



Collaborative Ecologies for Classical Music

**Final report of the AHRC Research Network: Networked Innovation
in Classical Music: Collaborative Ecologies in Creative Cities**

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Our network aims

Our network builds upon the previous work of our two research centres: Sheffield Performer and Audience Research Centre (SPARC), directed by Stephanie Pitts, and Maastricht Centre for Innovation of Classical Music (MCICM), led by Peter Peters. In our recent projects we have investigated how audiences connect with arts organisations across their localities, and we aimed to take this further in the network through the following objectives:

- To create a network of academics and practitioners with ambitions to strengthen and innovate the classical music sector to face the challenges of the decades ahead.
- To identify and address the barriers to classical music organisations working together to build new audiences in a city.
- To challenge entrenched assumptions about the training and career paths of classical musicians, and consider how to equip conservatoires and musicians to innovate in the sector, by sharing alternative models and best practices.
- To share knowledge across academic disciplines in order to bridge gaps in understanding and identify key areas for future research.
- To effect meaningful change in the cities where the network is focused and build partnerships for future collaborative working.
- To create a model for working across cultural ecologies to enrich the lives of students, musicians and audiences in the classical music sector.
- To share knowledge and good practice nationally and internationally, to increase the ability of educational and musical institutions to respond to the challenges facing classical music and its audiences.
- To support early career researchers and doctoral students in music, audience studies and related disciplines to develop skills for researching collaboratively with arts sector partners.

Our people and places

The seven cities in our network were chosen because each has a distinctive classical music scene, and also a 'lead academic' interested in the future of classical music in some way; including audience research, the careers of composers, performers and other music graduates, and the 'arts ecology', meaning how organisations fit together in a place.

More information about the network, its locations and activities is available here: <https://sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/classical-music-network>

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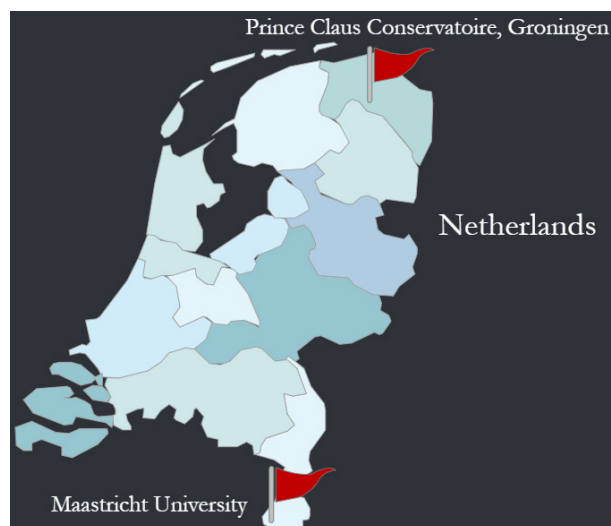
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Our methods and questions

In consultation with the Lead Academics we devised a set of questions that could be used in all seven of our cities, in a format that suited the circumstances: in Graz this took the form of interviews, in Groningen and all UK cities we distributed an online survey, and in Leeds and Liverpool there were also follow up group discussions.

The questions were sent to as many classical music organisations as we could find in each city, identified



through online searches, and existing contacts of the Lead Academics and their colleagues. Potential participants were approached by email with an explanation of the network and its aims, and an invitation to complete the survey or offer responses in an alternative format.

Our questions were as follows:

- Please tell us briefly about your organisation and its main activities.
- Does 'classical music' sufficiently describe your remit?
- Please explain the strengths and limitations of that term for you and/or your organisation's work.
- Would you describe [your city] as a classical music city?
- Where is the enthusiasm for classical music in [your city]?
- Where is the resistance or indifference?
- Is [your city] a place of making classical music? For whom, and where does this happen?
- Which other organisations in your city does your own work connect with most often?
- How do these connections work well - and how could they be strengthened?
- Where would you like to make connections and what impact would this have on your work?
- What is the role of the conservatoire and/or university in contributing to [your city] as a place for classical music?
- How could this role be strengthened and what impact could that have?
- To sum up - what would you say are the top two or three current strengths in the classical music activity in your city?
- And what two or three things would make the biggest difference to making [your city] a better place for classical music? (If funding is inevitably one of those, please be specific about where you would like to see more investment).
- Please add anything else that you would like to tell us about classical music in [your city].
- If we are able to set up a conversation between your organisation and others in the city, who would you most like to be there, and what questions/topics would you like to talk about?



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	Classical Music

Birmingham



Photo: (c) Michael Whitefoot

“We should make more noise about Birmingham. Manchester often seems to get a better press, but I think there is more in Birmingham.”



Birmingham is the second-largest city in the United Kingdom, located in the West Midlands of England. The city has a population of around 1,145 million, with strong ethnic diversity: in the 2021 census, 31% of the population identified as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, and 48.6% as White.

