



Family Arts  
Campaign

# Case Study

## London Symphony Orchestra

The [London Symphony Orchestra](#) (LSO) has been involved in the [Family Arts Campaign](#) since the inaugural conference in April 2013, regularly attending training and sharing days.

Families are an important target audience and the Family Arts Campaign allowed us to reflect on our current practices, benchmark them against other arts organisations and benefit from training, networking and the latest research.

The [Family Arts Standards](#) are an excellent benchmarking tool with surprisingly simple methods to improve engagement. One significant shift since signing up has been in our presentation of information: the realisation that families need very clear, detailed information well in advance and clear channels of communication for questions and feedback. The Standards can also act as a catalyst for bigger organisational change, e.g. customer policy, facilities.

We feel that the most important outcome is perhaps yet to come; the City Family Arts Network alliance between LSO, Barbican, Museum of London, Guildhall School, BBC Symphony Orchestra and City Libraries will help us be better heard and build credibility in tackling family programming at senior management level, one of our more long-term aims.

After the Campaign began in 2013, the LSO created a new bespoke part of our website in direct response to research. Parents planning family visits have different needs and priorities from 'standard' concert-goers (i.e. adults attending solo or with a partner) and that should be reflected in layout and tone.

The [Family Arts Festival](#) is a great way to reach new families and we programmed two new events especially for the 2013 and 2014 Family Arts Festivals: a creative workshop prior to Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*; and LSO in Wartime, Create an Opera in a Day. This last event was particularly successful.

We then ran five events as part of Family Arts Festival 2014: Two Free Friday Lunchtime Concerts; Musical Storytelling for Under-5s; The Two Bs: Bruch & Beethoven (BBC Radio 3 recital) and LSO in Wartime: Create an Opera in a Day (day-long creative project for families with 6-12 year olds).

We became conscious how important it is to highlight when an event is taking place in the school holidays (and indeed, programme them then if at all possible).

The LSO therefore make the following recommendations for the 2015 Get Creative Family Arts Festival:

- Programme more family-specific events rather than tagging 'events for all' as suitable for families (because some in reality are not!)
- Split events into very clear age categories for parents' benefit
- Repeat Family Days as day-long immersive projects work brilliantly
- Have at least one event to cater for early years: a very hungry market
- Collaborate with partners – we'll be working with the City Family Arts Network for Big Draw / Children's Library music session
- Keep average ticket price very low
- Maintain free events for those who cannot afford low cost tickets
- Collaborate on promotion with partners in your Network
- Local press to cover Network partners' joint activity
- Target hard-to-reach local families via partnerships – we'll be working with Islington Council and City Corporation
- Be clear: unaccompanied adults not allowed, nor unaccompanied children
- To target 13-16 year-olds, engage via grandparents, godparents etc. to act in loco parentis
- Engage a professional photographer
- Create and give out mementos

We want our family audience figures to increase, but our Family Concerts and Musical Storytelling events are usually close to selling out, which indicates that we need more products. We would like to see our under-18s discount being more regularly used and more families at bespoke/new initiatives.

Our main bookers for Family Concerts and Musical Storytelling are middle-class, white families. We would like to see audiences that better reflect our immediate local area. BME and other hard-to-reach families want to see more of their own lives reflected on stage but this is not currently feeding into programming.

We profile customer satisfaction with post-concert email surveys and invite email and social media comments. At the Barbican, we have an Information Desk and staff on duty to assist with enquiries. All events which take place at LSO St Luke's include general venue feedback forms.

There may be some marginal increase in ticket income generated by more sales to family events but if we succeed in targeting hard-to-reach families this would be offset as these tickets would be heavily discounted or free. Family events generate a very small portion of annual ticket income and ticket prices are kept artificially low to aid access. In the long-term, we hope that children who attend family events are more likely to become

regular concert-goers as adults: therefore family audience development is not about adding to our current bottom line, but instead seen as an investment in the future popularity and financial health of the LSO.

## Tips for engaging a family audience:

### DO

1. Give all the details, in good time
2. Emphasise how easy everything can be (choosing, booking, attending)
3. Use approachable, inclusive language
4. Position the arts as fun for all generations
5. Incorporate digital elements into marketing
6. Communicate through local networks
7. Take time to meet families face-to-face
8. Keep activities low cost or free
9. Include participation as part of the experience
10. Make the relationship last longer than just the event

### DON'T

1. Make adults or children feel unwelcome
2. Embarrass parents in front of other parents
3. Fail to provide clear information
4. Provide no opportunity for feedback, or not listen to it
5. Change the programme
6. Talk down to families
7. Provide poor facilities – food, parking, toilets, access
8. Have no staff, or poorly briefed or unfriendly staff
9. Provide a disorganised product
10. Rip families off

**Fabienne Morris**

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