

ULSTER ORCHESTRA PROPOSAL TO BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

UO's Financial Position

- The UO's grant from the ACNI has been cut by 14.4% (£317K) since March 2013. It has been told to expect a further in-year cut of 4% in 2014/15 and a cut of 10-12% in 2015/16. All these cuts will amount to a 28% (£609K) reduction in ACNI funding since March 2013.
- The UO's payment from Radio 3 has been cut by 23.5% (£126K) since March 2011. Radio 3 is proposing a further reduction (£82K) in its payment in 2016/17. If this cut is implemented, it will amount to a 27% (£208K) reduction in BBC funding since March 2011.
- Taking the ACNI and BBC cuts together, they amount to 28% (£817K) since March 2011. The total increase in the RPI since 2011 is 13.2%. To maintain our 2011 position in real terms, therefore, would require not £817K but £925K.
- 2013/14 yielded an operating deficit of approximately £562K, leaving cash reserves of about £513K. Even without the in-year cut in the ACNI grant, it will be most difficult to produce a break-even budget for 2014/15. We are currently forecasting a deficit of about £400K, which will reduce our reserves to an estimated £100K by 31 March 2015; taking into account the 4% in-year cut in the ACNI grant, the reserves will be wiped out.
- Cuts of the above magnitude – to an orchestra that is already underfunded and understaffed – are unsustainable; we would be bankrupt and have to go into administration. Indeed, we have delayed this year's AGM – at which the annual accounts are presented – to the last possible moment (December); if we had submitted them in September, as we usually do, our auditors would have had "to qualify" them to indicate that the UO was no longer a "going concern", with the result that we would have had to cease trading. Northern Ireland would then have the dubious distinction of being the only region in these islands that did not have a symphony orchestra.

Letter of Comfort

- In view of the above financial situation, the Board has concluded that the cuts being proposed by the ACNI are such that, unless we can get further financial support by November 2014, it will have no option – either financially or legally – but to announce the closure of the UO. And if the Orchestra were to close, its closure would be permanent not temporary: staff, particularly the professional players, would quickly drift away to find work in GB, the ROI, and elsewhere.
- Hence we are approaching Belfast City Council for support. The first aspect of our approach to Belfast City Council is a request for a letter of comfort.
- As can be seen from the above figures, the Ulster Orchestra's reserves are likely to be wiped out by March 2015. If the Ulster Orchestra is not to have its accounts "qualified" in

November and to continue as a “going concern”, it requires about £500K to cover the projected deficit of £400K as well as the 4% (£75K) cut to its 2014/15 ACNI grant. This would stabilise the Orchestra’s financial position and should allow the auditors to sign off the accounts without qualification. This, together with the second aspect of our proposal below, should enable the Board to sanction continued trading.

- Hence our first request to Belfast City Council is for a letter of comfort, a “cash-deficiency agreement”, in which the Council agrees to indemnify the Ulster Orchestra for any deficit up to £500K that it incurs by 31 March 2015.
- Our second request is for a rent-free period for the use of the Ulster and Waterfront Halls.

Rent-free Period

- As a result of the ACNI and BBC funding cuts, in 2013 the Ulster Orchestra reduced the number of offices it rented in the Ulster Hall. We are now operating in cramped conditions with insufficient space for staff, meetings and storage. The annual rent and service charge equates to c. £30K on a monthly, rolling-lease basis.
- Although we have reduced the number of concerts we hold in the Waterfront Hall because of its higher charges, the annual rental for rehearsals and concerts still amounts to c. £120K, with the need for marginally more rehearsal time at a cost of an additional £20K.
- Thus our total rental rate (offices, rehearsals, and concerts) is c. £170K, which means that the annual grant the UO receives from Belfast City Council (£149,283) and more is paid back to the Council to cover the rent.
- When the Ulster Hall was refurbished in 2006, DCAL and the ACNI contributed 31.3% (£2.7m) of the total cost on condition that the Hall would be the permanent home of the Ulster Orchestra, with DCAL saying that this permanent home should be provided on a rent-free basis. In addition, as the “anchor tenant” of the Ulster Hall, the Ulster Orchestra’s accommodation requirements were to take priority, with the needs of other users of the Hall being fitted around those of the Orchestra.
- Hence we request that Belfast City Council allows us (a) to reclaim all our original office space in the Ulster Hall and (b) receive a rent-free period of five years for both the offices and the two halls while still receiving the £149K grant annually.
- The acceptance of this proposal would make a significant difference to the Orchestra’s loss-making position, allow it greater flexibility to develop strategically, and further our collaboration on special projects with the management of the Ulster and Waterfront Halls: on for example, film nights, the opening of the conference centre at the Waterfront Hall, the 50th Anniversary of the Ulster Orchestra in 2016, a potential conference in 2017 of the Association of British Orchestras, and the use of the Ulster Orchestra for other civic events.