Culture features prominently in the city centre buildings, including Symphony Hall, home to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. The B:Classical website emphasises quality and prestige - 'superb orchestras, world class soloists and unmissable programmes' - featuring the programmes of Ex Cathedra, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, and many others. There is also a thriving amateur music scene, with at least thirteen orchestras and ten classical choral groups within five miles of the city centre.

Our data collection in Birmingham took place in Autumn 2023, before the announcement in February 2024 of devastating council cuts, including the withdrawal of the majority of the arts budget. In response to this decision, Birmingham arts organisations showed their resilience

through a #CultureMatters social media campaign, and a joint statement: 'In the face of ongoing austerity and reduction in public funding, alongside COVID-19 and rising inflation, the arts and culture sector has continued to be resilient. We remain open, and continue to welcome audiences, work with communities, and support artists in Birmingham, the UK, and internationally; as the sector responsible for the talent, development, and inspiration pipelines for the UK's global economic and reputational success, we don't plan on stopping.'

In Birmingham we received thirteen responses from nine different organisations, including staff of both large and small professional ensembles, experts in learning and participation, representatives of amateur ensembles, and conservatoire and university music colleagues.

Our participants saw Birmingham as:

Musically rich and varied:

"Birmingham is creative, diverse, real, engaged, honest..."

Prioritising education:

"A huge problem that needs to be addressed is the underfunding of music and music education, this government's attitude towards music and the way that classical music has been cut from the school curriculum - if you have more understanding of classical music and it touches you from a young age, you are more likely to engage with it."

Supporting musical careers:

"[We have] the principal aim of ensuring our students can gain real-life experience of what it's like to be a professional musician, in order that they are well prepared for their own future careers."

Playing a strong role in the UK arts scene:

"we should make more noise about B'ham. Manchester often seems to get a better press, but I think there is more in B'ham."

Building connections:

"We have potential to connect more formally at an organisational level rather than just within certain projects."

Sources: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000025> ; <https://bmusic.co.uk/bclassical> ; <https://www.dsmusic.com/blogs/amateur-orchestra-uk-directory/west-midlands> ; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c51ee94ywj2o> ; <https://cbso.co.uk/stories/bcc-cuts>

Cardiff

Cardiff is a growing city with a population of around 362,300 in 2021. In that year Cardiff was the most densely populated of all 22 local authority areas in Wales. The people of Cardiff speak both English and Welsh, with 12.2% of Cardiff residents identifying as Welsh-speaking.

In the centre of Cardiff can be found the Welsh National Opera (WNO) and two full-time ensembles, WNO Chorus and WNO Orchestra at the Wales Millennium Centre, and The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD), Wales's national conservatoire. Cardiff is also home to the concert hall St David's Hall, which normally promotes the International Concert Series and the Welsh Proms amongst other world-class classical music (but is temporarily closed until 2025), and to Llandaff Cathedral, with a choir educated at The Cathedral School, Llandaff.

Amateur classical music groups in Cardiff include the prominent Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra, Cardiff Chamber Orchestra, which was created by graduates from RWCMD, the City of Cardiff Symphony Orchestra and Cardiff Friendly Strings amongst others.

In Cardiff we received nine responses from four different organisations, including representatives of amateur and professional ensembles, conservatoire teachers and freelance musicians.

Our participants saw Cardiff as:

Strong for professional classical music:

"We are blessed with having two world-class resident orchestras: the BBC NOW [British Broadcasting Corporation National Orchestra of Wales] and Welsh National Opera. The Millennium Theatre (opened around 2000) has been a valuable new venue for opera and musical theatre and also now hosts the BBC recording studio (Hoddinott Hall)."

Not all about classical music:

"Personally I think there is vibrancy in the music scene in general but the classical profile is not the dominant one. The resistance or indifference is perhaps rooted in the preconception of classical music being 'not for me'. Many parts of the community do not have access to classical music events (financial barriers)."

Harder to navigate as an amateur musician:

"Where are the opportunities for emerging artists to perform? At which venues do we see musicians of a high-calibre frequently perform? Perhaps St David's Hall, but alas it is now closed. On top of this, one concert hall doesn't make a scene and it certainly doesn't provide a place for all of the city's musicians to make music."

Sometimes struggling for audiences:

"[Music students] should form a larger part of the city's audience attendance, which would hopefully stimulate the city's ecosystem (not just financially - many of them receive free or heavily discounted tickets - but by creating a buzz/good atmosphere)."

Full of possibilities:

"Training and then retaining music students in the local area would give a boost to the classical music scene. To be able to offer financial support to students on a more equal basis to competitor London conservatoires would make a difference."

**“ We are blessed with
having two world-class
resident orchestras: the
BBC NOW and Welsh
National Opera. ”**



Photo: (c) Kiran Ridley



Glasgow

The largest city in Scotland, the population of Glasgow is growing and reached around 620,700 in 2022. Whilst the 2022 census data breakdown on ethnicity is not yet publicly available, the 2011 census found that 17.3% of the population of Glasgow identified as an ethnic minority.

