

Q&A

Late last year, Orchestras Live announced that Tony Stoller had been appointed as its new chair. Stoller has previously worked as chair of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and as a broadcasting regulator. In 2004, he was awarded a CBE for services to broadcasting

MT How did your music education begin?

My earliest encounter with music education was through the Ernest Read and Robert Mayer Children's Concerts at Royal Festival Hall in the 1950s. I was generally self-taught after that, apart from my piano lessons, and relied heavily on BBC radio to learn more about what music meant.

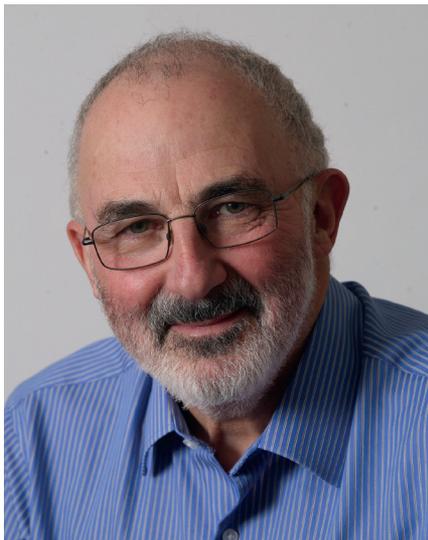
MT How did you come to be involved with Orchestras Live?

As a broadcasting regulator, being chief executive of the Radio Authority from 1995 until 2003, my fascination with the combination of live and broadcast music continued. I wrote about this extensively in my 2010 history of independent radio in the UK, *Sounds of Your Life*. That led onto a PhD, studying the place of music in broadcasting, and a book, *Classical music on radio in the United Kingdom, 1945 to 1995*, published by Palgrave Macmillan last year.

After I left my last chair, I became aware of the role of chair of Orchestras Live (OL). It seemed to be exactly the sort of contribution that I wanted to make to the music sector and to public life as a whole. I regard it as a great privilege to be involved.

MT What are your ambitions as chair?

The first job of any chair is to make it possible for the executive to do their jobs well, and to support and guide them. That also requires making sure that an organisation is well governed, that proper accountability and scrutiny is in place. But the whole purpose of that is to achieve something for orchestras and audiences. I



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feel strongly that orchestral music should be available right across the country, and that people who may currently feel excluded – not given 'permission' to listen – are given the opportunity to be involved. Back in the 1940s, the BBC worried about working class people listening to the Third Programme, fearing that 'they would not be able to engage with it on equal terms'. That is exactly the wrong note to strike. Everybody is able, and it is our job at OL – working with our partner orchestras and local authorities, and with the Arts Council England – to make that possible.

MT Thoughts on music education now?

I am sadly aware of the pressures which music educators are coming under as the curriculum is narrowed, and the schools

feel the pinch of lack of resources as things shift away from music and the arts. This could lead to a lower value being placed on those activities by families and schools. I can only admire what is being achieved despite that. I am encouraged at seeing music hubs stepping in to help fill the gaps, as I know from my grandchildren. I do not think that we should accept the reductions in music education, but should be fighting for greater awareness and support. We can be aided by radio broadcasters, music streamers and podcasters, who need a widely appreciative audience.

MT What do you see as OL's role now?

It is a promoter, supporter, partner and an active player in individual music education projects. It also offers leadership, to help broaden out approaches to orchestral music. It can act as something of a research and development department for the orchestral sector, piloting new approaches, supporting risk and sharing best practice. We support the established classical canon, but we also welcome the opportunities which digital techniques and increased musical fusion can offer. These are areas that young people are exploring themselves informally, and we value their own contributions in creative learning opportunities through OL's projects.

MT Anything else to add?

We all recognise the crucial importance of increasing the diversity of those involved with music, and offering opportunities to include individuals and groups who may currently feel shut out. Within the orchestral sector, and among musicians and programmers as a whole, there are now a growing number of initiatives to recognise the contribution of female composers and musicians. I look forward to seeing equivalent progress for people of colour, whose abilities and potential – and historic contribution – is still unacceptably undervalued. Disability also has too long been a bar to people getting involved with making music. That needs to change, and I look forward to OL working with everyone in music and especially with those who teach and develop younger people, to produce a truly diverse and inclusive musical sector.

orchestraslive.org.uk