EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER

THE SOUND OF GROWTH: MAJOR NEW STUDY PROVES RETURN ON CULTURAL INVESTMENT AND THE SOCIAL VALUE GENERATED ACROSS HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SECTORS



Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's (BSO) new report details conclusive proof of its impact across 10,000 square miles of the South and South West of England

- The BSO generated **£11.4m of economic value** and **£17.8m of social value** in 2025, impacting people in hospitals, care homes, concert halls, community centres and schools

- **For every £1 spent, the BSO generates £3.29 turnover** in the regional economy – and **£6.2m GVA** towards the UK's GDP

- **100% of teachers saw cognitive boost in their pupils**: with academic motivation (88%), concentration and focus (81%) and attention to detail (58%) highlighted, alongside improvements in literacy and numeracy

- **93% of people said BSO Participate events improved their mood** and 79% of participants in clinically supported programmes said it improved their quality of life

- The BSO continues to **combat social isolation in rural areas** through its season of **live broadcast concerts** from Lighthouse, Poole, engaging over **19,000 viewers** in 2025.

A major new study, commissioned by Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from creative economy consultancy Sound Diplomacy, details its social and economic impact across its audiences and participants in the South and South West of England. The study examines the Orchestra's work in concert halls, classrooms, care homes, community centres and hospital wards in 2025 and proves conclusively that public investment in culture results in major economic and social value.

Impact on the regional economy

- In 2025, the BSO – which is a registered charity – generated an **economic value of £11.4m** turnover, and **£6.2m GVA** towards the UK's GDP.
- **Every £1 spent by the Orchestra locally created £3.29 of regional turnover**, as money circulated through supply chains, household incomes and audience spending.
- *Audience spend* alone generated £4.67m total turnover and £2.48m GVA, with more than half **(51%) of audiences travelling into the host town** for an event.
- Beyond the balance sheet, the BSO generated a **monetised social value of £17.8m** including cultural participation, health and wellbeing and personal development, with every £1 spent generating over £2

Impact on communities

- 74% left a BSO event feeling a **greater sense of community pride**.
- £3.9m of social value was generated by **fair, local and inclusive employment**.
- **Nearly 20,000 viewers reached beyond the concert hall**, as the BSO's live broadcast Digital Concerts helped those experiencing social and cultural isolation.

Impact on education

- **100% of teachers reported observing at least one cognitive gain**, including academic motivation, concentration and focus, and attention to detail.
- 69% of teachers observed greater **confidence and resilience**
- 54% of teachers saw **improvements in literacy**

Impact in health and care settings

- 79% of participants in clinically supported programmes agreed the BSO **improves their quality of life**
- 67% said the programmes help them **build resilience**
- Participants with additional needs reported equal or greater benefit than the rest of the participants

Impact on mental health and happiness

- 88% of teachers said a BSO programme **made their class happier**
- 96% of concert attendees said a **BSO concert made them feel happier**
- 63% of concert attendees reported a **reduction of stress and improved mental wellbeing**
- **A major regional employer, with a workforce (215 FTE) that is proud and supported**: 95% of freelancers proud and 90% feel sufficiently supported; 97% of staff musicians agree the BSO Committee is active and supports a productive and successful working environment.

Dougie Scarfe OBE, the BSO's Chief Executive, said: *"I'm proud that this report powerfully demonstrates what is possible when a world-class orchestra puts its region and its communities at the heart of everything it does. At the BSO, we've long known that music brings people and communities together – this new report evidences it, alongside the Orchestra's economic might, turning local investment into extraordinary return.*

"Music has – and continues to - contribute enormously to economic and societal growth here in the South West. Making music is at the core of what it is to be human: it contributes to the social fabric of our communities; connects people and supports their wellbeing; ignites potential in the young; and creates a great place to work."

Caitlin Buckley, Sound Diplomacy's Global Head of Projects, said: *"This study set out to measure the economic and social impact of the BSO and found an organisation whose value runs far wider than any single number can hold: it is an orchestra that delivers value many times greater than the resources invested in it, and does so across a region of more than 10,000 square miles – in concert halls and classrooms, hospitals and care homes, cities and villages alike. The data is evidence of the incredible work that the BSO does, and everyone should feel proud of this impact."*

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. It is the largest performing organisation in the South West of England, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions in the UK.