Glasgow has been named a UNESCO City of Music since 2008. Glasgow is home to the Scottish Opera, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scotland, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) and the Scottish Ensemble. The Cities of Music website explains that 'Glasgow has the highest density of higher education institutions offering courses in music and the largest population of music students in Scotland.'

The amateur classical music scene in Glasgow is thriving and varied, with numerous groups based in and around Glasgow, including Glasgow Chamber Orchestra, Glasgow Symphony Orchestra, Glasgow Orchestral Society, Glasgow Community Orchestra (supported by RSNO), and many others.

In Glasgow we received seven responses from seven different organisations, including representatives of amateur and professional ensembles, conservatoire teachers, freelance musicians and audience members.

Our participants saw Glasgow as:

Musically diverse:

"It's a broad city of music. Depending on your point of view it might be better seen as a city of Scottish (traditional) music or the centre of Scottish popular music. From a classical point of view it has clear strengths (national companies and orchestras based here, Scotland's only conservatoire) but that doesn't define the city."

Full of musical opportunities:

"It is an area open to all ages and standards, from beginners to professional standard amateurs - there really is something for everyone! It happens in a myriad of settings from schools to churches to people's front rooms!"

Home to major Scottish organisations:

"There is a Conservatoire and a University with thriving music departments. Many professional orchestras and ensembles are based in Glasgow. There are things like Celtic Connections which are hugely important to the music scene, and the bagpipe competitions."

Lacking grassroots connections:

"There are a few big organisations (BBCSSO, RSNO, Opera etc) but I don't see connections with smaller, grassroots classical groups (clubs, choirs etc.) which could have an important impact."

Benefiting from its music students:

"Music students play significant roles in amateur and, at the margins, professional music-making. Most of the professional musicians teach at the RCS and Uni"



“ It is an area open to all ages and standards, from beginners to professional standard amateurs - there really is something for everyone! ”



Sources: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=30386> ; <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/census-results/at-a-glance/ethnicity> ; <https://citiesofmusic.net/city/glasgow/> ; <https://amateurorchestras.org.uk/oscotlan.htm>

Graz

With just under 300,000 inhabitants in 2022, Graz is the second largest city in Austria - after Vienna with 2 million inhabitants. In 2021, the population of the Graz larger urban zone (LUZ) was 665,390. It is the capital of Styria. Graz has four colleges and four universities, and has a student population of 60,000.

Some of the most important venues for classical music are the Oper Graz (Graz Opera), Schauspielhaus Graz (Graz National Theatre), Musikverein Graz (The Styrian Music Society) and MUMUTH (The House of Music and Music Theatre). One of the most prominent events is the Styriarte classical music festival that has taken place every summer since 1985. Today, with 2,300 students and 500 teachers, the University of Music and Performing Arts is the second largest arts university in Austria with courses in music, drama and stage design. The Styrian Music Society is the oldest organisation of its kind in Austria and organises orchestral, chamber, soloist concerts and song recitals.


The Graz Opera is making a name for itself as an

interdisciplinary house that offers programmes ranging from musicals to contemporary opera, from the usual opera repertoire to mini-operas in the countryside. With the Graz Philharmonic Orchestra as its opera orchestra, it is regarded as one of the essential music theatres in Europe. Since 1985, the Styriarte has established itself as a summer festival for early and classical music: initially a festival centred around the conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt, after his death the Styriarte developed into a laboratory for new concert formats around a broad concept of classical music. This classical music life is embedded in a comprehensive music school structure that offers children and young people low-threshold access to learning an instrument.

In Graz we conducted two in-depth personal interviews based on the central questions of the joint study with high level positions in leading arts organisations, and we received two responses from a new music organisation and an interdisciplinary platform that works on new performance formats for early music.

Sources: https://www.citypopulation.de/en/austria/steiermark/graz_stadt_/60101_graz ; https://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10034466/7772565/zahlen_fakten_bevoelkerung_bezirke_wirtschaft.html ; <https://www.kug.ac.at/en/> ; <https://musikverein-graz.at/musikverein-steiermark/>





“The Graz Opera is making a name for itself as an interdisciplinary house that offers programmes ranging from musicals to contemporary opera”

Our participants saw Graz as:

A central location for classical music:

“The practice of music has an incredible value in society, whether it’s a band, brass band or symphony orchestra. Today we certainly have many times more musical contacts between the arts and the population than ever before.”

A rather conservative city when it comes to classical music and culture:

“In the opera or theatre, people who are ‘different’ are not so noticeable. They do little to show the outside world how diverse our society has fortunately become. We are trying to change that.”

Having a large number of outstanding historical venues:

“Nevertheless, there are perceived inhibitions when it comes to attracting a wider audience for classical music. Our economic reality doesn’t allow us to break the social barriers.”

A place where the next generation of musicians and music teachers are trained:

“Music education, dramaturgy, diversity and individuality should be made possible and encouraged. The University of Music can and should be an institution that leads the practice into a present with changed demands.”

