

PRESS RELEASE

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Music for all: Orchestra's impact on people's lives celebrated with prestigious award from University of Exeter

**Dougie Scarfe OBE receives Honorary Doctorate of Letters in recognition of steering
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra through transformational change**



Dougie Scarfe OBE with the University of Exeter's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lisa Roberts, and Chancellor, Sir Michael Barber ©University of Exeter

- **Dougie Scarfe OBE**, Chief Executive of **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO)** since 2012, accepts an **Honorary Doctorate of Letters** from the **University of Exeter**.
- The award is presented in recognition of Scarfe's work in breaking down barriers and building a more inclusive musical world.
- The **University of Exeter is the Orchestra's home in Devon**. In addition to bringing its world-class symphonic performances, the Orchestra is known for giving free **Schools' Concerts** in the county and supporting the **Exeter Community Family Orchestra**.
- In February, the BSO and the University renewed their partnership with a four-year agreement, deepening support for **creative health and wellbeing** opportunities in Devon.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's (BSO) Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE, has accepted an award from the University of Exeter in recognition of his commitment to breaking down barriers in classical music, through his leadership of the BSO's work since 2012.

The BSO exists to bring incredible music into people's lives. Under Scarfe's direction, the Orchestra has also become known for driving industry change and is as loved for its community-led events throughout its 10,000-square-mile region in the Southwest of England as for its world-class concert hall performances.

It is renowned for its impactful **health and wellbeing programmes** and **music education work** that reaches thousands of people each year.

In recent years, the Orchestra has built a strong reputation for its work to combat **rural isolation** — with its acclaimed **symphonic Digital Concert series** providing a lifeline to many, and its BSO On Your Doorstep series of live chamber-scale concerts in smaller spaces. Its **award-winning dementia work** is much-loved across the Southwest, with hundreds of people experiencing live music in care homes and the community each year.

Audiences in Devon were among the first to witness the **horn virtuoso Felix Klieser**, when he made his UK concerto debut in November 2021, and, under Scarfe's leadership, the Orchestra has driven change to create a more inclusive musical world. It launched **BSO Resound, the world's first disabled-led ensemble at the core of a symphony orchestra**, in 2018 and continues its mission to make the sector ever more accessible, including through the commissioning of new music.

Scarfe has held senior roles as both administrator, educator and performer in a career spanning over three decades. He was formerly Chorus & Orchestra Director and Concerts Director at Opera North, where he began his career as a professional horn player.

A passionate advocate for culture, Scarfe's ongoing efforts to improve access and inclusion in classical music has been widely praised — he was recognised with an OBE in 2023 and announced as a Deputy Lieutenant of Dorset later that year.

Professor Lisa Roberts, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter, said:

"Dougje is a passionate and energetic advocate for culture and the role of music in people's lives. His efforts to improve access and inclusion in classical music, including improving outcomes for disabled musicians and the commissioning of new music, has made a huge difference to people, both in our region and around the country."

"The BSO and the University of Exeter have been working together for many years, and we share a strong partnership which brings much-needed creative opportunity to the South West peninsula. I am delighted that, earlier this year, we renewed our agreement to be the Orchestra's home in Devon, ensuring that music and the arts play a central role in the health and wellbeing of our communities."

"Dougje's dedication to education has also led to many young people experiencing the joy of classical music, and through this he has driven the BSO towards a bright and exciting future. It is an honour to award him a degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa)."

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE DL, said:

"Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is immensely proud that the University of Exeter has been its Devon home for over half a century. In that time, hundreds of thousands of people of all ages have experienced the life-enhancing power of live symphonic music in the University's wonderful Great Hall. The BSO and the University of Exeter have a shared vision to make true, telling and long-term"

impacts in the twenty-first century and it is a privilege for me to accept the Honorary Doctorate of Letters in recognition of the BSO's work to build a more inclusive musical world."

The University of Exeter and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra share a vision to create a fairer, socially just and inclusive society. The University and Orchestra announced a four-year extension to their partnership, earlier this year, pledging a deepened commitment to **supporting creative opportunities** in and around Devon, with particular **focus on access and inclusion and health and wellbeing**.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. High-resolution images available [here](#).
 - a) Dougie Scarfe OBE with Professor Lisa Roberts (President and Vice-Chancellor) and Sir Michael Barber (Chancellor) of University of Exeter ©University of Exeter
 - b) Dougie Scarfe with Mike Shore Nye, Senior Vice-President and Registrar ©University of Exeter
 - b) BSO's Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE DL ©Corin Messer
 - b) Musicians of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
2. **ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** | bsolive.com

One of the UK's best-loved orchestras, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is known for championing the role of culture in people's lives. Based at Lighthouse, Poole, the Orchestra has residencies in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Southampton, and Yeovil, and performs in towns and villages across the region. It is the largest cultural provider in the Southwest of England, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions in the UK.

Celebrated globally for his outstanding musicianship, extraordinary interpretations, and breadth of repertoire, Mark Wigglesworth's appointment as Chief Conductor — from autumn 2024 — builds on the BSO's reputation for the highest quality music-making. The Orchestra boasts an enviable list of named conductors, including Principal Guest Conductor Chloé van Soeterstède, who, from the 2024/25 season, joins Marin Alsop, David Hill MBE, Kirill Karabits OBE, and Andrew Litton.

Highlights of the season include concerto and chamber performances from Artist-in-Residence, the violinist Alena Baeva, and collaborations with Calleva Assistant Conductor, Enyi Okpara, who performs a broad mix of repertoire across the year. Guest artists include conductors Adam Hickox and Kevin John Edusei; pianist Nicholas McCarthy; and accordionist Ksenija Sidorova — and the Orchestra's celebrated Digital Concert series continues into its fifth year, with 17 live performances broadcast globally from Poole.

Committed to new music, the BSO has presented premiere performances of works by Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, Jonathan Dove, Magnus Lindberg, Anna Korsun, Elizabeth Ogonek, Shirley J. Thompson OBE, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Kate Whitley in recent years — and its Voices from the East series has been recognised for unearthing lost symphonic works from eastern Europe and central Asia.

The BSO is known for championing access to high-quality music for all and leads hundreds of community-based events each year, from its award-winning work in health and care settings to partnerships with schools and music education hubs. In the 2024/25 season, it deepens its reach into local communities, including: a new residency in partnership with NHS Dorset; an expansion of its creative health work; and the extension of the BSO Young Associates community music training scheme. Following international attention for igniting change, BSO Resound



— the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra, and winner of the 2019 Royal Philharmonic Society's Impact Award — continues to challenge perceptions.

About Dougie Scarfe OBE DL

Dougie Scarfe was born in 1966, he is 57. He has been Chief Executive of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra since 2012.

In June 2023, Dougie was recognised in His Majesty King Charles III's inaugural Birthday Honours list, being awarded an OBE for his Services to the Arts. He was later awarded the title of Deputy Lieutenant of Dorset, supporting His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant, Angus Campbell.

Dougie was a recipient of the ABO/Classical Music Orchestra Manager of the Year award for dedication to improving access and inclusion in the sector, in 2023. He was also nominated as a 'Cultural Hero 2020' by The Times for his dynamic leadership of the BSO during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dougie trained at the Royal Northern College of Music.