Advantages to the Ulster Orchestra

- If BCC were to accept the above two aspects of our proposal, it would not only save the Ulster Orchestra from going into administration in November, it would also enable the Orchestra to take advantage of the following developments that will occur over the next six months:
 - Discussions with DCAL to provide financial support for an early retirement scheme for the Orchestra's players.
 - Discussions with the Department of Education to provide a more strategic, cohesive and synergistic programme of musical education in schools.
 - Discussions with private trusts and foundations to support education and other social projects.
 - Discussions with the BBC that will hopefully lead to a different structural relationship between it and the Ulster Orchestra and to larger fees for its services.
 - Work that Trevor Green, a highly experienced orchestral consultant, and we are engaged on to redesign the operating model of the Ulster Orchestra, including: the Musicians' Union contract, the structure of performance and outreach, and the cost-revenue basis. If BCC's letter of comfort and the rent-free period are to be effective, they have to be accompanied by a long-term plan that will ensure the Ulster Orchestra has a sustainable future.
- Accepting the Ulster Orchestra's proposal would also have cultural, economic, and social benefits for Belfast City Council.

Cultural Benefits of the Ulster Orchestra

- Our auditors – not the most artistically sensitive of people – think “it is inconceivable that there would be no symphony orchestra in Northern Ireland”. And given the enormous cultural, economic and social contribution that the Ulster Orchestra makes to Belfast and Northern Ireland more generally, it is inconceivable that the Orchestra should close, especially on the eve of its 50th Anniversary.
- To start with the cultural benefits, the Ulster Orchestra is NI's main cultural flagship, enhancing the quality of life by providing opportunities for audiences in NI and elsewhere to experience world-class conductors, soloists and music-making.
- The Ulster Orchestra is the musical pulse of Northern Ireland, with its weekly concerts in Belfast; performances across the region; participation in the Belfast Festival at Queen's; its community concerts; and its extensive education and outreach work.

- The Ulster Orchestra is an important cultural partner, collaborating with educational institutions, other arts organisations (e.g. NI Opera, the Belfast Philharmonic Choir), local authorities, and broadcasting institutions.
- The Ulster Orchestra offers performance opportunities for the creative output of Northern Irish composers and for Northern Irish musicians, which would otherwise not exist and which are essential to their career development.

Economic Benefits of the Ulster Orchestra

- **Multiplier Effect**
 - The majority of the Ulster Orchestra's £4m spend occurs within the local economy, largely in Belfast. This direct spend, together with the induced spend (that incurred, for example, by patrons attending the Orchestra's events, the employment of external artists, and additional programming costs incurred by orchestral sponsors and funders in staging events), currently generates a total spend of £2.62 for every £1 provided by the ACNI grant.
 - This multiplier yields an annual cash flow, excluding the ACNI grant, of £3m. When capitalised at a real discount rate of 3%, it implies a cash-flow value to the local economy of £50m over twenty-five years and of a £100m in perpetuity.
 - The above multiplier is narrowly defined, and hence the economic benefit calculated by it is significantly underestimated, because it takes no account of the way in which NI's geographical reach and world standing are enhanced by the Ulster Orchestra.
- **NI's Geographical Reach & World Standing**
 - The Ulster Orchestra's live performances reach audiences in NI of over 70,000 each year. Significant as these audiences are, the Orchestra's relationship with the BBC greatly increases its geographical reach, both nationally and internationally: through broadcasts on BBC2, Radio Ulster, Radio 3, the European Broadcasting Union, NPR in the US, and online streaming worldwide.
 - The Ulster Orchestra has produced more than 70 commercial recordings for Chandos, Naxos, BMG, Hyperion, and Priory & Toccata.
 - Through the Orchestra's collaboration with NI Screen, it has begun to record soundtracks for films. The first was for the Irish Film "A Nightingale Falling", which was released in cinemas in September of this year. The soundtrack will also be released digitally, and the music score by Graeme Stewart will be published, on the Ulster Orchestra's recommendation, by the international publishing house of Faber. The Orchestra also recorded in 2014 the soundtrack for the children's TV series "Puffin Rock". This series is being produced by the Derry/Londonderry animation