Groningen and the North Netherlands region

The regional entity known as the ‘North-Netherlands’ (in Dutch: Noord-Nederland) is formed by the three most northerly provinces of the Netherlands: Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe. Compared to other Dutch administrative regions, it is large in acreage (12.000 km²) and small in population (1,7 million inhabitants). The region comprises forty separate municipalities, including the cities of Groningen, Leeuwarden and Assen, with Groningen being the largest (200.000 inhabitants).

Apart from more traditional concert programming, classical music programmes in the Northern Netherlands seem open for adventure and experiment. Concerts take place in spaces outside of the concert hall, outdoors in nature, or in spaces with other cultural-historical value. The more traditional classical orchestra of the north – the North Netherlands Orchestra – is also known for shifting the boundaries of classical music programming in recent years: examples include a Beatles concert tour and their performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony at the pop festival Lowlands in 2023.

The North-Netherlands region hosts a remarkably large and active scene of fanfare, wind and brass ensembles (‘hafabra’). In the Netherlands, such bands and orchestras are registered as intangible cultural heritage, and therefore express a form of identity and continuity of certain groups and communities.

Noteworthy in the region’s music field are its active amateur scenes: for example, the many brass bands and choirs in small towns and villages. Rural Groningen also hosts an exceptional collection of well-kept organs. In addition to (inter)nationally-fed and oriented cultural programmes in venues, there seems to be a growing sense of locality within the arts and culture. Festivals and local theatres, in particular, seem to increasingly attend to local communities and contexts in their programmes.

In Groningen we received twenty-one responses from nineteen different organisations across the North Netherlands region, including representatives of amateur and professional ensembles, conservatoire teachers and freelance musicians.

Sources: <https://www.regioburgemeesters.nl/regio-s/noord-nederland/> ; [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groningen_\(stad\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Groningen_(stad)) ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQFIXT3pLqE> ; <https://www.immaterieelerfgoed.nl/en/watisimmaterieelerfgoed> ; <https://www.volkskrant.nl/beter-leven/in-noord-groningen-tref-je-kleine-kerkjes-met-grootse-orgels~bf44d425/>



“There’s a collective effort to reshape how we engage with classical music, inspired by insights from younger perspectives.”

Our participants saw Groningen as:

Adapting to modern tastes and innovative forms of engagement:

“There’s a collective effort to reshape how we engage with classical music, inspired by insights from [...] younger perspectives.”

A place full of working musicians, programming, and opportunities for collaboration:

“There is a large group of musicians and also (international) music students we work with. In principle, all organisations are interested in collaboration. There are some festivals that, separate from a classical music category label, offer in-depth programming (Jazz at Guest, Rockit, Oranjewoud, Explore the North, Sounds of Music).”

An educational hub training next generations:

“...the conservatoire fulfils a crucial role because without young well-trained musicians who approach classical music in innovative ways, classical music will eventually disappear from the scene.”

In need of increased investment and new approaches to funding distribution:

