

Chair of the Board



Passing the Baton: A Message from our Outgoing Chair

My seven-year term chairing the OAE ends this summer. I have greatly enjoyed this role and the opportunity it provides to be at the heart of and support one of the leading creative ensembles. The role is highly rewarding, and I encourage suitable candidates to consider it.

The OAE has blazed a trail in the 40 years since it was formed. It was an early champion of period instrument practice with an extraordinary performance and recording record in the UK and abroad. The OAE has a player-led structure and now a unique residency in a North London comprehensive school and has always sought fresh challenges.

The players and the programmes devised by them are first rate and respected internationally. The management is best in class. The current Trustee group works very effectively and harmoniously bringing to bear a wide range of expertise.

Despite difficult times for the arts, the OAE is flourishing and there are always new opportunities. The search is for an individual to lead this orchestra boldly into its fifth decade. The role provides an outstanding opportunity to work with people of extraordinary musical talent and commitment of all ages and from all backgrounds.



Imogen Charlton-Edwards, OAE Chair

A Welcome from our Chief Executive

The OAE is seeking a Chair who brings the sound judgement, strategic insight, and affinity with the OAE's activities, musical ambitions and values which Imogen has provided over a successful period of leadership: someone excited by the scale of the opportunity, and clear-eyed about the responsibilities of stewardship at this moment in our development. The new Chair is likely to share a cultural range and ambition which matches the OAE's.

Orchestral performance at the highest level remains at the heart of the OAE's activities. We regularly play to sell-out audiences in leading venues and are committed to innovation in various ways. The OAE is a musician-led orchestra. That principle underpins our artistic decision-making, our governance structures, and our way of working. It provides a rare level of artistic ownership and commitment.

The OAE has for many years occupied a distinctive position in the cultural ecology: artistically ambitious, socially engaged, and increasingly influential in shaping wider policy conversations. Our residency at Acland Burghley School has opened up new opportunities, resulting in the orchestra operating at the intersection of world class performance, education and local participation. This work has attracted wide attention: a case study for Arts Council England and a recommendation in the recent Hodge Review.

The Chair will play a critical role leading a collegiate and supportive board in sustaining that balance: championing the orchestra's performance, independence and integrity while ensuring robust oversight, strategic focus, and long-term resilience.



Crispin Woodhead, OAE Chief Executive

From the Stage: A Musician's Perspective

The OAE was founded by an inspired and inspirational group of players. We players today are just as engaged and passionate. As double-bassist and current Vice-Chair, I have the pleasure and privilege of sitting on the board. I have witnessed first-hand the dedication of our board members; their love of the music we play; their full support for the unique personality with which we play it; and the generosity with which they offer their skills to support and enhance the wellbeing of the OAE.

I have observed in previous Chairs that essential ability to be able to hear everyone and guide strategic action, all the while having a love and understanding of what the OAE is. I look forward to that tradition living on.

Cecelia Bruggemeyer – Double Bass, Chair of the Players' Artistic Committee & Board Vice-Chair





About the OAE

The OAE is one of the world's leading orchestras with a highly distinctive sound and approach. It was founded in 1986 as a player-led orchestra to specialise in music composed between the 17th and 19th Centuries (and occasionally beyond) – by composers such as Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and others and performed on instruments – or replicas of instruments – from the time the music we play was written. The Orchestra works with leading conductors and soloists from around the world.

The OAE has developed innovative programming and, alongside more conventional concerts which are regularly a sell-out performed as part of a residency at the South Bank Centre, have developed a series combining music and science (Bach, the Universe and Everything) and the Night Shift (night-time gigs in informal venues).

The OAE's approach combines old and modern and is rooted in research and experimentation to discover how these instruments were played. The result is a vivid contrast with the sounds of a 'modern' symphony orchestra that highlights the ongoing developments of musical language.

The OAE has a long-standing commitment to music education and has developed one of the best respected orchestral education programmes in the country. Building on this, in summer 2020, the OAE moved into Acland Burghley School in Camden, North London. The residency – a first for a British orchestra – allows us to live, work and play amongst the students at the school. This move underpins the OAE's core 'enlightenment' mission of reaching as wide an audience as possible.

This collaboration has produced new works including breaking Bach which premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival last year.

The OAE is well supported by trusts and foundations and a wide range of individual donors and supporters. It receives Arts Council England support, but its primary sources of income are from performances and private supporters.



Role overview

We are looking for a new Chair for the OAE to succeed Imogen Charlton-Edwards whose successful term comes to an end this summer. The Chair will support the orchestra's various missions. The individual will have proven leadership capabilities and senior volunteer experience with an arts organisation.