firm Dog Ears, is being narrated by Chris O'Dowd, and will be broadcast by Nickolodeon Junior in the UK and RTE Junior in Ireland.

- The Ulster Orchestra is competing against Hull in a bid for the 2017 conference of the Association of British Orchestras and, if successful, the conference will be held in the new conference centre at the Waterfront Hall. As an important element in NI's cultural infrastructure, the Orchestra also adds value to NI's "cultural tourism product" in other ways. And it could be used more extensively to assist politicians in promoting NI overseas as a vibrant place to invest, work, and live.
- In short, the Ulster Orchestra increases NI's geographical reach and world standing, and, in doing so, supports and promotes NI's efforts to attract foreign direct investment, its cultural tourism product, and its growing music, TV and movie industries.

Social Benefits of the Ulster Orchestra

- **Vision & Values**

- The Ulster Orchestra's vision is to be at the heart of Northern Ireland, a major contributor to its quality of life and an ambassador for the region abroad, delivering music to diverse audiences here and around the world.
- A key value of the orchestra is to enrich the lives of people in Northern Ireland as a resource that celebrates our full creative potential, impacts positively on health, education and social inclusion, and enhances the region's reputation as a vibrant cultural force.
- Overcoming barriers to participation within areas of high deprivation and marginalised communities is a priority for the Orchestra as we seek more opportunities to serve the communities in which we are based.
- The Ulster Orchestra believes that its relevance transcends artistic performance to include active participation in music, social inclusion, and the development of a sense of self-worth and regional pride.

- **Current Provision & Building for the Future**

- The Ulster Orchestra has been active for over three decades in bringing engagement and education activities to all areas across Northern Ireland, and has been particularly active working in areas of social and economic deprivation over the past ten years.
- We provide concerts, workshops, seminars, projects, master-classes, regional performances and special ticket schemes, all of which are designed to increase opportunities for a wide cross-section of people in Northern Ireland to explore the world of music.

- In our last full season (2013/14), a total of 25,000 participants were involved in our education and outreach programmes in addition to over 70,000 audience members who attend our concerts in Belfast.
- One project of particular note is the Paper Orchestra Project. In January 2014, with support from a small grant provided by DCAL, we launched the project, working in some of Belfast's most deprived working-class areas.
- The project was created in partnership with the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and the Good Shepherd Primary School in Poleglass, and with the Greater Shankill Area Partnership and Malvern P.S and Wheatfield P.S. in the Greater Shankill Area.
- The schools involved are in areas of high deprivation. The Wheatfield School is in an area that is in the top 2% in terms of overall deprivation, The Malvern School is in an area with the lowest education and skills attainment in Northern Ireland, and is in the top 1% in terms of overall deprivation. The Good Shepherd School is in the Poleglass area, where 25.9% of people have a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activities, only 8.7% have a degree or higher qualification, and 55.9% have no or low qualifications; it is in the top 6% of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland.



- The areas targeted have a challenging historical legacy from the Troubles, with a very high proportion of fatalities occurring within a two-mile radius of each postcode area.
- The aim of the Paper Orchestra NI Project is to familiarise children with the instruments involved in an orchestra and how to take care of them, to allow them to experience the excitement of performing in front of family and friends as part of an orchestra, and to instil an interest in music and learning to play an instrument.

