

# Case Study for Culture Hive

## Lancashire Classical Music Collaboration

### Developing Classical Music Audiences in Lancashire



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Lancashire Classical Music Collaboration (LCMC) is a partnership of three orchestras – Hallé, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and Manchester Camerata - and three Lancashire venues - Preston Guild Hall, Blackburn King George's Hall, and the Muni in Colne working together to bring world class orchestral music to the people of Lancashire. This ground-breaking partnership project, the first of its kind in the UK, was brought about by a significant two year Grants for the Arts award made by Arts Council England which began in 2012. It was extended through to May 2015 in order to see through a number of successful initiatives. The original partnership also included Lancashire Sinfonietta who sadly withdrew due to county council funding cuts and have subsequently ceased trading.

Lancashire has offered high quality classical music programmes through the three professional orchestras for a number of years. However, audiences have reduced and the partnership was formed to identify ways to engage and develop new audiences so that more people experience and are inspired by classical music.

### **Objectives**

To reinvigorate lapsed and build new audiences for orchestral music in the region in order to build a more viable audience base for all the LCMC partners.

This would be achieved through:

- Increasing audiences overall by 10% by the end of the project
- To position the LCMC offer to grab the attention of new attenders; re-engage infrequent/lapsed attenders; turn current attenders into 'word of mouth' advocates
- To recruit a range of partners to build a lasting legacy
- To provide a range of value added activities

These objectives were translated into 9 strategies which LCMC pilot tested and refined during the project. The strategies that we originally set out to test were: Season Subscription Development; creation of a bespoke Distribution Network; Test Drive; Segmented Communications; Coaches for Venues; Tourism; new ways of using PR/Media Advertising; Digital/Online; developing Audience Communities.

### **Season Subscription Development**

2013/14 season we undertook a telephone subscription campaign using the services of a professional agency, to help drive renewal from existing subscribers, encourage new subscription from existing classical attenders at the venues, and crossover between orchestras/venues.

Whilst income generated for the 2013/14 season was less than the overall cost of the campaign there were a number of learnings:

- We had not allowed enough lead time and briefing for the external agency
- We discovered that customer data supplied to the agency wasn't as robust as it might have been.

Based on learnings from the 2013/14 campaign it was decided that a more effective approach would be to undertake a repeat campaign 'in-house' in 2014/15. As a result a professional trainer was employed to train venue staff to undertake the campaign.

The training provided staff with the skills to undertake similar campaigns in the future. By using in-house staff with first-hand knowledge, subscription sales increased in the two venues that took part. Preston Guild Hall was unable to participate due to lack of staff resource and a much reduced RLPO season which meant there was no formal 'subscription package' for 2014/15. Venues have committed to using the training to do an annual telephone campaign.

### **Distribution Network**

To develop a list of new places to distribute the collective LCMC message using Audience Agency Heat Maps and postcode data tables as well as collective knowledge of the area/market. Print distribution was planned for four key points during the season beginning with distribution of a specially designed leaflet in August 2013, which included a ticket offer for tracking purposes. The offer resulted in zero sales and there was no significant overall spike in sales. The next distribution LCMC trialed a door-to-door leaflet campaign using Audience Agency research on a list of 'top' postcodes within the catchment area. A more attractive ticket offer was made for tracking purposes. Again there were no sales via the offer and no significant spike in sales in the 2 weeks after the drop. As a result a more direct approach was taken with a door-to-door leaflet campaign placed within the weekend Guardian and Telegraph. The resulting ticket sales were significant.

### **Test Drive Programme**

We used a tried and tested audience development programme to recruit new audiences.

#### **Pilot 1 trialed two schemes during the 2013/14 season:**

- In partnership with the Lancashire Evening Post (LEP) and Visit Lancashire. This pilot, in Sept 2013, began with significant preview coverage in print over a two week period prior to running a competition. The competition offered a VIP 1st Prize and 275 pairs of tickets to runners up. The paper also offered to review a number of concerts over the season. Resulting entries were low (most were via Visit Lancashire) due to poor communication by staff at the LEP which had resulted in errors and omissions to the editorial.
- A second scheme with Classic FM. Because of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's partnership with Classic FM they agreed to run a competition on air and on their website at no cost. The competition which ran for two weeks offered a VIP first prize and 275 pairs of tickets for 'runners up', and resulted in an overwhelming response. The scheme helped fill spare capacity at three concerts (one for each orchestra/venue) whilst also gaining significant profile for classical music in Lancashire in a national context.

#### **Pilot 2 trialed two further Test Drive schemes in 2014/15:**

- Data sourced from Audience Agency Spectrum/Experian using a direct telephone survey approach to gauge interest. The Experian data was not as useful or reliable as expected but topped up with lapsed attender venue data resulted in 186 people

attending their first concert free. We then conducted a post-concert follow-up to gain feedback/gauge interest in future attendance/offers which resulted in 94 people being given a low cost ticket offer to a second concert.

