

Culture and the Arts bring meaning to our lives. Culture and the Arts make us the human beings we are and give structure and sense to the society we create; they provide us with real values and fulfil our mental and emotional existence. In the most difficult days of the history of humanity, alongside the most dramatic events, the most devastating wars and epidemics, the Arts, and perhaps especially music, enhanced the spirit. Music became a symbol of resilience, heroism and ultimately our belief in ourselves, from Josef Haydn's 'Mass in Time of War' to Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony. We are at war now and we musicians are desperate to join in in the battle to help society, help people to improve their mental health, fire their spirit and give comfort during this most isolated, most lonely time in our modern history.

But we can't. We are prevented from performing in live spaces, prevented from reaching the eyes and ears and hearts of our public, prevented from sharing with them our love, our passion, our belief. It is becoming more and more apparent that orchestras, opera companies and other musical institutions in the UK, a truly world-leading country in all forms of culture, are in grave danger of being lost forever, if urgent action is not taken.

Many of us have had great support through the Job Retention Scheme, and we are really grateful to the Government for that. But we need also to look to the coming months, and even years, and discuss what the impact of this closure, and of contained social distancing remaining, means for the performing arts.

We ask for support from the Government, and that they work with us in planning a long term strategy for recovery, including additional financial support to help ensure that we can continue to play our full roles for our local and national audiences, our communities, and our cities.

If financial help is not provided, companies will fold, musicians will be silenced. We may be left with no more Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, no music written about our times, for our times, by our living composers. Many, many musicians will simply be forced to abandon their profession. Orchestras and opera companies will close their doors as there will be no other choice when their resources run out. And, most importantly, audiences, communities, and the hundreds of thousands of children and young people we support and inspire through our work, will lose a major asset; one that makes a profound difference to their lives.

The cultural and creative industry is one of the UK's greatest glories, and will be crucial to the UK's economic and psychological recovery. Our wish and hope as musicians is to lead the recovery in the coming difficult months and years. Culture and music can achieve amazing things. In the years after World War II, there was clear recognition that the UK needed new cultural organisations to heal the soul and regenerate the spirit, and the funding, support and infrastructure to achieve this. For us musicians to be able to take on this vital role again, we really need long term support.

Vasily Petrenko - Chief Conductor, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; Chief Conductor, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra; Chief Conductor, EUYO; Music Director Designate, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (from Aug 2020)

Martyn Brabbins - Music Director, English National Opera

Sir Mark Elder CH CBE - Music Director, The Hallé

Edward Gardner - Chief Conductor, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra; Principal Conductor Designate, London Philharmonic Orchestra (from Sep 2021)

Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla – Music Director, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Tomáš Hanus - Music Director, Welsh National Opera

Vladimir Jurowski – Chief Conductor and Artistic Advisor, London Philharmonic Orchestra; Chief Conductor, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin; Principal Artist, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Kirill Karabits – Chief Conductor, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Daniele Rustioni - Chief Conductor, Ulster Orchestra

Esa-Pekka Salonen - Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, Philharmonia Orchestra; Music Director Designate, San Francisco Symphony (from 2020/21 season)

Lars Vogt – Music Director, Royal Northern Sinfonia; Music Director Designate, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris (from July 2020)