- The project worked with 81 primary school children who used cardboard templates to create their own “paper instruments”, which they then individually painted and decorated. The children engaged in music tuition workshops led by Orchestra players, all of whom have many years’ experience in teaching young children.
- Phase One of the project culminated in two free performances of “Peter and the Wolf” by the Ulster Orchestra playing alongside the paper orchestra within the communities targeted (at the Dairy Farm Shopping Centre on the Stewartstown Road and the Boys’ Model School in West Belfast on 13 and 14 March 2014).
- Local news reader Paul Clarke was enlisted to read “Peter and the Wolf”. The project was also the first engagement of our new Chief Conductor, Venezuelan Rafael Payare. Maestro Payare is a former participant in the world famous “El Sistema” programme, which brings immersive classical music to some of the poorest areas of Venezuela and which has been replicated in areas of deprivation throughout the world.
- Beyond the timeframe of the original funded project, the Ulster Orchestra continued to provide tuition to the children until June 2014, culminating in two further community performances, this time with the children using actual instruments (supplied by DCAL) to entertain their teachers, peers and parents.
- We plan to build on the initial work in these communities to create a long-term presence that involves the schools and community organisations in implementing a suitable programme of musical tuition. The key aims of this continuation project are to create opportunities for these children to build confidence and promote positive self-esteem as well as to pursue music as an educational and/or vocational pathway.
- The project also provides an opportunity for the families of these children and the wider community to be involved in classical and orchestral music, and for both communities to come together through the medium of music in a fun and accessible way.
- If we are successful in attracting funding for the next phase of the project, it will be assessed after six months; and the next step will be to investigate ways to expand the project into other parts of Belfast, which will require significant funding from stakeholders across the city.
- The following appendix provides further examples of the work that the Ulster Orchestra does on a regular basis, and gives an outline of what we have planned for the coming year to provide a service that is inclusive and accessible to all.

APPENDIX

Educational Workshops: Schools

The Ulster Orchestra offers interactive educational workshops for nursery, primary and special educational settings as follows:

All About Rhythm Animal Magic Around the Word The Beach Party Beauty and the Beast Big Bad Bass Cartoon Capers Disney Favourites French Matinee Jingle all the Way Movie Magic Music, Moods and Movies Music Through the Seasons	Nellie the Elephant The Pied Piper Pirates Ahoy! Simply Samba Sketches of Spain Sound Works String-Tastic Viva Violas The Water Cycle The Snowman Live Time Travel Come and Play
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Between March 2012 and March 2013, we visited 125 schools in six counties. In the 2013/14 season, 25% of all schools visited were in the bottom 20% in terms of measures of multiple deprivation. A specific example of this work was the project created around Britten's 100th Anniversary, "Giving Britten a Voice", which worked with 200 children from Millennium Integrated P.S. in Saintfield, Botanic P.S., and St Kieran's P.S. in Poleglass.

Education Workshops: Post-primary and Adults with Special Educational Needs

The Ulster Orchestra provides a variety of activities and workshops for post-primary and adults with special educational needs (SEN). As well as bespoke activities, which are sometimes necessary when working within an SEN environment, we offer the following set programmes:

Adopt a Player Ensemble Concerts Introducing the Instruments of the Orchestra Open Rehearsals All About Rhythm Music Tuition Pre-concert talks Student Standby Scheme Thank you for the Music Master-classes – piano, violin, horn, clarinet A day with Ulster Orchestra Players Good Vibrations GCSE Elements School Orchestra Workshops
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The Orchestra's strategic engagement plan, which will be rolled out in 2014/15, will actively target specific post-primary and SEN schools located in social and economic disadvantaged areas, and will focus on five-six core education and outreach projects. We will continue to provide workshops and other activities alongside these projects.

Educational Workshops: Adults

Ulster Orchestra players have been actively developing over many years a set of schools and adult education centres where they work on a regular basis. A renewed focus on targeting specific areas of social and economic deprivation will be in place for the 2014/15 season, with community groups consulted on needs, and with the emphasis on creating bespoke workshops for community organisations and adult education centres. Some examples of what we are already doing are outlined below.

