



Dear Mr Sharp

We write regarding the recent announcement of the BBC's new Strategy for Classical Music, which includes the disbanding of the BBC Singers and cutting the number of salaried positions in its orchestras.

The Association of British Choral Directors (**abcd**) is a national charitable organisation solely concerned with supporting everyone leading choral music, both amateur and professional, and promoting choral music nationwide. Our members range from world famous professional conductors to students taking their first steps in leading choirs in the community.

We ask that the BBC abandons its proposal to disband the BBC Singers and make redundant a large section of its salaried orchestral musicians.

In the UK we are unusual in having only one full-time salaried professional choir: the BBC Singers. Their reputation worldwide is second to none, the quality of their work built up over many years, and they are undoubtedly one of the top chamber choirs in the world. They are the flagship choir to which young singers from all walks of life aspire. Their commitment to new music is well-known; they are the choir for which composers from all walks of life want to write. No other choir covers such a broad repertoire.

We have witnessed first-hand the work that the BBC Singers do outside of the formal concert platform, in workshops and masterclasses for our young choir leaders – the leaders of the future – and for singers of all ages across our communities. High quality education programmes require expert and high-quality leadership, something that members of the BBC Singers are ideally placed to provide.

To disband this choir is a cultural catastrophe for the UK and one that will affect the international reputation of both the BBC and classical music in this country hugely. The British choral tradition is a unique part of our national identity. The BBC is seen as the standard-bearer for UK culture and the tone set by you affects how people around the world view choral music in this country. The BBC Singers are the cornerstone of this tradition, the example to which all singers and choirs aspire. This is no elite minority. Over 2 million people in this country sing in choirs each week – more than attend football matches.

This decision comes at a time when musicians of all kinds are struggling to survive. The music sector was greatly affected by the pandemic; choral music and singing across our communities, amateur and professional, were particularly badly affected. Classical music exists for everyone, but destroying it as a profession does nothing to inspire young people to get involved in it. By disbanding the BBC Singers, the BBC will be forfeiting its crucial role in the development and strengthening of choral music in this country and abdicating its responsibility for cultural leadership.

As an Association we ask the Board of Governors to intervene in this decision.

Yours sincerely

Leslie East OBE, Chair

Ken Fayle, Chair-elect

Rachel Greaves, General Secretary

cc. Tim Davie, Director General  
Charlotte Moore, Chief Content Officer  
Simon Webb, Head of Choirs and Orchestras