- Facebook advertising 'Sign-up' campaign – we used the LCMC brand, through Visit Lancashire's Facebook page, to target specific interest groups/areas. People who clicked to 'Sign Up' were offered a chance to get 2 free tickets from a limited number available if they signed up for information.

We have continued to develop the audience who attended through these initiatives with further concert offers. Take up so far has been limited due to the level of programming available and continued development will require similar or increased levels of concerts.

### **Segmented Communications**

A number of direct marketing communications targeted at:

- repeat attendance from existing classical/non-classical audiences at each venue
- new audiences through data from bought 'mailing lists' and Visit Lancashire arts interest e-data.

We produced eye-catching printed newsletters with a collective LCMC message and brand featuring an attractive all-inclusive VIP package. The campaigns showed a good level of sales and have given food for thought for development of an ongoing segmentation strategy.

### **Coaches for Venues**

Research into Lancashire based coach companies resulted in development of a partnership with Moving People, Accrington. We began by undertaking informal research with current audiences to gauge interest in a coach-to-concert scheme. Feedback was largely positive. This resulted in a trial coach and concert package being offered for one RLPO concert as part of Moving People's existing 'Excursions' programme. Whilst take-up was less than expected it was a good start and a survey of bookers done by Moving People has provided useful feedback.

### **Tourism**

A partnership set up with Marketing Lancashire (Visit Lancashire) has given some clear mutually beneficial benefits with some paid for elements but more importantly a range of two way in-kind marketing and PR support. The principal element has been the development of a dedicated web presence on the Visit Lancashire site with a unique URL ([www.visitlancashire.com/classics](http://www.visitlancashire.com/classics)).

### **Online Advertising & Promotions**

The ACE funding allowed LCMC to test a number of digital advertising campaigns aimed at attracting new audiences. The most successful were targeted Facebook ads and ticket promotions with Travel zoo and the locally based Deal Monster. We were also successful in putting in place procedures to ensure the collection of customer data (not usual with this type of promotion) in order to develop an ongoing relationship with those who responded to the promotions.

## **Audience Communities**

We investigated setting up an ambassador/advocates scheme but the cost weighed against the potential success of such a scheme was low. We subsequently recruited 12 members of the current audience with a view to setting up an incentivised ambassador scheme. Consultation with recruits revealed that most didn't want to make the commitment that would be required. As a result we didn't pursue this idea further.

## **Developing Insight through Research**

- An audience survey was undertaken targeting attenders at 3 concerts given by each of the orchestras in the 2014/15 season. The purpose of the survey was to find out more about attendance patterns, communications, programme, and motivation as well as demographic, age, gender information to help inform future planning and audience development.

*"A truly wonderful and memorable evening. A great band and a great conductor (Sir Mark Elder)"*

*"Venue a lovely surprise! Brilliant performance."* [Manchester Camerata, Colne]

- Conducted a customer feedback survey aimed at Test Drive attenders (1 online, 1 by phone) to gain feedback on their first experience of a concert and to gauge interest in further attendance.

*"[RLPO] Loved The Lark Ascending. Other pieces very vigorous, and loved watching the facial expressions of the orchestral players and how passionate they were about what they were playing. They must have been exhausted"*.

- Tagged new audiences on venue databases, and collected a range of data for future contact by all partners.

## **Key Achievements or Outcomes**

- Audiences have increased despite the demise of Lancashire Sinfonietta, who were obliged to withdraw from the project. There were 2,323 new attenders overall between 2012 and 2015.
- Successful initiatives included: a number of Test Drive's testing new approaches to the established 'Test Drive' model (e.g. through Facebook, Telephone campaigns) resulting in 592 new attenders; Segmented communications offering special all inclusive 'VIP night out' packages resulting in over 1,600 tickets and, significant additional income; Guardian/Telegraph post code sector door drop campaign using targeted print and messaging
- The opportunity to pilot test a range of initiatives has provided both partners with options and templates for future audience development
- Enabled the collection of shared customer data across the partner organisations
- Development of key partnerships – Marketing Lancashire (Visit Lancashire) who provided the LCMC web presence and a range of marketing support; Lancashire

Music Hub, Moving People Coach Company and Lancashire Evening Post. They all played a part in the positioning of LCMC and classical music in Lancashire and nationally. It is expected some of these relationships will continue beyond the end of the project, in particular retention of the collaborative LCMC brand through web presence on the [www.visitlancashire.com/classics](http://www.visitlancashire.com/classics) website.

