

SUBMISSION TO THE CAL COMMITTEE ON THE INCLUSION OF WORKING-CLASS COMMUNITIES IN ULSTER ORCHESTRA ACTIVITIES

Introduction:

1. 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.
2. To help us to be more relevant and service-driven we have been providing concerts, workshops, seminars, cross-curricular creative projects, master classes, regional performances and special ticket schemes, all 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 (2012-13), a total of 25,651 participants were involved in our education and outreach programme.
3. 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 to our community transcends artistic performance to include active participation in music, social inclusion and the development of a sense of self-worth and regional pride. This belief has shaped the development of a new strategic direction for the Orchestra.
4. The current business model of the Ulster Orchestra includes specific focus on:
 - balancing performances and programmes to match constituencies' interests and to expand the reach of these activities regionally, nationally and internationally;
 - using the full orchestra and small ensemble performances to extend the reach and relevance of the orchestra throughout Northern Ireland and to new and diverse audiences; and
 - increasing youth and education programming and interaction, particularly in areas of social and economic disadvantage.
5. In terms of engagement and education, the goal of the orchestra is 'to deliver exceptional community engagement and educational initiatives which are directly led by the Orchestra's artistic vision'.
6. In reaching out to working class communities, the Ulster Orchestra recognises that there is a diversity of needs and a broad range of issues within these communities. Some of the issues are indicative of deprivation (poor access to education and employment, high criminality, poor standards of health, poor quality of life) while others are issues which

concern the broader society but which are exacerbated by living in an area of high deprivation (deficient levels of care of older people, poor inclusion of marginalised groups such as the disabled, treatment of ex-prisoners, low levels of engagement of youth).

7. In exploring how we can contribute to efforts to address deprivation in working-class areas, the Orchestra places great importance on creating strong partnerships which use the knowledge and expertise within communities to allow the Orchestra to adapt its methods of delivery to best help and serve those partners in their core work. We will continue to develop and sustain relationships with key groups across Northern Ireland (such as schools, youth and community groups, hospitals, respite care facilities, residential homes and prisons) building on existing networks and identifying new partners as we go into the next delivery period (the 2014/15 season).

Education and Outreach Activities:

8. General engagement aims, such as enriching life through music, are core to the Ulster Orchestra's activities. As part of these activities the Ulster Orchestra has refocused the existing education programme in order to offer more meaningful engagement with various stakeholder groups. Our new strategy is in step with DCAL's desire to 'make a meaningful contribution to social inclusion' by way of projects that 'tackle particular social issues'.
9. Although perhaps not widely known, the Ulster Orchestra has already been active for a number of years in bringing engagement and education activities to all areas across Northern Ireland, including working-class areas. However, in order to more clearly target these areas our new strategy places an increased focus on communicating opportunities for involvement more directly to these groups. The projects discussed in this report provide examples of the work that we are delivering already and an outline of what we have planned for the coming months to develop relationships with key partners in order to provide a service which is inclusive and accessible to all.

Educational Workshops - Schools

10. 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. Developing relationships with schools in working-class areas is a by-product of these workshops, and in the 2013-14 season 25% of all schools visited by the Ulster Orchestra were in the bottom 20% in terms of multiple measures of deprivation.

A specific example was the project created around Britten's 100-year anniversary, 'Giving Britten a Voice', which worked with 200 children from Millennium Integrated PS in Saintfield, Botanic PS, Botanic, and St Kieran's PS, Poleglass.

The Paper Orchestra NI

11. As a part of our new strategic direction, in January 2014 the Ulster Orchestra launched the Paper Orchestra NI, supported by DCAL. Working in some of Belfast's most deprived working-class areas, the project was created in partnership with the Good Sheppard Primary School in Poleglass, the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership, Malvern P.S, Wheatfield P.S. in the Greater Shankill Area and the Greater Shankill Area Partnership.
12. The schools involved are in areas of high deprivation. The Wheatfield School is in an area which 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 Sheppard School is in the Poleglass area, where 25.9% of people have a long-term health problem or a 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; the area is in the top 6% of the most deprived in Northern Ireland. The areas targeted have a challenging historical legacy from the Troubles, with an extremely high proportion of fatalities during the Troubles occurring within a 2 mile radius of each postcode area.
13. The aim of the Paper Orchestra NI project is to familiarise children with 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 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, and these helped to make classical and orchestral music more accessible to the children. All the players involved have many years' experience in teaching young children. Phase one of the project culminated in two free community performances of 'Peter and the Wolf' by the Ulster Orchestra 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.
14. The performances themselves enlisted the help of local news reader Paul Clark to read 'Peter and the Wolf' and were the first community engagement of our new Chief Conductor Designate, 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.

15. The Ulster Orchestra plans to build on this initial work to create a long-term presence in these communities, involving the schools and community organisations in implementing a suitable programme of musical tuition. The concept of the paper orchestra comes from the original 'El Sistema' programme and, with the support of our funding partners, we intend to continue the work of this project in the flavour of 'El Sistema' by providing actual instruments to the children and giving lessons to them within their own environment over the next 12 months.
16. 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 possibly pursue music as an educational pathway. It 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. We will assess the impact of this project after 12 months and, if it proves successful, we will investigate ways to expand the project into other parts of Northern Ireland.

Education Workshops – Post Primary and Adults with Special Educational Needs

17. We provide 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
Masterclasses – piano, violin, horn, clarinet
A day with Ulster Orchestra Players
Good Vibrations
GCSE Elements
School Orchestra Workshops

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 to six medium-sized core education and outreach projects. We will continue to provide workshops and other activities alongside these projects, within budgetary constraints.

