



**ODYSSEY
FESTIVAL
ORCHESTRA**

“Inspiring young people on their musical journey”

Odyssey Festival Orchestra

‘Astonish Me’ - September Concert 2023 - Education Impact Report

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Goals of the Odyssey schools engagement programme

Less than 2% of the concert-going public is under 25 (*The Audience Agency, 2017 (most up-to-date survey)*). Many young people are unfamiliar with, and possibly even intimidated by, the idea of a live classical orchestral concert. As a result, under 18s are missing out on a crucial element of cultural history and the opportunity to have enjoyable and inspiring musical experiences. One of the central aims of Odyssey is to improve access to, and enjoyment of, the concert hall experience, especially for the younger demographic. This is achieved in part by offering London schools, mainly from inner-city boroughs such as Southwark, the chance to bring students - free of charge - to vibrant concerts at premier London venues performed by Odyssey's talented young orchestra (aged 18-30) of professional and amateur musicians.

An engaging and imaginative concert experience

We use imaginative programming including actors and narrative to explain and present great orchestral works in their historical and cultural context. This way we aim to make the concert-going experience even more exciting, reaching out especially to younger adults who might otherwise be daunted or uninspired by a traditional, uninterrupted classical music performance.

We actively reach out to local schools in inner London to invite them to concerts and to offer pre-concert talks and workshops. We hope that the free tickets, along with workshops and accessible, entertaining programmes, will instil a lifelong love of classical music that will lead to more diverse audiences in future.

We are particularly keen to reach children who rarely, if ever, have attended a concert. The audience for our September 2023 concert had 21% attendees under 25 – significantly higher than the average national figure of 2%. This included 83 pupils from five London schools, who participated in our 'free tickets for schools' programme.

'Astonish Me' - our September 2023 concert

Our September 2023 concert was an exploration of repertoire inspired by two dancers, Vaslav Nijinsky and Leonid Massine, and commissioned by the great impresario Diaghilev and his Ballet Russes. Our narrator Kathryn Hunter played Tamara Karsavina, who was the lead ballerina in the Ballet Russe for many years, and who created most of the famous female roles in the 'The Spirit of the Rose', 'Petrouchka' and 'Daphnis and Chloë', among other repertoire from the concert. The script was created using her diaries among other sources to take the audience on a historical journey through some of the works that Diaghilev commissioned and Karsavina danced in.

The concert took place in Cadogan Hall, which added to the experience of the students who attended who got to experience a concert in a historic and beautiful venue. The programme (see below) had some links to the school syllabus as some A-level music courses are expected to get to know the 20th century music of Ravel and Stravinsky. Programme [here](#).

Weber (orch Berlioz 1841) (1911) Invitation to the Dance

Stravinsky Suite from Petrushka (1911)

Ravel Daphnis and Chloe, Suite No 2 (1909)

Respighi Suite from La Boutique Fantasque

Stravinsky Pulcinella (excerpts) (1920)

De Falla Three Cornered Hat, Suite No 2 (1919)

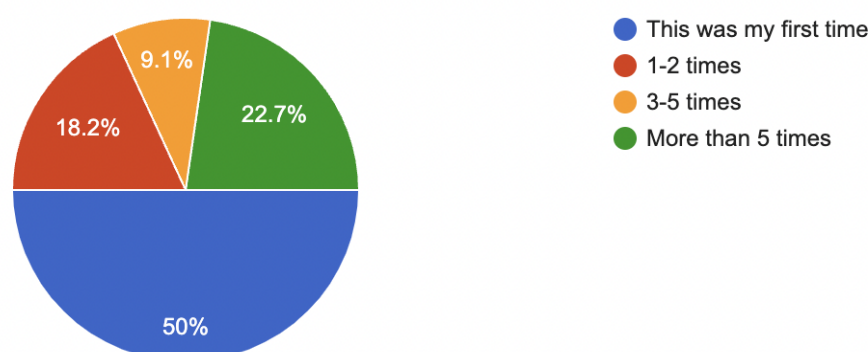
Our offer to schools was:

- Free tickets to the concert (narrator and dancers on stage)
- A free workshop on the music before the concert to introduce the students to the music they would hear
- Free drinks in a reception room in the interval/ before the concert, with members of the orchestra milling round to talk to them about the concert.

Information about the respondents

- We gave 90 tickets out to schools. 7 of these were for teachers so there were (as far as we know) 83 students who attended.
- We had a 27% response rate to the student survey.
- The five schools who attended were:
 - Harris Academy Peckham
 - Beths Grammar School
 - Harris Boys' Academy (East Dulwich)
 - St Thomas the Apostle
 - Haberdashers School New Cross
- The age of respondents ranged between 13 and 18. The large majority of students who attended were doing GCSE or A-level music.
- **50% of them said it was the first time they'd attended an orchestral concert before. 68% had been to two or less orchestral concerts (see figure 1).**

Figure 1: Student responses to the question: "Have you attended an orchestral concert before?"



Student statistics on the concert and workshop

- **79% said that the workshop before the concert helped them to understand the music better.**
- 95% said they liked the way the actor and musicians worked together.
- 76% said the readings and narrations enhanced their enjoyment of the music.
- **86% said they would be encouraged to go to more concerts like this.**

Teacher statistics on the concert and workshop

- **100% said they were 'very likely' to take up a similar opportunity again in the future**
- 67% said that the pre-concert talk helped to build students' enthusiasm for the concert.