- LCMC was a shortlisted finalist in the Visit Lancashire Tourism Awards 2014: Cultural Venue/Organisation Award category
- The level of co-operation the project has produced between orchestras and venues has helped establish excellent practice in sharing resources, working to common goals and has benefited wider practice. This was in no small part due to coordination by a strong Project Manager resulting in consensus and action throughout the project.
- Sharing project achievements with other UK organisations - a number of the strategies pilot tested have been rolled out to other arts organisations (e.g. Welsh National Opera).
- Trailblazing - LCMC was one of first Audience Agency clients to test and use Audience Spectrum data.

### **Conclusions & Recommendations**

The Development Strategy going forward will be to build on the strategies or initiatives that have been successful so that they become part of the future audience development strategy of each venue and orchestra.

These will include:

- Continuing to build on and commit to the relationship with Marketing Lancashire through [www.visitlancashire.com](http://www.visitlancashire.com) in building audiences for classical music in Lancashire
- To continue to develop a relationship with local coach company, Moving People Accrington with a view to building a sustainable Coach to Concert scheme for audiences
- Venues will utilise subscription telephone sales training (specialised training was provided for in-venue staff) to put in place an annual renewal and recruitment campaign.
- To undertake ongoing joint new audience schemes such as 'Test Drive the Arts'
- To build on successful communications to targeted audience segments, which will include a regular Lancashire Classical Music Collaboration 'Classical Music in Lancashire' newsletter for audiences.
- To continue work with Lancashire Music Hub (launched in Mar 2014) to develop younger audiences
- To integrate new audiences recruited through new audience campaigns into future venue/orchestra strategies.
- To seek to work collaboratively with other Lancashire based arts organisations and Arts Council England Creative People & Places projects in Pennine Lancs (The Canal & River Trust) and Blackpool/Wyre (Left Coast).

Whilst there have been many successes the project has highlighted some resource based and infrastructural challenges.

- Going forward it will be important that the limited functionality and uneven capability of box office/CRM software across the venues is seen as a priority.
- The functionality of King George's Hall box office system, in particular, was not on a par with the capabilities of the systems used by the other venues. This, despite willingness from venue staff to fulfil project objectives, resulted in issues in running customer data reports, extracting data and recording information.
- As a result LCMC commissioned HD Consulting to undertake an audit of King George's Hall box office system to help build the case for review.
- The musical landscape in Lancashire has shifted significantly since the start of the project, with the future of the Manchester Camerata in Colne in flux due to local authority funding cuts. Future resource therefore is likely to be less than it was and much of the ongoing audience development is likely to be incumbent upon the orchestras to instigate and maintain.

## Additional Information

### Audience Survey

#### Overview

An audience survey was undertaken targeting attenders at Manchester Camerata concert on 21 September, Halle concert on 14 November and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra concert on 7 December. The purpose of the survey was to find out more about attendance patterns, communications, programme, other arts attendance and motivations for attending as well as usual demographic, age, and gender information.

#### Method

- 2 versions – v1 long version 21 September; v2 shortened version 14 Nov & 7 Dec.
- 21 Sept & 14 Nov survey handed out at the concert and either returned by freepost or collected on the night and staff face-to-face completion at the concert
- 7 Nov survey – post concert by survey monkey to attenders with email addresses which represented 40% of total bookers.

#### Sample Sizes

The number of responses per concert conformed to accepted standard response rates/000 of 3% or more.

	Surveys completed	Total attenders	% Response	
MC, The Muni	38	529	7%	on concert night
RLPO Guild Hall	25	882	3%	by email post-concert (178 emails)
Halle, King George's Hall	67	663	10%	on concert night

#### Results Summary

This summary deals with trends encompassing all three concerts and orchestras/venues.

#### Demographic Profile

In respect of **gender balance**, the Manchester Camerata and Halle audience conforms to the regional and national trends for arts audiences which show a great proportion of female to male audiences (c. 57-64% female and 33-39% male). The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra (RLPO) audience was a somewhat more even balance with a slightly higher proportion of male (56%) to female (44%). That said the RLPO sample was much smaller and therefore reduces levels of confidence.

The LCMC audience profile showed that where **postcodes** were given the highest concentration of audiences came from the postcodes most local to the venue. However there was a good smattering of attendance from the 30—45 minute drive time with the RLPO drawing audience from as far south as Sandbach and across to Leeds.

Looking at the **ethnicity** of LCMC audiences there was, not surprisingly, a high representation of white British averaging 95-97%. 6% preferred not to say and 3%



(representing 1 person) were British Asian. The ethnicity of the audience is not representative of the local population base in respect of Blackburn and Preston.

As a group LCMC's **disabled** audience profile is made up of between 6%-21% with a disability. The Halle/King Georges Hall (KGH) audience has the lowest levels of disability and Manchester Camerata/Muni the highest (Manchester Camerata also had the highest proportion of audience aged 75+). Between 4-8% preferred not to say.