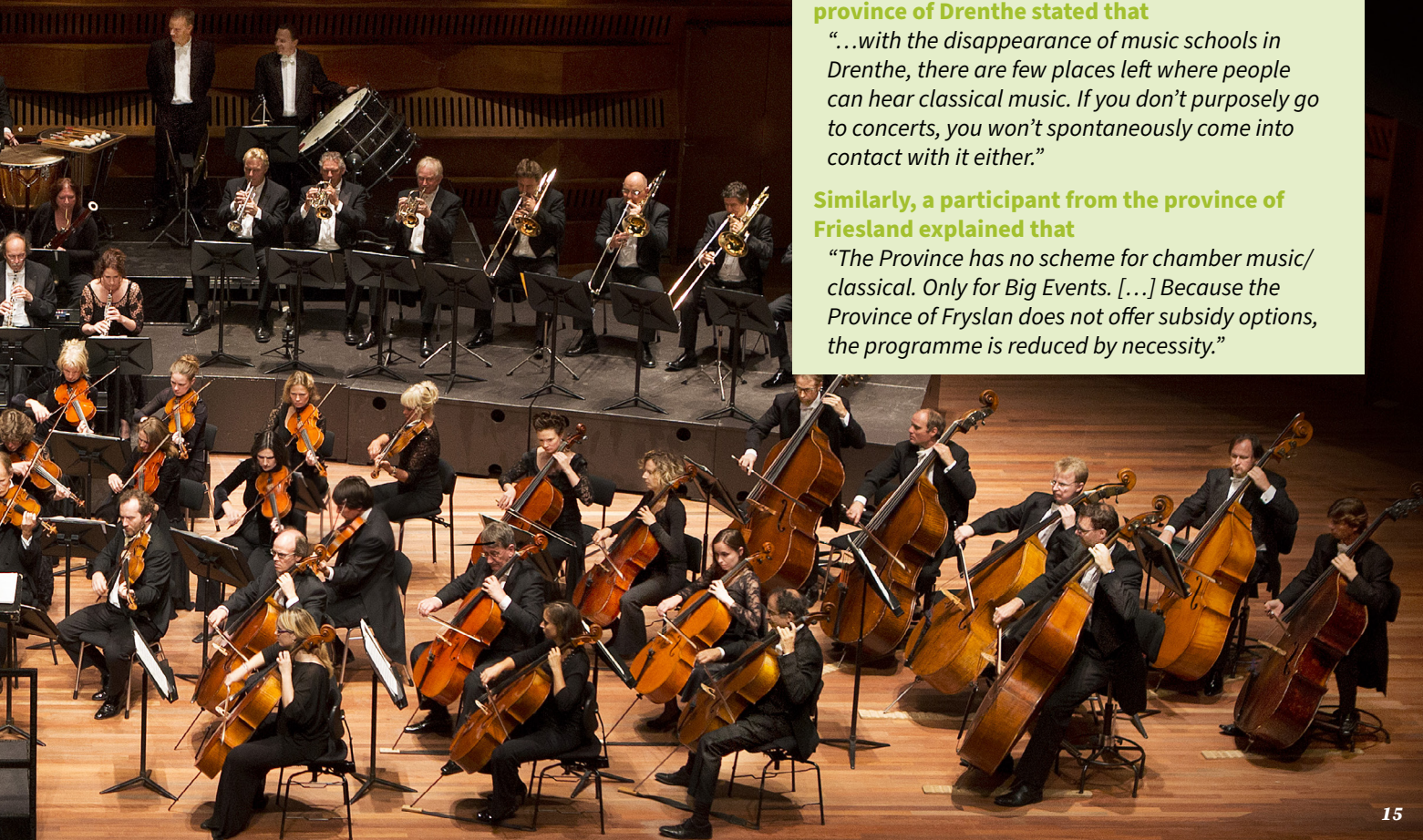
“Funding is crucial, no doubt! I advocate for increased investment in the cultural sector overall. I believe in directing more support toward meaningful projects by young(er), independent artists/organizations and less toward big, established government-backed organizations.”

The classical music scenes in the rural regions surrounding the city of Groningen appear to be suffering from years of funding cuts, particularly to music education: a participant from the province of Drenthe stated that

“...with the disappearance of music schools in Drenthe, there are few places left where people can hear classical music. If you don’t purposely go to concerts, you won’t spontaneously come into contact with it either.”

Similarly, a participant from the province of Friesland explained that

“The Province has no scheme for chamber music/classical. Only for Big Events. [...] Because the Province of Fryslan does not offer subsidy options, the programme is reduced by necessity.”



Leeds

One of the UK's fastest growing cities, Leeds had a population of around 812,000 in 2021. Leeds has a relatively young population with a median age of 36 years, compared to the median age of England (40 years). However the 2021 census showed that the population of Leeds is ageing, with the number of people aged 50 to 64 years rising by 14% and the number of residents aged 20 to 24 years falling by 2% since 2011.

Leeds is home to several key classical music organisations including Leeds International Concert Season, Opera North and Howard Assembly Room, as well as a strong higher music education presence with two universities and the Leeds Conservatoire bringing music students to the

city and holding regular concerts. The amateur classical music-making scene in Leeds is well-populated with orchestras, choirs and bands with a range of aims and entry requirements.

In Leeds we received fourteen responses from twelve different organisations, including staff of both large and small professional ensembles, representatives of amateur instrumental and choral ensembles, church musicians, concert promoters, music education providers, and university music colleagues. We also hosted a meeting at the University of Leeds, where five participants had further discussions with lead academic Karen Burland and her colleague Emily Payne.



Sources: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000035/> ; <https://amateurorchestras.org.uk/oyorkshi.htm>



Our participants saw Leeds as:

A city where classical music is not strongly visible:

"I think people facilitating and taking part within this music would definitely say Leeds is a classical music city - but I don't think the general public agree. I would imagine most people wouldn't even consider it."

Offering variety and quality:

"There are a lot of local people engaged in classical music. There is a wide range of opportunities for classical music, from listening to professional groups - eg Opera North, to taking part in amateur groups - some of which play to higher standards than others. Orchestras from around the world come to Leeds to play at the Town Hall."

Lacking a good concert hall:

"Current venues are a constraint to us - we play in a couple of churches, which can seat up to about 200 people, but then the next step up is the Town Hall, which is not affordable to us. So I would say a venue with a stage large enough for a symphony orchestra, tiered seating and a capacity of up to 500 would be a real asset for the city."

Well connected to the university:

"The University of Leeds is crucial to our operations. Our organisation developed out of the University and still performs and rehearses at it regularly. A large number of our performers have or have had ties with the University."

Needing more networks:

"...perhaps a 'Leeds List' for classical music in the city. It seems to me all organisations have to try to publicise on their own and if I want to check for concerts myself I generally have to search individual organisations."

