

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday 11 March 2025

MORE PEOPLE IN THE SOUTH WEST SET TO BENEFIT FROM ORCHESTRA'S COMMUNITY MUSIC WITH LANDMARK £300,000 BOOST



Hospital patients and school children to access more live music ©BSO

- Thousands of people across the South West, from **hospital patients** to **school children**, are set to experience the power of live music thanks to a major injection of funding for **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's** (BSO) community music programme.
- The Orchestra, which is a registered charity, has received the **largest single grant in its history** following a landmark commitment from the **Garfield Weston Foundation**.
- More patients in hospitals and healthcare settings will benefit, as workshops with **Dorset County Hospital** and **Arts in Hospital** expand to **Dorset HealthCare** sites and beyond.
- **The Orchestra plans to deepen access for pupils** in **Bristol, Dorset, Hampshire** and **Yeovil** among the first to experience live music, as workshops and concerts tour the region.
- With the need and demand for music provision growing, the Orchestra is calling on local **philanthropists, businesses** and **charitable foundations** to help sustain and expand these vital programmes.

Music can be life-changing, and studies frequently demonstrate its positive impact on wellbeing, teamwork, reasoning, creativity and self-esteem. While talent is distributed equally, opportunity is not – within Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s 10,000-square-mile territory, districts in 71% of counties have been identified by Arts Council England as Levelling Up for Culture Places.

BSO Participate sits at the core of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s mission of bringing music into people’s lives. Last year, the Orchestra created over **47,000 opportunities for people of all ages** to experience the joy, inspiration and healing power of live music-making.

The **Garfield Weston Foundation** has committed to underpin the work of BSO Participate for a three-year period, pledging £300,000 to the Orchestra’s work in communities. A family-founded grant maker, the Foundation supports quality and excellence within the community, through arts, youth, health and environment initiatives.

Supporting hospitals and healthcare

Last year, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra launched a pilot programme with **Dorset County Hospital** and **Arts in Hospital** with weekly music-making workshops tailored for patients and staff in its dementia, stroke and children’s wards. In 2025, the programme expands across other **Dorset HealthCare** sites, in Poole and Sherborne.

With the support of the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Orchestra aims to work with other key NHS trusts in the region over the next three years, **providing year-round support to benefit an estimated 200 nurses and 1,180 patients** and their families.

Supporting children and young people

The BSO is committed to ensuring all children in the region reap the benefits of music-making. Last year, there were **35,902 participations** in the Orchestra’s music education projects in **66 locations**.

The Orchestra plans to deepen access to its music education projects, thanks to the Foundation’s support. Chamber-scale concerts will continue for Key Stage 1 pupils in **South Somerset**, in partnership with **The Octagon, Yeovil** – plus, SEND schools’ concerts will reach into **Bristol, Dorset** and **Hampshire**.

The **BSO Young Associates** programme - which was launched in 2022 to create a career springboard for aspiring community music leaders traditionally underrepresented in the arts workforce – will also expand. Recent alumni will be embedded deeper into community music-making across the region – and **Creative Training Weekends** for young people will reach an estimated **60 aspiring music leaders** over the three-year period.

Dorset HealthCare and Dorset County Hospital’s Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Bryant, said:
“Bringing live music into the hospital environment has had a powerful impact for everyone. At a ward level it changes the environment for patients, families and staff. It can bring a bit of normality into a very difficult situation – we have seen the power of music to make a difference in caring for people at the end of life, but also to support rehabilitation and feeling better for patients who are on a journey of recovery. We’re looking forward to the next stage of this exciting work in our partnership with the BSO.”

Feedback from a Primary School teacher, in Yeovil, Somerset:

“...a lovely afternoon: informative, well planned and being a free event was very brilliant too!”

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

“This grant is a game-changer for us - we are deeply grateful to the Garfield Weston Foundation, whose support allows us to make a lasting and meaningful impact in schools, hospitals and communities across the South West. As a charity, we rely on ongoing support to keep these vital programmes running – and we invite other funders to join us in transforming lives through the power of music. We know that our creative wellbeing and music education programmes make a difference to people’s lives, and with challenges facing people of all ages we’re certain the positive impacts of this work will be felt deeply.”

To learn more about Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s work in communities across the South West, visit bsolive.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. High-resolution images available [here](#)
 - a) The BSO’s schools’ concerts have introduced thousands to music ©BSO
 - b) BSO Artist-in-Residence Alena Baeva performs at Dorset County Hospital ©BSO
 - c) BSO Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE ©Corin Messer

2. **[ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA](#)** | bsolive.com

*Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth | Artist-in-Residence — Alena Baeva
Principal Guest Conductor — Chloé Van Soeterstède | Associate Guest Conductor – David Hill MBE
Conductor Laureate & Artistic Director, Voices from the East – Kirill Karabits
Conductor Laureate – Andrew Litton | Conductor Emeritus – Marin Alsop
Calleva Assistant Conductor – Enyi Okpara*

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 is resident in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Southampton, and Yeovil, and performs in towns and villages across the region. A leading arts charity, it is the largest cultural provider in the South West 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 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, Marin Alsop, David Hill MBE, Kirill Karabits, 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 through its BSO Participate programme: 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 **Dorset County Hospital and Arts in Hospital;** 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.

A **National Portfolio of Arts Council England,** the BSO is a registered charity and relies on generous philanthropic support from individual donors, gifts in wills, corporate partners, and charitable trusts and foundations. In 2024, the Orchestra was delighted to receive its largest ever funding pledge from a charitable trust: a grant award of £300,000 over three years (2025-27) from the **Garfield Weston Foundation** towards BSO Participate.

3. **ABOUT GARFIELD WESTON FOUNDATION** | garfieldweston.org

Established in 1958, the Garfield Weston Foundation is a family-founded grant-maker that gives money to support a wide variety of charities across the UK. The Foundation's funding comes from an endowment of shares in the Weston family business – a successful model that still exists today. The Weston family have a consistent aim. The more successful the family businesses, the more money the Foundation can donate.

Each year the Foundation gives away its income and donations have continued to grow. Since it was established it has donated over £1.5 billion, of which over half has been given away in the past ten years. In the most recent financial year the Foundation gave away over £100 million to nearly 1,800 charities across the UK.