Move to the Music

The Move-to-the-Music Programme targets isolation and loneliness among older people, specifically targeting rural communities. Part-funded by corporate supporter JTI, it supports people aged 70 plus. The programme provides door-to-door transport, free tickets for an Ulster Orchestra concert, and refreshments for residents from three geographic areas: Down (covering rural Ards, Castlereagh and Down Districts), Co Antrim (focused on Ballymena) and Co. Armagh.

To ensure we help the most vulnerable and isolated elderly people in each locality, the Orchestra works with Age NI and the Open Door Club, and also with the Community Transport Network that offers a door-to-door service to participants for six concerts per season. The initial three-year pilot has been so successful that the Ulster Orchestra will expand the scheme to cover the Newry, Dungannon and Moyle Districts in the 2014/15 season, and increase the concerts offered from six to eight. This will provide free access to our concerts for 3,360 vulnerable, elderly people from across Northern Ireland over the next season, which compares with 1,260 people from the 2013/14 season.

Hear Our Voice

The Hear-Our-Voice Programme actively encourages participation in classical music activities by a number of targeted community groups working with the elderly and adults with special educational needs in areas of social and economic disadvantage. It brings members of these communities together to participate in interactive workshops throughout a one-year period. These groups then come together for a final event (in 2013 it was a special Christmas concert in Ballymena).

This cross-partnership initiative works with Lisnafillan Community Care (Alternative Angles), North Belfast Senior Citizen Forum, Harryville Partnership Initiative, Women's Aid, and Age NI. A recent evaluation of the project indicated that it is delivering on its objectives, and we are planning to expand the project to include other groups in the areas targeted, for example the "Men's Sheds" project in North Belfast.

This cross-partnership approach ensures that we are: maximising the social impact of our work across a number of areas of specific need; helping to bring people together who would not otherwise have the opportunity; and making the world of classical music more accessible and fun.

Pricing Policies to Encourage Access and Participation

The Ulster Orchestra's policy is to price all its concerts affordably in an attempt to reach out to all members of the community. Tickets range in price from £6.00 to £22.00 (Ulster Hall) and £8.00 to £28.00 (Waterfront Hall), and for the 2014/15 season all tickets to our season concerts for students, children and the unwaged will be priced at £5.00. We will also continue to offer a reduced Christmas Community Concert at the rate of £3.00 in the Ulster Hall, which is open to all community and

charitable organisations. We also offer a group discount that provides a free ticket for every ten tickets booked and further discounts for booking over thirty tickets.

It is also part of the Orchestra's sponsorship policy that when securing contracts with corporate sponsors and supporters, we designate up to fifty tickets per concert to be allocated to community groups from across Northern Ireland. For example, from next season fifty tickets for every lunchtime concert (8 concerts in total) will be allocated to groups working with the homeless, elderly, and people with special educational needs. We have also been proactive in targeting community groups in working-class areas: for example, allocating 352 complimentary tickets to twelve community groups from working-class areas since October 2013, and providing reduced-price tickets to approximately 1,000 people from various community groups and charities in the 2013/14 season.

Accessibility: Challenges and Barriers

The Ulster Orchestra is Northern Ireland's symphony orchestra and is a resource for all sectors of the community, including working-class and marginalised groups. A number of factors affect the accessibility of arts organisations, including the Ulster Orchestra, to working-class communities and include:

- A lack of general interest from within communities in particular forms of artistic expression, including classical and orchestral music.
- Prohibitive costs, including those of tickets and transport.
- A lack of targeted educational provision for the development of musicality within many schools in working-class areas, and a lack support within the home and community for classical and orchestral music.

Hence there is a need for artistic institutions, including the Ulster Orchestra:

- to communicate the value of the arts to working class communities;
- to change perceptions towards institutions such as the Ulster Orchestra, which are sometimes viewed as elitist or "out of reach"; and
- to strengthen the links between already successful engagement work in working-class communities and the Orchestra's artistic output as a whole.

And the Ulster Orchestra is engaging in these activities as it collaborates with key stakeholders to develop new projects in working-class communities.