“There are a lot of local people engaged in classical music. There is a wide range of opportunities for classical music.”



Liverpool



Liverpool has a population of around 486,100, and in 2021 was the second most densely populated local authority area in the North West of England. Liverpool has a relatively young population with a median age of 35 years, compared to the median age of both the North West of England and England as whole (both 40 years). However, the 2021 census showed that the number of people aged 65 to 74 years rose by almost 25% since 2011.

Liverpool has been named a UNESCO City of Music since 2015, however the Cities of Music description of the Liverpool music scene focuses mostly on popular music artists and venues. The University of Liverpool is proud of its new concert hall, the Tung Auditorium, whose website focuses on the venue as “a remarkable space

for solo, chamber, choral and orchestral performances”. Liverpool has two cathedrals that support choirs, recitals and concerts. Liverpool Anglican Cathedral also has an extensive outreach programme, which is run in partnership with local primary schools. Liverpool has a variety of amateur music groups, community choirs, choral societies and smaller groups.

In Liverpool we received nine responses from seven different organisations, including directors and committee members of amateur orchestras, concert promoters, venue managers, and university music colleagues. Sarah Price also hosted a city meeting at the Tung Auditorium, University of Liverpool, for further conversations with twenty participants.

“The single most important thing that would have a positive impact is schools funding.”



Our participants saw Liverpool as:

Proud of its classical music heritage:

“The RLPO [Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra] has roots going back to 1840, and classical music in the city has had an important role in its culture for around 180 years.”

...but better known for its pop music history:

“The overwhelming perception of Liverpool is that the predominant culture is ‘popular’, and its classical music achievements tend to be overlooked both locally and nationally.”

Dominated by large organisations:

“The Philharmonic are a huge part of the picture, as an excellent orchestra, with a strong (although maybe diminishing) audience. The cathedrals both have a big role in the city’s music scene, both liturgical and not. The University of Liverpool is definitely increasing its presence locally too.”

Excited about the new Tung Auditorium:

“By presenting a year round programme, with many concerts free of charge, this adds to the range and diversity of the regional cultural offer. The aspiration is for the Tung to be viewed as a ‘destination’ for classical music, which enhances the University as a place to come and study (and teach!) music.”

Concerned about music education:

“The single most important thing that would have a positive impact is schools funding. If schools were able to fund the purchase of good quality instruments and one to one or small group lessons ... this would allow all children to have a meaningful interaction with and honest chance at music making.”

Photo: (c) Mark McNulty

Sources: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000012/> ; <https://citiesofmusic.net/city/liverpool/> ; <https://thetungauditorium.com/> ; <https://amateurorchestras.org.uk/onorthwe.htm>



Cross-city themes

Venues and spaces

Finding the right venue at an affordable price is a challenge for amateur groups

“Better-suited venues for amateur music making (size and hire cost) would make a big difference to amateur performances and would probably attract a wider audience, which would have the benefit of bringing music to a more diverse population. Funding opportunities, to assist with hire charges for existing venues, would be an alternative approach.” (Cardiff)

“Current venues are a constraint to us - we play in a couple of churches, which can seat up to about 200 people, but then the next step up is the Town Hall, which is not affordable to us. So I would say a venue with a stage large enough for a symphony orchestra, tiered seating and a capacity of up to 500 would be a real asset for the city.” (Leeds)

Education and opportunity

Making music education accessible to all is a shared priority across cities

“Music tuition in schools should engender a life-long interest in the participation of all musical styles (as listeners or performers). The sort of free music tuition that I (and many others) benefited from in the 1970/80s is unfortunately no longer available. School curricula increasingly seem to place less emphasis on music and music making and fewer children are taking up orchestral instruments.” (Cardiff)

“Every child in Birmingham would have the opportunity to continue fully funded musical training beyond WCET [whole class ensemble teaching], thus giving the pipeline of musicians a chance to grow and flourish.” (Birmingham)

“Classical musical education is still seen as a badge of social belonging. And it is precisely the conservative elites in the city of Graz who use talk of the classical musical tradition as a demarcation from the ‘foreign’ present.” (Graz)

What does classical music mean?

Classical music can be an off-putting term that does not capture the activities and enthusiasms of performing groups

“The term ‘classical music’ can be a barrier to some people, even when they are self-professed music lovers. It is a person-made, but significant, barrier, that exists to make some members and groups of our communities feel that they can’t, or don’t want to, engage. And yet the power of music of any genre to move people and transform their lives is unquestionable.” (Leeds)

“‘Classical’ helps some people to understand which area we specialise in, however it is also a very narrow term and possibly unhelpful and off-putting term for some.” (Cardiff)

“For me, the definition of classical music is that, in addition to the entertainment value, it has a certain artistic quality, that you can’t listen to incidentally as functional music, but as something you consume as a work of art.” (Graz)

“I suppose if pushed I would say ‘orchestral music’ is perhaps a better definition of what we do, but this may be splitting hairs.” (Leeds)

“It is a useful shorthand for the work of the orchestra and our musicians, but the music they perform goes some way beyond it, as does the overall activity of the organisation.” (Liverpool)

Classical music for whom and where?