Qualitative feedback summary

- The students seemed to pick up on the energy of the orchestra. They really enjoyed the dancer and the actor (their teachers also said this), and the narration helped them to understand the music better.
- Daphnis and Chloe was their favourite piece by far!
- The teachers liked that the programme linked in to the pieces their students are studying, and would like even more pieces from the GCSE and A-level syllabus if possible.
- Teachers said that their students loved the opportunity to speak to members of the orchestra before the concert and in the interval.

Selected quotations from students

What did you particularly enjoy about the concert?

- "I loved seeing all of the different instruments and hearing all of the specific parts they played and then seeing how it fit together." - *14 year old student, Harris Boys Academy East Dulwich*
- "Best concert ever" - *15 year old student, Harris Boys Academy East Dulwich*
- "The atmosphere the orchestra create in the setting, and the combination of talking speech and orchestral playing is complemented each other quite well. **There was a lot of emotion in the playing.**" - *16 year old student, Beths Grammar school*
- "The way the concert told such a special story. It was a beautiful journey we all went on together and it opened young people's minds to the beauty of orchestral music that some may never have imagined could exist." - *17 year old student, Beths Grammar school*
- "I enjoyed the atmosphere and how the sound from the orchestra filled out the entire hall. The pieces were beautiful and it was **surreal seeing it live for the first time.**" - *16 year old student, Beths Grammar school*
- "I really enjoyed the acting. **It helped me to understand the story better and made the music more immersive.**" - *16 year old student, St Thomas the Apostle College*
- "I really liked how well the music was performed and the **energy of the music.** I also liked the actors that came on stage, thought they were cool." - *16 year old student, Beths Grammar school*

What did you learn from the talk before the concert?

- "How the conductor works with the orchestra and how all musicians have to move together as one, we also got a bit of context behind the ballet and the pieces which was insightful." - *17 year old student, Beths Grammar school*
- "I learned the definitions of maximalism, impressionism and expressionism." - *17 year old student, St Thomas the Apostle College*
- "The background of the music and how much more there was to the music including dance and disputes and a love story" - *16 year old student, Beths Grammar school*
- "The key to understanding music is to be able to imagine the note in your head before playing it." - *16 year old student, Beths Grammar school*

What were your favourite and/or least favourite works, if any, and why?

- “Daphnis et Chloe was my favourite. It was already my favourite piece by Ravel but the way the musicians were no longer individual players but rather all as one, was such a beautiful thing to experience. **They allowed the audience to be present in the building of tension and when it was released, it was an extraordinary moment.**” - 17 year old student, *Beths Grammar school*
- “The Petrushka was my favourite. The sense of drama fitted with the music strongly.” - 16 year old student, *Haberdashers Hatcham College*
- “They were superb but Daphnis et Chloe was honestly beautiful.” - 17 year old student, *St Thomas the Apostle College*

Selected quotations from teachers

What interested you about the free ticket offer?

- “Firstly, it was free :) But a big pull was that it fed into GCSE music specification well. We have just started Western Classical Area of Study in Yr 11 so this was perfect for them. Many of the students there also had not had the chance to see a full orchestra play also so was a great opportunity for them.”
- “The works being played directly linked to the areas that we will study within the A level.”
- **“The programming was inventive and appealing.”**

How might the ‘free tickets for schools scheme’ and accompanying pre-concert talk by Odyssey Members complement your music provision in school?

- “Ties in with the Areas of Study for GCSE Music course”
- “We can use it to inspire our own orchestra.”
- “Supports with wider listening for A level courses, great for students to see young musicians of that calibre”

What do you foresee as the longer- term impact (if any)?

- “Better marks in listening paper as they have now seen an orchestra so will help with identifying instruments. Inspiration for composition coursework. It will also allow us to discuss the works and as they have seen them they will have an automatic buy in in the conversation.”
- “I think that it has inspired some of my students to look further into works from the 20th Century, but also look to compose within that style.”
- **“Gives the students an opportunity to see what the future could possibly hold for them but also to see a wider breadth of orchestral repertoire than we can provide in school”**

What did your pupils most enjoy about the experience?

- “They enjoyed the full orchestra sound. They also loved meeting members of the orchestra and getting to speak with them.”
- “They really enjoyed the workshop and then hearing the works live.”
- “The sense of occasion and the musical a visual feast. The narration and dancer were a surprise to the students.”
- “The combination of acting / dancing / music”

Other

- Teacher: “It’s a **wonderful inspiration** to our students to see what is possible from collaboration..”
- Teacher: “Communication has been excellent. Thank you for the opportunity to enhance our students musical journey!”
- Teacher: “Loved it - **inspiring and different** - please keep up these type of performances.”
- Student: “It is amazing what you are doing, I am very passionate about orchestral music and I know it was a very important event for young people to witness it for the first time, and you made that happen. **This project will change young people’s lives hopefully for the better.** Thank you”

Photos

The Orchestra



Students talking to members of the orchestra in the interval



Dancer in Petrushka Costume

