



Britten Sinfonia

Press Release

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Internationally acclaimed chamber orchestra Britten Sinfonia launches £1 million appeal to enable it to ‘play on’ following ACE funding cut

- **Composers Steve Reich, Sir James MacMillan and Master of the King’s Music, Judith Weir, are amongst leading figures supporting Britten Sinfonia’s campaign to secure the future of the pioneering orchestra**
- **Britten Sinfonia’s *Play On* appeal asks everyone who loves music and cares about culture to join in building the future of the “vital and innovative” [Guardian*] orchestra**

Donate at <http://playon.brittensinfonia.com>

To follow our campaign and join in on social media:

#PlayOn #BrittenSinfonia

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One of the country's most celebrated chamber orchestras, Britten Sinfonia, has launched a public appeal to secure its future following the withdrawal of its funding as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation ** which has left the orchestra with a financial shortfall of £1 million over the next three years. Those lending support to the *Play On* appeal include a range of musical figures close to Britten Sinfonia, including composers **Steve Reich**, Master of the King's Music, **Judith Weir**, **Sir James MacMillan**, **Thomas Adès** and **Nico Muhly**, singers **Dame Sarah Connolly** and **Roderick Williams**, trumpeter **Alison Balsom**, harpsichordist **Mahan Esfahani** and pianist **Benjamin Grosvenor**. They are joined by others connected with Britten Sinfonia, including an **NHS nurse** and a **teacher**, in a film to launch Britten Sinfonia's **Play On** appeal - watch [here](#) and download [here](#)

Based in Cambridge, Britten Sinfonia, described by leading American composer Steve Reich as “*a particularly finely tuned chamber orchestra of enormous sensitivity*”, is the only professional orchestra in the East of England, an area chronically underserved by arts and music provision. Britten Sinfonia's work in the region typically reaches around 14,000 people annually. Alongside residencies in Norwich and Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden, Britten Sinfonia performs and makes music with communities and schools, and in hospitals, elderly care settings and prisons.

Admired on the global stage, Britten Sinfonia has toured to the USA, South America, India and across Europe. It was the first UK orchestra to play at Hamburg's newly opened ElbPhilharmonie in 2017, and with choral ensemble The Sixteen, it gave the first ever live streamed concert from the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. An Associate Ensemble at the Barbican, the multi-award winning orchestra has appeared at venues and festivals across England, including Wigmore Hall, Sadlers' Wells, Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne, BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival and the Norfolk and Norwich Festival. It has commissioned nearly 250 new works, both from emerging composers and from some of the biggest names in classical music. Its adventurous outlook has seen it collaborate with composers, directors, choreographers and musicians from across the musical spectrum, including Anoushka Shankar, Father John Misty, Rufus Wainwright, Michael Clark, Richard Alston and Urja Desai Thakore of PagraV Dance Company.

To donate to Britten Sinfonia's 'Play On' Appeal, go to: playon.brittensinfonia.com

Meurig Bowen, Britten Sinfonia Artistic Director and Chief Executive comments:

“No arts organisation is ever not fundraising! But in light of our loss of Arts Council England National Portfolio funding, the need to cast our net wider and to ask lovers of classical music to consider supporting us for the first time is particularly urgent.

We never took for granted this longstanding public funding, and cherished the ability it gave us to make bolder programming choices, to bring into being so much newly composed music, and to have a wide-reaching presence throughout the East of England in concert halls, schools, health and community settings. Now, everything that is celebrated internationally, nationally and regionally is at risk. This level

of skill, expertise and extraordinary musical synergy is rare; it has taken three decades to build, and simply can't be replicated overnight.

We are so proud of the range and quality of our work, and are determined that this loss of ACE funding will not decrease or degrade what we do. The collective belief in the importance of this – for audiences, communities and the wider cultural ecology – is too great for that to happen.”

Judith Weir, Master of the King’s Music comments:

“We definitely need to experience more live classical music outside of our biggest urban centres - in smaller cities, towns and rural spaces. Fortunately we have a successful model for this, widely considered to be the UK’s finest chamber orchestra - inventive in its public approach, accessible and creative. This is, of course, Britten Sinfonia. Hearing less of - or even losing - this vital ensemble is not an option, especially in its East of England centres. Please support ‘Play On’ at this significant and vital moment in Britten Sinfonia’s thirty-year history.”

Sir James MacMillan, who as both composer and conductor has had a decades long relationship with the orchestra in some of his most important pieces, comments:

“Some of my happiest musical experiences and memories in my professional life have been with this wonderful orchestra. They are different. There’s a different feeling working with them, writing for them. This country, this musical world needs Britten Sinfonia.”

American composer Nico Muhly, today one of the world’s most in demand composers, comments:

“Britten Sinfonia was one of the first organisations to give me a chance as a young composer and they took an enormous risk by commissioning a lot of work in a short period of time. I owe so much of my current life in music to their generosity, and I know I speak for generations of young, (and youngish) composers and performers and presenters when I say that Britten Sinfonia’s work is so key and so crucial. I cannot encourage you enough to support them in every way that you possibly can.”

Violinist Thomas Gould, Britten Sinfonia’s Leader comments:

“Speaking as a musician in Britten Sinfonia, we have been touched and humbled by the outpouring of support from the classical music community following the Arts Council’s announcement. It is deeply heartening that we are held in such high esteem, and many thanks to all our friends and colleagues who have joined together for the ‘Play On’ appeal. Let’s bounce back from this setback even stronger than before, and pull together to continue providing the Britten Sinfonia that so many people clearly love and need in their lives.”