



**\*\* UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 HOURS,  
TUESDAY 18 AUGUST \*\***

**HUGE INCREASE IN CHILDREN EXPERIENCING  
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS, REPORT REVEALS**

**RISE OF 55,000 THIS YEAR ALONE – AS ORCHESTRAS SEEK TO  
EXTEND PROVEN BENEFITS TO ALL CHILDREN**

**Culture Secretary, Ben Bradshaw, said:**

*"I welcome this report. It is fantastic that more young people are attending concerts and having the opportunity to listen to live music.*

*Music has the power to change lives, but is also important in its own right for its ability to enrich and provide fun. It is hugely important that our best orchestras continue to play their part in introducing children to music."*

**Schools Minister, Vernon Coaker, said:**

*"This report from the Association of British Orchestras demonstrates a shared commitment to give all children access to quality music opportunities, and I welcome the increased numbers of children experiencing orchestral concerts. We have invested £332m to 2011 to ensure that every child experiences the positive social, behavioural and educational benefits music offers. Hearing and being involved in live performances is a vital part of that. We also recently announced our plans for a year of events celebrating music to run from September this year. At the heart of this we will be offering even more children and schools the chance to experience high quality live music performances, such as those offered by the ABO."*

More children than ever before are now experiencing an orchestral concert during their time at school, the most comprehensive study of its kind reveals today.

The Association of British Orchestras' (ABO) report, **Live the Experience**, shows that the number of youngsters experiencing concerts has surged by 55,000 to over 300,000 this year alone – up almost 20% on last year.

The increase means that almost half (48.9%) of all schoolchildren will now experience a live orchestral performance during their time at school, helping to boost their learning ability, creativity and interest in the arts. The ABO's 10-year ambition is to offer the opportunity for every child to hear a live orchestral performance by 2017.

In **Live the Experience** the ABO calls for a much more coherent approach to concert provision across the UK. This, it says, would be more cost effective and reach more children missing out on orchestral concert experiences in hard-to-reach communities in rural and urban areas.

**Live the Experience** shows that:

- 305,000 school children will experience an orchestral concert this year – an increase of 18% on last year
- Of the average 623,320 children in each school year, 48.9% will experience a concert during their time at school
- 400 concerts were given by orchestras for schoolchildren in 2007/2008 – with an average of 72 more concerts planned for 2008/2009
- 26,369 schoolchildren experienced orchestral concerts performed at their school in 2007/2008
- Tickets for 193 concerts, almost half of all those given, were either free or under £3 to the school
- £4 million per annum is being spent out of existing funds and resources to deliver concerts to schoolchildren.

Chi-chi Nwanoku MBE, Principal Double Bassist for the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, said:

“Children experiencing live orchestral concerts really matters. It is so valuable for the way they learn and get creative – and nothing can replace the real thing. When I was at school I was taken to two orchestral concerts – and both left an indelible print on my memory. I will never forget how struck I was by the orchestra; riveted by the spectacle and feeling of it even though I didn't necessarily know the pieces I was listening to.

“And now, as a professional musician, I see first hand how experiencing a live performance can inspire and excite young people. We've got to make sure that every child is given that opportunity.”

**Live the Experience**, which covers all concerts given for school aged children by professional orchestras across England, makes several key recommendations to improve school children's access to orchestral concerts including:

- Pooling national and regional resources to widen the reach of concerts and improve value for money
- Further studies of what works to inform government and local authorities
- Centrally managed information to bring schools' requirements and orchestras' concert opportunities together
- Joint planning between orchestras and local authorities and their representatives at a national level.

Timothy Walker AM, Chair of the ABO, said today:

"For the first time we have a picture of the access schoolchildren have to orchestral concerts and the progress that is being made.

"Providing access to concerts for young people is central to what orchestras do and it is our ambition that every child should have this opportunity at some time during their school life. The best news in this report is that a relatively small investment will bring huge returns in terms of the numbers of children we can reach."

"We now want to see similar studies carried out in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order for the ambition to be met."

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#### **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

Studies, including the Arts Council England's *Taking Part* study, have repeatedly shown that learning a musical instrument improves children's capacity to learn and do well at school and that when young people experience live orchestral performances it can be the catalyst for their exploration of creativity and music making. It is available here:

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/project\\_detail.php?sid=13&id=373&page=2](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/aboutus/project_detail.php?sid=13&id=373&page=2)

**Chi-chi Nwanoku**, principle double bassist for the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and an ABO board member, is available for interviews and comments on the paper - including her first experiences of orchestral music and current work with schoolchildren.

**Timothy Walker** is Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chair of the Association of British Orchestras. He is available for interviews.

Report Author and Music Education Specialist, **Fiona Harvey**, is available for interview **this week only**.

For a copy of **Live the Experience**, further information, images and interviews contact:

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The Association of British Orchestras exists to support, promote and advance the interests and activities of professional orchestras in the UK.

For more information see [www.abo.org.uk](http://www.abo.org.uk)