A National Portfolio of Arts Council England, the BSO is a registered charity which relies on generous philanthropic support from individual donors, gifts in wills, corporate partners, and charitable trusts and foundations.

For further details – and to access to the executive summary of the BSO's Social and Economic Impact Report – visit bsolive.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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***The BSO's Social and Economic Impact Report cover the period January to December 2025.**

****Number of people surveyed:**
Concert audiences (1,908 responses); Community participants (98 responses); Teachers (26 responses); BSO staff (181 responses), plus a further 8 in-depth interviews.

1. **High-resolution images available here:**
   a) Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ©Mark Allan
   b) The BSO's weekly music-making at Dorset County Hospital ©BSO
   c) The BSO's Young Associates programme ©Corin Messer
   d) Dougie Scarfe, BSO Chief Executive ©Corin Messer

2. **Methodology**
   The report measured value across two impact areas: Economic Impact (measuring both operational and attendee value) and Social Impact – which, alongside measuring participants' self-reported impact provides a monetised valuation of activities using the TOMS framework. Concert audiences, community participants, teachers and BSO staff all shared insights. The research draws on peer-reviewed studies and institutional research, with social impact measured through four dimensions: Individual Development; Health and Wellbeing; Interpersonal Relationships; and Economic Inclusion and Fair Opportunity.

3. **About Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** | bsolive.com
   Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth
   Celebrated Composer – Thomas Adès | Artist-in-Residence – Boris Giltburg
   Principal Guest Conductor — Chloé Van Soeterstède | Associate Guest Conductor – David Hill MBE
   Conductor Laureate & Artistic Director, Voices from the East – Kirill Karabits OBE
   Conductor Emeritus – Marin Alsop | Conductor Laureate – Andrew Litton
   Calleva Assistant Conductor – Michal Oren

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   Mark Wigglesworth became the Orchestra's Chief Conductor in 2024, and his opening seasons have magnified 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** alongside **Marin Alsop, David Hill MBE, Kirill Karabits, Andrew Litton** and new Calleva Assistant Conductor, **Michal Oren**.

   In 2026/27, the BSO welcomes **Thomas Adès** as its *Celebrated Composer* in a series that shines a spotlight on new British music. The Orchestra shares eight performances, including one that Adès conducts – and local pupils will interact with his music through further events.

The Orchestra's **two-year Beethoven celebration: *Road to Joy*** runs from October 2026. Alongside symphonic performances, the series provides three immersive *Beethoven Now* weekends, delving deeper into the enduring legacy of the composer's music and humanity.

The BSO welcomes pianist **Boris Giltburg** as *Artist-in-Residence*, with five performances across the season. Further highlights include debut performances from conductor **Charlotte Corderoy**, pianists **Junyan Chen, Eva Gevorgyan, Isata Kanneh-Mason**, and violinist **Johan Delane**. The BSO's celebrated **Digital Concert series** continues into its seventh year, with 18 live performances broadcast globally from Poole – this year, supported by **Digital Concert Sponsor, Lark Music**.

Celebrated for its pioneering community-based **BSO Participate** work, the Orchestra brings music into people's lives beyond the concert hall thanks to a network of partnerships spanning health, care and music education; with a unique team of dynamic **BSO Associate and Young Associate Musicians** living in the heart of communities across the South West, it delivered more than 58,000 experiences last year. Its creative health programme continues to expand, with regular sessions at **Dorset County Hospital, Dorset HealthCare** sites, and **Southampton Hospitals Charity**. Several **Community and Wellbeing Orchestras** support a range of needs across the region from Bodmin, Boscombe and Bristol to Chard, Exeter, Newquay and Wincanton.

Following international attention for igniting change, **BSO Resound**, the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra, continues to challenge perceptions. The group joins conductors **Tom Fetherstonhaugh** and **Enyi Okpara** in 2026/27.

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bsolive.com

4. **About Sound Diplomacy** | sounddiplomacy.com
Sound Diplomacy, a global music, culture and creative economy consultancy which uses research and data to demonstrate the economic and social value of the creative industries. It has advised more than 190 clients in over 35 countries, spanning the public sector, private entities, and cultural and creative sectors.