



ABO CONFERENCE 2019: CROSS BORDER

A SPRINGBOARD FOR DEBATE ABOUT BORDER ISSUES IN THE UK CLASSICAL MUSIC INDUSTRY, INCLUDING BREXIT, DIGITAL, DIVERSITY AND AUDIENCES

The UK's most prestigious classical music forum, the Association of British Orchestras (ABO) annual conference, will be hosted by the Ulster Orchestra at the ICC Belfast, from 23-25 January.

At a time of anxiety for the sector over Brexit, with potentially restricted access to talent and increased red tape in European touring markets, Director Mark Pemberton says:

"Brexit will of course be a topic, but with so little concrete information available even at this advanced stage, we will be taking the opportunity to look beyond geography and politics. What other boundaries exist? What are the barriers that inhibit reaching wider audiences? How can we make meaningful progress around diversity and inclusion? There is competition in our sector, but it is also an industry that's incredibly good at sharing ideas and best practice. We're proud of the reputation that the ABO Conference has built as the best forum of its kind for open discussion of all these issues."

Delegates will be welcomed by **Gavin Reid**, Chair, ABO, **Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle CBE DL**, Lord Lieutenant of Belfast, with a keynote address by **Sean Rainbird**, Director, National Gallery of Ireland. **Richard Wigley**, Managing Director, Ulster Orchestra says: *"The Ulster Orchestra couldn't be happier to welcome delegates from across the orchestral sector in the UK and beyond. We are proud to be part of Northern Ireland and its new-found flourishing place in the world. A warm Belfast welcome awaits."*

Visiting speakers **Steve Brosvik** of Nashville Symphony and **John Kieser** of New World Symphony will be giving updates on how programmes in the US are supporting and encouraging equity, diversity and inclusion. UK Disability Champion for Arts & Culture **Andrew Miller** will present a session, along with conductor **James Rose**, with updates on the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Change Makers project, which has created a disabled-led professional ensemble.

Other cross-border issues on the agenda will be the progress that is being made to counter the historic 'us and them' divide between musicians and management. The ABO's 'Find Your Way' programme, now in its third year, aims to boost the careers for future leaders in the sector, and actively encourages orchestral musicians to participate. Graduate of the scheme **Catherine Arlidge MBE** – violinist in the CBSO and now Artistic and Educational Director of the National Children's Orchestras of Great Britain - and current participants, will present at the conference.

In the final session, conservative thinker and polemicist **Sir Roger Scruton** will address an audience who face the seemingly competing and incompatible demands of artistic

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excellence and public accessibility. He will defend the concept of elitism - a culture which distinguishes between knowledge and opinion - where knowledge must set standards and distinguish false from good: "...this is something which much concerns the advocate of classical music, because he knows that the classical tradition of music contains within it precious achievements, precious knowledge, and a precious world of feeling which requires a certain effort to enter." [Roger Scruton](#)

The ABO is delighted to welcome back Principal Media Partner **Classic FM**, and to announce a new relationship with **Help Musicians UK** as Charity Partner, as well as welcoming **International Arts Manager** as Media Associate. **Classical Music** magazine, newly acquired by the Mark Allen Group, continues its long association as Print Media sponsor for the conference and the ABO/Classical Music Awards which will be hosted by **Anne-Marie Minhall** from Classic FM. The ABO is grateful for the support of **Arts Council of Northern Ireland**, and its hosts the **Ulster Orchestra**.

On the first evening, delegates will attend the ABO's award dinner, with partner Classic FM, which will see the presentation of the **ABO Award** and the **ABO/Classical Music Awards**, which recognize excellence and innovation in orchestras concert halls, and artist management. On the second evening, there will be a 'cross-border' concert with the **Ulster Orchestra**, conducted by **Rafael Payare**, bolstered by musicians from across Europe for a performance of Shostakovich's huge Symphony No 4. A pre-concert reception will be hosted by **ISM**. A post-concert event will be jointly hosted by **Alan Davey CBE, Controller BBC Radio 3** with **Peter Johnston, Director BBC Northern Ireland**. The conference opens with the premiere of **Béal** by **Ryan Molloy**, especially commissioned for the Ulster Orchestra and performed by its brass musicians, followed by the **Čhavoreng** choir, part of a project by the Czech Philharmonic – and supported by **British Council Northern Ireland** – to rehabilitate the reputation of the marginalised and stigmatised Roma community in the Czech Republic.

Further details of the new partnership between Help Musicians UK and the ABO will be announced in the closing session of the conference.

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