The candidate will need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the way the OAE works and a commitment to the musical, educational and audience-development aspirations of the OAE.

The OAE depends on private-sector funding, therefore candidates will need a willingness to be actively involved with fundraising and to work closely with the Development department.

The OAE Board is populated with committed sector-specialists, and it meets four times a year, although there is a good deal of effective sub-committee work and communication between meetings.

"The OAE seems unusually blessed in attracting interesting, passionate music-lovers whose support and commitment enriches our own musical experience."

Lisa Beznosiuk, OAE Principal Flute



Key responsibilities

- Ensuring effective, governance and fulfilment of legal requirements
- Facilitating discussions and decision-making processes to support the realisation of the orchestra's work
- Shaping the Board agenda to reflect OAE activity, a fast-moving sector and the decisions at hand
- Supporting fundraising and profile raising for the orchestra and promoting support for the wider sector
- Shaping OAE culture and strategy, particularly relationships with players and staff
- Acting as an ambassador for the OAE, fostering positive external relationships that reinforce the orchestra's objectives and enhance opportunities from diverse sources, particularly within the Acland Burghley School community
- Leading Board meetings which take place four times a year, and dealing with any issues as they arise between meetings



Person specification

Essential Skills and Experience

- **Governance Expertise:** Demonstrated experience in ensuring effective governance and compliance with legal requirements within a charitable or cultural organisation.
- **Strategic Leadership:** Ability to shape Board agendas to reflect organisational priorities, sector developments, and emerging challenges.
- **Fundraising and Advocacy:** Proven track record in leading fundraising initiatives and raising the profile of an organisation, ideally within the arts or cultural sector.
- **Relationship Building:** Strong interpersonal skills to foster positive relationships with trustees, staff, and players, promoting a collaborative and inclusive culture.
- **External Representation:** Skilled in acting as an ambassador for the organisation, developing partnerships and networks that advance strategic objectives. Particular emphasis on engaging with educational communities
- **Board and Committee Leadership:** Experience chairing meetings effectively, facilitating constructive discussions, and ensuring timely decision-making.

Personal Attributes

- **Commitment to Mission:** Passion for the work of the Orchestra and the wider cultural sector.
- **Diplomacy and Integrity:** Ability to manage complex issues with tact and uphold the highest standards of governance.
- **Influence and Advocacy:** Confidence in representing the organisation externally and inspiring support from diverse stakeholders.
- **Time and Availability:** Capacity to lead Board and committee meetings and address matters arising between meetings.



Acland Burghley School

In summer 2020 the OAE moved into Acland Burghley School, a 1,200-pupil state comprehensive school in Camden, North London.

Three offices have been adapted for our administration team, alongside a filming studio and library. The Grade II listed school assembly hall is used as the OAE's rehearsal space so, for the first time, we are all in the same place: players, staff and library.

The school is not just the OAE's landlord or physical home; this pioneering partnership - now recognised nationally - gives the majority of students their first encounter with live orchestral music as well as providing students with opportunities to build creative, technical and administrative skills. This partnership underpins the OAE's core 'enlightenment' mission of reaching as wide an audience as possible.

The move to Acland Burghley School was made possible with a leadership grant of £120,000 from The Linbury Trust, one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. Theirs and others' support enables us to maintain our base at ABS and produce a year-round programme of work at the school.

This imaginative partnership takes collaboration between professional artists and the public education system into new and exciting territory in which creativity has a part to play in all aspects of the curriculum."

Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair, Arts Council England



Further information and how to apply

All applications are being handled by our executive search partners GatenbySanderson. For more information on the role, and for a confidential conversation, please get in touch with:

Oliver Startup - oliver.startup@gatenbysanderson.com or

Rebekah Herz-Bauman - rebekah.herz-bauman@gatenbysanderson.com

The initial term is three years. Two further three-year terms may be added, at the discretion of the OAE Board.

We are an equal opportunities organisation committed to diversity and treating all members, trustees, and our audiences with dignity and respect regardless of background.

"Britain's indisputably best period instrument ensemble"

The Independent



Resources & insight

- [OAE website](#)
- [OAE's profile on the Charity Commission](#)
- [OAE YouTube channel](#) (120k subscribers)
- [OAE content on MarqueeTV](#)
- [The story of Breaking Bach](#)
- [Review of the OAE's performance of Bruckner with Adam Fischer in October 2024](#)
- [Review of the OAE's performance of Haydn with Sir Andras Schiff in November 2025](#)
- [The Hodge Review](#)



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