LCMC's audience profile shows the highest proportion of audience members in the **age ranges** 55-64, 65-74 and 75+ (55-64 19% MC/Muni, 30% Halle/KGH, 40% RLPO/GH; 65-74 39% MC/Muni, 36% Halle/KGH, 28% RLPO/GH; 75+ 31% MC/Muni, 15% Halle/KGH). This is not untypical if referenced against the national picture for classical music audiences. That said RLPO/GH did have 20% in the 45-54 age range and Halle/KGH 9%. Halle/KGH also had 8.5% aged under 44 (4% 0-24).

Whilst for Manchester Camerata/Muni and Halle/KGH almost all of the audience either lived/worked near the venue or came from another part of Lancashire, 32% of the RLPO/GH audience had come from another part of the UK or were on holiday.

## Attendance

*Q1 Before today, have you seen [orchestra] at [venue] before?*

The highest proportion of the audience had either been in the last 12 months (46%-64%) or were there for the first time (14-24%). Whilst for Manchester Camerata and RLPO 18/16% had been 1-2 years ago for Halle audiences this represented only 9% and 12% of their audiences had last been 2+ years ago.

*Q2 & 2a) Have you ever attended a concert?*

Crossover between attendance at KGH and GH is high but not from either to the Muni. That said a large percentage (54%) of RLPO attenders have never been to either KGH or the Muni and tend to go to KGH hall for RLPO concerts. Muni attenders are equally likely to attend GH or KGH and are more likely to go to see Manchester Camerata or RLPO.

*Q3. Which communications from a given list seen or hear before the concert & which prompted booking*

The top choices for each venue/orchestra were as follows:

	Seen/heard (1-5)	Prompt to bk (1-3)
Venue brochure	1 MC/Muni, Halle/KGH, RLPO/GH	2 RLPO/GH
Orchestra/Series brochure	2 MC/Muni, Halle/KGH; 4 RLPO/GH	1 MC/Muni; Halle/KGH
Letter	3 Muni, Halle/KGH; 5 RLPO/GH	2 MC/Muni;
Halle/KGH; 1 RLPO/GH		
Email	4 Muni, Halle/KGH; 3 RLPO/GH	3 RLPO/GH
LCMC Leaflet	5 Muni, Halle/KGH	3 Halle/KGH
KGH website	4 Halle/KGH	
Guild Hall website	2 RLPO/GH	
Visit Lancs website		3 MC/Muni

*Q4. Which did you do during your visit?*

Purchase of a programme was the highest percentage for both MC/Muni attenders and Halle/KGH attenders followed by drink at the bar, talk, food and CD purchase. For GH/RLPO purchase of a drink at the bar was the highest percentage followed by programme and CD.

*Q5. Invited comments about their attendance at the performance.*

For Manchester Camerata at the Muni many commented on the performance being wonderful, fab acoustics, intimate and warm and friendly staff. There were also several comments about the venue – seats uncomfortable and venue hot - and the tea – either food could be more imaginative or didn't know how to book. Again Halle/KGH audience commented on the how much they enjoyed the occasion, wonderful band and Sir Mark Elder. There were also several compliments about the food served at Blakey's although one person commented the 'didn't know about the restaurant'. Several people commented on how they wished there were more RLPO concerts in Preston (or even Blackpool) and that it was good to see school children in the audience!

*Q6. Events/festivals/venues attended in past 12 months*

Not surprisingly the highest percentage had attended their own venue, with Bridgewater Hall, Blackburn Cathedral, ACE Centre Nelson, Blackpool Grand, and Clitheroe Grand being the most frequented after that.

*Q7. Value for money?*

Most people were very satisfied or satisfied that the concert represented value for money. Of the 2/3 people who were dissatisfied the comments were – '*better value for money for OAPs*' (KGH), '*I can attend a 1st class orchestral concert at the Bridgewater for £10/12, yet have to pay closer to £20 at the Guild Hall. I realise that the fee is set by the venue and not the orchestra, but it's a factor in many people not attending any more*' (GH).

*Q8. Which programme/artists would prompt you to book?*

In terms of programme people wanted personal favourites or particular composers, for example Beethoven Symphony No. 9 Bruckner Symphonies, Bruckner Violin Concert and Mozart Symphonies. In terms of artists most mentioned were Vasily Petrenko, Sir Mark Elder and very well-known soloists such as Nicola Benedetti, Nigel Kennedy, Lang Lang, Lesley Garrett, Alfie Boe, and James Galway. This bears out previous classical music research undertaken that for the majority of the audience soloists won't influence them to book unless they are very, very well-known and high profile.

*Q9. Why attend?*

For this question we asked audiences to state all the reasons and up to 5 main reasons from a given list. The top 5 main reasons were as follows: to be entertained (this was the top reason), excitement of live event, atmosphere & ambience, major UK orchestra, see or hear something new. Also hobby/leisure interest in music, social night out and escape and re-charge batteries.