Education Workshops - Adults

18. Ulster Orchestra players have been active in various communities across Northern Ireland for many years and have developed a base of schools and adult education centres where it works 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 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

19. The Move-to-Music programme focuses on isolation and loneliness in the older community, specifically targeting rural communities. Part-funded by corporate supporter JTI, it supports people aged 70 and over. 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 work with 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, which offer 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 for a further 2 years, and increase the concerts offered from six to eight. This will provide free access to our concerts to 3,360 vulnerable elderly people over the next season from across Northern Ireland. This compares to 1,260 people from the 2013/14 season.

Hear our Voice

20. “Hear our Voice” actively encourages participation in classical music activities by a number of targeted community groups, including the elderly, adults with special educational needs, and those in areas of specific 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.
21. 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, targeting for example the ‘Men’s Sheds’ project in North Belfast.
22. This cross-partnership approach ensures that we are maximising the social impact of our work across a number of areas of specific need and are making the world of classical music more accessible and fun.

Women’s Aid – Don’t Silence the Violence

23. This project saw a year-long collaboration with ABCLN Women's Aid, which is dedicated to providing refuge, support, information and training in the Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Larne & Newtownabbey areas to women and children who are suffering abuse within the home.
24. The project provided a safe environment for the women to explore ways that music could help them process their experiences, and it provided a platform for them to tell their stories. Ultimately, they created a DVD ‘Don’t Silence the Violence’, which was launched on 10 March in Stormont Buildings. The DVD highlighted the reality of violence against women and children and involved the women taking part in music workshops, and with

help, composing the music that accompanied the DVD. It can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6anD52IxKoE> – please be aware that it contains disturbing scenes.

Pricing Policies to Encourage Access and Participation

25. It is the policy of the Ulster Orchestra to price all its concerts affordably 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 from the 2014/15 season all tickets to our season concerts for students, children and the unwaged will be priced at £5.00. We will 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 30 tickets.
26. It is also part of our sponsorship policy that when securing contracts with corporate sponsors and supporters, we designate up to 50 tickets per concert to be allocated to community groups from across Northern Ireland. To expand on this, from the 2014/15 season 50 tickets for every lunchtime concert (9 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 working in working-class areas, allocating 352 complimentary tickets to 12 community groups from working-class areas since October 2013 (these were the number that were taken up by these groups; the number offered was higher), 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

27. The Ulster Orchestra is Northern Ireland's symphony orchestra and is resource for all sectors of the community, including working-class and marginalised groups. A number of factors affect the accessibility of the Ulster Orchestra to working-class communities and include but are not limited to:
 - A lack of general interest from within communities in particular forms of artistic expression, including classical and orchestral music.
 - Costs, not only in terms of ticketing but also in terms of transport and other associated costs.
 - A lack of targeted educational provision for the development of musicality within many (but not all) schools in working-class areas, and a lack of support within the home and community for classical and orchestral music.
 - A need for artistic institutions to adequately communicate the value of art to working-class communities, including providing role models for communities.
 - A need for artistic institutions to change perceptions towards institutions, such as the Ulster Orchestra, sometimes viewed as elitist or 'out of reach'.

- A need to strengthen the links between already successful engagement work in working-class communities and the Orchestra's artistic output as a whole.
28. We will work with our key stakeholders to develop new projects that will overcome these barriers, while building on the work that has already been done and expanding that which has worked well. We will also programme our season to include concerts that contain more popular music and have cross-genre elements – for example, film music nights, Irish music and dance collaborations, Strictly Come Dancing, and Disney favourites.

Conclusion:

29. Increasing access to the artistic and engagement work that we do for working-class communities is a priority for the Ulster Orchestra. The Orchestra's ability to strengthen already successful links with working-class communities is central to our work.
30. In reflecting on our role on promoting inclusion of working class communities in the Ulster Orchestra activities we draw the following conclusions:
- Creating strong partnerships with a broad range of groups is key to the Ulster Orchestra's strategy for engagement. The knowledge and expertise of community-based professionals allows the Orchestra to deliver interventions which are relevant to target groups and maximise the potential to affect positive change.
 - Targeted interventions which address a range of specific issues and which build on already successful engagement work are parts of the Ulster Orchestra's plan for working successfully in working-class communities.
 - In working with the breadth of groups detailed above, the Ulster Orchestra aims to address a broad diversity of needs within working-class communities.
 - Communicating opportunities for involvement and creating a reputation for excellent delivery within working-class communities is central to the Ulster Orchestra's strategic direction.
 - In creating opportunities for engagement in working-class communities, we are designing and delivering projects which have a range of positive outcomes. The example of the Paper Orchestra demonstrates this:
 - On an individual level the project aims to positively affect the confidence and self-esteem of participants, maximising potential for educational achievement.
 - On a family and community level we are creating community cohesion and a sense of pride.

- On a cross-community level we are bringing polarised communities together through the medium of music in a fun and accessible way.
 - On an artistic level we are tapping into the potential and talent within working-class communities and increasing the chances of individuals from within these communities choosing music as an educational pathway.
- The Ulster Orchestra aims to broaden the reach of its activities by creating affordable opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience and access the work of the Orchestra. Being an active presence in working-class communities and linking our engagement work to our concerts and recordings is central to creating interest within working-class communities. We will continue to hold rehearsals in locations such as the Spectrum Centre, in West Belfast and will continue to look to find suitable locations in other working-class areas across the city.
 - In the next 12 months, the Orchestra will create and deliver a minimum of five to six core education and outreach projects with specific aims and objectives tailored to specific groups, working alongside our existing educational workshops and other activities.
 - In our programming, and recruitment of key personnel (including our new chief conductor Rafael Payare), the Orchestra demonstrates that having a positive impact on social change is central to our mission. It reflects a strong desire to be an orchestra for all, improving the quality of life and impacting positively on health, education and social inclusion.