

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MONDAY 18th JULY ****

Public demand ‘as strong as ever’ as orchestras take music to millions

**New figures paint positive picture of sector, but fears remain over impact
of public funding cuts**

As the world’s biggest classical music festival, the BBC Proms, started this weekend, new figures released today show the UK’s orchestras are playing to millions of people across the country – and to more young people than ever before. But the effect of funding cuts is yet to be felt, warn sector leaders, who fear many orchestras will be forced to reduce the number of performances in future seasons.

The new figures from the Association of British Orchestras (ABO) show that British orchestras played to a collective UK audience of more than **4 million (4.18m)** in 2009/2010, including nearly **half a million** (472,805) under-18s.

They also reveal that orchestras played **over 3,700 concerts in the UK last year**. If the number of international performances is also included, British orchestras performed 4,164 concerts in the year - that’s 12 concerts a day.

Statistics also reveal that orchestras are making their public investment work hard, with nearly **54% of the sector’s income being earned**. Orchestras also saw their fundraising efforts pay dividends with contributed income and sponsorship at almost £18m.

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

“Demand for classical music is as strong as ever in the UK and the latest statistics compare favourably with figures from the USA showing a 13% decline in audiences over the past decade.

“This is testimony to the work orchestras have done in developing their audiences and extending their reach - but this will inevitably be under threat due to funding cuts. With the

reduction in public funding for many orchestras, there is added pressure to make investment work hard – which is exactly what the figures show the orchestras are already doing.”

And with the London 2012 Festival less than a year away -the major cultural festival taking place from June-September next year - orchestras up and down the country will be taking part in national moment of music making during the BBC-led project, [Music Nation](#), on the weekend of 3-4 March 2012.

Mark Pemberton added:

“With the eyes of the world on the UK next year, Music Nation is a huge opportunity for Britain to showcase its great orchestras across a single weekend of live music and participation. Orchestras are a key part of the British cultural scene - and our latest figures show that despite tough economic times, the British public are as keen as ever to experience the thrill of a live orchestra.”

Ends.

For a full copy of the Key Facts 2009/2010, interviews with Mark Pemberton or representatives from the orchestras, please contact:

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Music Nation

For more information on the Music Nation programme, see <http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/our-work/projects-and-programmes/music-nation/music-nation/bbc-music-nation-programme>

About the Association of British Orchestras

The ABO is the national body representing the collective interests of professional orchestras throughout the UK and you can find details of all our members on this site, orchestral facts and information as well as the latest news and comment on the issues that affect British orchestras.

www.abo.org.uk

When compared to some of the UK’s popular spectator sports, the new audience figures for orchestral concerts come out on top:

- In 2010 just over 2.1 million attended Rugby League superleague fixtures: nearly 50% more than this attended an orchestral concert.

- 1.8 million saw a top flight Guinness Premiership rugby union game in the 2009-10 season – fewer than half as many as went to an orchestral concert
- 462,919 tickets were sold for the County Cricket Championships in England/Wales in 2005 – a fraction of the number who see orchestral concerts