The assumed values of classical music can exclude new and diverse audiences

“The term [Classical Music] tries to create an exclusivity, a reservation for a certain class that no longer exists anyway. And our dilemma is that this class uses our favourite object for the sake of distinction.” (Graz)

“And by taking a fresh look at the classical repertoire, we are increasing queer visibility and encouraging queer artists to participate and contribute what makes them tick. While funding calls for ‘diversity and inclusion’ are taking place at EU level, this is not noticeable in the local funding structure in Graz and Styria.” (Graz)

“The term invites an inherent prioritisation of music of the past, in particular a male dominated, Euro-centric outlook, and drives resources, measures of excellence etc. in that direction.” (Glasgow)

Networking and resources

Networks take time and energy to build, but can bring shared advantages of scale and impact

“Large-scale, cross-organisational funding bids would be helpful (spread capacity, increase funds - i.e. would we have more power as a collective to achieve £1m+ bids compared to many more smaller sums). Understanding what research is going on that connects to our work, sector, and organisations. Connecting with researchers, post-grads etc. to see if there are work experience opportunities.” (Birmingham)

sector - including classical music - in the city.” (Liverpool)

Higher Education

Universities and conservatoires can have a key role in supporting classical music cities, including through the activities of their students and graduates

“Think there is always scope for the HE universities to provide more info about the breadth of music related employment opportunities out there. Many people we encounter only consider wider options as a backup to a performing career. Most music leaders we work with balance a portfolio of music leading, performing and composing.” (Birmingham)

“...the conservatoire fulfils a crucial role because without young well-trained musicians who approach classical music in innovative ways, classical music will eventually disappear from the scene.” (Groningen)

“There is a Conservatoire and a University with thriving music departments. Many professional orchestras and ensembles are based in Glasgow. There are things like Celtic Connections which are hugely important to the music scene, and the bagpipe competitions. They both



“There are a few big organisations (BBCSO, RSNO, Opera etc) but I don’t see connections with smaller, grassroots classical groups (clubs, choirs etc.) which could have an important impact.” (Glasgow)

“In principle, all organisations are interested in collaboration.” (Groningen)

“We work with Liverpool and Hope Universities, the Metropolitan and Anglican cathedrals. We find it beneficial to collaborate on projects, for example performing large-scale choral works, sharing facilities, encouraging young talent, providing opportunities for young performers, enabling a crossover of players.” (Liverpool)

“City Council and Combined Authority at senior level, the Universities, the Arts Council, to discuss how we truly take a strategic approach to long term development of the music

play a strong role in the contemporary music scene and connect to the public well through open performances and workshops. I’d like to see more of a connection between Glasgow Uni and the RSNO. I think it would bring new thinking into the orchestra and benefit composers, performers and researchers in the university.” (Glasgow)

The University of Leeds is crucial to our operations. Our organisation developed out of the University and still performs and rehearses at it regularly. A large number of our performers have or have had ties with the University.” (Leeds)

“University of Liverpool and Hope University and also Edge Hill University all have music departments and the former two in particular have both had periods of strength in particular in nurturing a strong cohort of Liverpool and North West composers. U of L is the most engaged in the city music scene more widely and has recently built and opened a superb new concert hall for the city.” (Liverpool)

Amateur music

All of our cities have a vibrant amateur scene, often linked to past opportunities for music learning that are at risk for future generations of players

“[T]here is also a vibrant amateur and semi-professional scene, with high levels of musicianship across these. Many of those involved in these groups are likely to be university educated.” (Birmingham)

“In the past, Wales seemed to have a much stronger choral tradition, which would engage local amateur musicians, but this type of performance has increasingly dried up. It’s unclear whether this is because of a lack of interest or whether it is due to financial constraints.” (Cardiff)

“There are many choirs that require music reading and that perform at least some literature that would widely be identified as ‘classical’. There are a number of orchestras. There is good teaching available at various levels. The city library houses an extensive collection of performing material cheaply available to performing organisations. Leeds Cathedral has an extensive offering of choral music that engages children and young people. Opera North also runs choirs and a youth orchestra.” (Leeds)

“Liverpool has a large offering of music making from school orchestras to community groups. It is, however, only who was or is able to afford lessons that is able to actively participate in these activities. So I’d say anyone would be able to join in and be an active participant in principle but, in reality, since the onus of learning through instrumental lessons falls entirely on the shoulders of the families, it ends up being a privileged activity. There are also exceptions - the children of In Harmony and the many community choirs.” (Liverpool)

Reach and resistance

Classical music is not for everyone, but everyone should have the chance to try it.

