



# ORCHESTRA OF ST JOHN'S

**Kickstart grant helps the Oxford charity orchestra bring classical music to those who need it most, making sure that music comes first.**

The Orchestra of St John's was established fifty years ago by John Lubbock. Fifty years on the OSJ remains a busy, vibrant orchestra and John remains its conductor and musical director. John has always believed that music has extraordinary power and reach. So alongside their concerts, he introduced the 'Connections Programme' – taking the orchestra out of concert halls to perform in front of children with learning difficulties in a project known as 'Music for Autism' and those that are disadvantaged, including refugees. The OSJ ethos is to bring music to all.



## **Facing challenges in an ever changing world**

Simon Payne from OSJ explains "We were lucky enough to continue our outreach work 'Music for Autism' in a remote capacity during lockdown and also played safely to patients and staff in NHS hospital gardens. One of the greatest challenges we have faced has been obtaining audiences during lockdown due to COVID19. Now things are opening up again we have needed to change our main Oxford venue, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to the larger venue of SJE Arts. The new venue will allow us to incorporate safe social distancing measures. As a result of our location change, we need to build a new audience. We needed additional support to help us professionally position our marketing and reach a new, wider audience."



## Key support from OxLEP Business

OSJ was awarded an OxLEP Kickstart Grant. The grant funding had two main advantages for the charity. The first being to work closely with a marketing consultant, who has helped to improve the overall marketing strategy, social media and adopt a more professional approach to their marketing delivery. Secondly, OSJ has been able to partner up with a specialist who is evaluating their approach and strategy to the music for the 'Connections Programme'.

"The grant we received from OxLEP has enabled us to also bring on board a local education academic who has been observing our sessions and has come up with an evaluation to help streamline the process going forward. The programme has been running for a large number of years and we need to ensure that it continues to attract schools, moves with the times and is as wide-reaching as possible."

Alongside the grant funding, Simon Payne from OSJ has attended OxLEP's Peer Networks Programme webinars over a few

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months. Simon explained: "The workshops proved really useful, and it was great to talk to other people from similar industries who were in the same situation as us."

"Overall the support we received from OxLEP has made us feel positive about the future and I believe we are in a stronger position now than we were pre-lockdown. We have updated our website and strengthened our board along with the administrative team. We also have plans to take on one new staff member.

We will absolutely look to OxLEP for ongoing support in the future."

**osj**  
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**For more information on Orchestra of St John's please visit [osj.org.uk](https://osj.org.uk)**

If you are looking for support for your business get in touch with us to find out how our team of specialists at OxLEP Business can help you.

**01865 897 181**

e: [business@oxfordshireLEP.com](mailto:business@oxfordshireLEP.com)

w: [oxlepbusiness.co.uk](https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk)