to the high class/affluent 1%

Not interested <1%

Classical music is becoming popular <1%

Offer free/reduced priced tickets <1%

Other 1%

Don't know 30%

**Question 3: Thinking about the role of orchestras, particularly during a recession, how far do you agree or disagree with the following statements about British orchestras?**

They are good for Britain's image abroad: net agree 59%, net disagree 4%

The musicians are of the highest quality: net agree 61%, net disagree 2%

They provide people with the opportunity to experience high quality live music: net agree 74%, net disagree 2%

They are an important part of British cultural life: net agree 65%, net disagree 5%

They do a lot of education work with young people: net agree 44%, net disagree 5%  
They contribute to the economy: net agree 33%, net disagree 13%

**Question 4: Some people say that during times of recession it's still important to support the arts, other people disagree. Do you agree or disagree that it is still important to support the arts during a recession?**

Agree: 53%  
Disagree: 19%  
Don't know: 28%