“Personally I think there is vibrancy in the music scene in general but the classical profile is not the dominant one. The resistance or indifference is perhaps rooted in the preconception of classical music being ‘not for me’. Many parts of the community do not have access to classical music events (financial barriers).” (Cardiff)

“I think Liverpool is a very musical city where anyone would be able to listen to/take part in such a variety of



music genres, including classical. I don't think I have ever encountered indifference or resistance towards classical music here, from the most deprived areas to the most affluent, people seem to always enjoy a good tune.”

(Liverpool)

“A huge problem that needs to be addressed is the underfunding of music and music education, this government's attitude towards music and the way that classical music has been cut from the school curriculum - if you have more understanding of classical music and it touches you from a young age, you are more likely to engage with it.” **(Birmingham)**

Recognising strengths

Cities feel musically vibrant when there is a variety of activity and opportunity

“Lots of it, considering the size of the city, and of what there is there's a tremendous variety on offer, from classical favourites to contemporary to crossover, with education work to boot.” **(Cardiff)**

“It's a broad city of music. Depending on your point of view it might be better seen as a city of Scottish (traditional) music or the centre of Scottish popular music. From a classical point of view it has clear strengths (national

companies and orchestras based here, Scotland's only conservatoire) but that doesn't define the city.” **(Glasgow)**

“A thriving and ever growing classical music scene at amateur and professional levels. A good array of soloists to choose from. Good collaborations between amateur orchestras as well as choirs at amateur level.” **(Glasgow)**

“Quality - the quality of performance and performers seems high on the agenda of most. Great venues - an opera house, a town hall, and several lovely chamber music spaces - it could form a brilliant classical music map. Creativity and innovation - each venue/company has its own USP, meaning there is a diverse range of classical music on offer around the city.” **(Leeds)**

“A few top end providers and a healthy amateur scene.” **(Leeds)**

“The Philharmonic are a huge part of the picture, as an excellent orchestra, with a strong (although maybe diminishing) audience. The cathedrals both have a big role in the city's music scene, both liturgical and not. The University of Liverpool is definitely increasing its presence locally too.” **(Liverpool)**



Photo: (c) The Dean & Chapter of Llandaff Cathedrals

Conclusions and next steps

Large organisations seem to be reasonably well connected in all cities, particularly through education projects and links with music students and graduates.

They would often like to do more, but are restricted by time, resources and opportunities for longer-term planning.

Small organisations see large organisations as having resources, including space and funding, that could be useful to them, but find it hard to make those requests heard.

Recommendation: There is scope for a ‘musical match-making’ service, that makes clear what organisations in a city need from each other. Universities could take a lead on curating local opportunities and enlisting students to connect organisations, so gaining valuable arts sector knowledge and experience. We hope to trial some of these approaches in the next stage of network activities.

Networking is seen as valuable for consolidating aims, sharing resources and strengthening the arts profile of a city. It is restricted by time and resources and by being dependent on individuals, who might change roles, leading to connections being lost.

Recommendation: Making networking a shared priority through regular meetings or events could capitalise on a willingness to work together. The knowledge shared across organisations could lead to reciprocal promoting of concerts by local amateur groups to increase sharing of audiences and players. This in turn could create a year-round programme of musical opportunities, including for those interested in trying classical music for the first time.

The value of classical music is strongly felt by those who participate, but known to be inaccessible or seen as irrelevant by others in each city. The terminology

brings with it cultural baggage, but there were no strong suggestions for an alternative.

Recommendation: There is a need to promote the current experience of classical music while acknowledging its historical power structures, so helping audiences to understand what this music offers now. Taking performances outside the concert hall, in pop-up venues or alongside other community interest events, could help increase access to the sounds of classical music without the institutional structures. This is currently a growing practice that is not well documented, so the sharing of good practice online and through research is also to be encouraged.





Music education is a concern across all UK cities, and its decline is seen as a risk to the future thriving of the classical music ecology. Organisations that offer learning and participation projects are part of the solution, but stronger music provision in schools and routes to lifelong musical engagement are also essential.

Recommendation: Parents and teachers could be supported with clearer information about the musical learning opportunities available locally, including in amateur groups, churches and cathedrals, and arts organisations of all sizes. The committees and friends organisations of amateur groups could take a lead on considering how they support musical learning for potential players and audiences of all ages, and share those experiences with other groups locally for a joined up city-wide approach.

Research in multiple cities brought the advantage of multiple perspectives on similar challenges, and allowed us to use the local knowledge of a network of academics and organisations to gather data. There were limitations, however, in getting to know each city well in a short amount of time, and in tailoring our questions to the specific needs and interests of each local network.

Recommendation: The sharing of local knowledge nationally and internationally, could help to build a stronger picture of the challenges facing classical music ecologies. Our survey could be used and adapted in other cities to generate a shared repository of knowledge, case studies and practical solutions. Readers of this report who would like to contribute to such a repository are encouraged to get in touch with:

sparc@sheffield.ac.uk



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Photo: (c) Hannah Fathers

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