



Annual Report 2024-25

Foreword from

Music that matters, music for change. That is the essence of Manchester Camerata.

Since joining the Board as Chair in January 2025, I've witnessed countless ways in which this fantastic organisation brings that vision to life.

At its heart is a team of exceptional and ambitious musicians, audiences and communities, as well as our funders and philanthropists. Our brilliant Music Director, Gábor Takács-Nagy, inspires our musicians to take risks and play with total commitment – and it shows. Whether performing in the new Monastery lunchtime concert series in Gorton, at sold-out venues in London, or on international stages from Bahrain to the Edinburgh International Festival, Camerata continues to demonstrate the energy and artistry that make it truly unique.

This year has also seen increasing recognition for Camerata's work on the national stage. Our pioneering Camerata 360° Ruth Sutton Fellowship programme won an Association of British Orchestras Award, confirming Camerata's reputation as a sector leader in nurturing the next generation of talent. Through this and our partnerships with the Royal Northern College of Music and beyond, we are helping young artists develop not just as performers but as rounded, creative individuals.

Equally inspiring is the impact Camerata is making beyond the concert hall. Across Greater Manchester, the Orchestra's Music in Mind programme is now reaching even more people living with dementia and their carers. As I've joined sessions in our now-thriving network of Music Cafés, I've witnessed first-hand the joy, connection, and relief they bring. That impact is being amplified through the new Centre of Excellence for Music and Dementia, which is building a

powerful evidence base for how music can transform health and wellbeing.

Our communications and partnerships have also gone from strength to strength – from a Classic FM partnership that brings our work to national audiences, to creative campaigns that make classical music feel fresh, inclusive and alive. Each of these achievements reflects the imagination and drive that define Manchester Camerata.

None of this would be possible without an extraordinary group of people. Together, our musicians, our staff, my fellow trustees, and our supporters and partners have built on the strong foundations laid in recent years and turned strategy into visible, lasting impact.

I would like to pay special tribute to my predecessor, Stephen Dauncey, whose leadership over the past seven years helped to shape the vision we are now realising.

As we look ahead, our ambition is clear. We will keep growing and nurturing the talent that enables us to innovate in all parts of our programme – this will allow us to sustain and grow our impact.

To the audiences, funders, volunteers, partners, and friends who have been part of this journey, thank you for believing in Manchester Camerata and helping us to make music that matters, music for change.

Nic Hailey CMG
Chair of Trustees

Our Chair

Our strategy 2022-2026

Manchester Camerata's strategy focuses not just on what we do, but how we work, drawing connections between the quality of our craft and the impact that we are seeking to achieve. We are driven by three strategic priorities.

📍 Talent

We do things brilliantly. Everything starts with the quality of our musicians, and we must value, nourish, and support them. Manchester Camerata is committed to being a best-in-class employer of musicians.

📍 Innovation

We do things differently. We will be bold in identifying new ways of working and new ways to reach audiences in Greater Manchester and beyond.

All our Concerts and Community programmes are aligned with these key strategic aims. Our Communications and Fundraising strategies support them. In combination, these four themes will build the reputation of the organisation as an acknowledged global thought leader when it comes to the transformative role culture can play in society.

📍 Impact

Manchester Camerata exists to make a difference. We believe music changes the lives of people and the prospects of places. Part of our mission is not just to say this but to prove it.

Our impact 2024-2025

Musicians

33 Freelance members

200 Deputies

Audiences

126k+ reached live

2M reached digitally

Community

Over 6,000

participant contacts made through our community programmes e.g. in schools and for people living with dementia and their carers

Turnover

£1.8 million

Concerts

Throughout 2024-25, Manchester Camerata has continued to demonstrate the power of music to inspire, innovate, and make human connections. This has been a year defined by artistic ambition, creative collaboration, and a deep commitment to nurturing talent and innovation in our programme.

As a commitment to serving our local community, we launched *The Monastery Series*, a successful new programme of lunchtime concerts at our Gorton home. These concerts not only celebrate individual artistry, but also strengthen the connection between our organisation and the local community. From welcoming local schools to offering £3 tickets for Gorton residents, we are reinforcing our belief that world-class performance belongs in every setting, and is accessible to everyone.

In 2024-25, we recorded three new *Mozart, Made in Manchester* albums for the Chandos Record Label, marking the finale of our project to record all Mozart's Piano Concertos with eminent pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. This huge body of work celebrates the chemistry between Music Director

Gábor Takács-Nagy, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and our musicians. To date, the series has received 5-star reviews from Gramophone, *BBC Music Mag*, *The Telegraph*, and more, has been made Classic FM's record of the week on more than one occasion, and has also been streamed over 3 million times. This cements Camerata's reputation as one of the most dynamic orchestras working in classical recording today.

In 2024-25, our performances continued to receive national acclaim. In May, our concept-driven Disruptors concert received a five-star review from *The Observer*, being named one of their best classical concerts of the year. *Songs of the Bulbul*, our collaboration with Artistic Partner, Rushil Ranjan and Dance Company, Aakash Odedra, premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival, achieving five-star reviews, and was named the 'best show at the festival' by *The List*. We debuted the world premieres of five new works, including the improvisational work, *Missing Pieces*, by our violinist Gemma Bass, *Requiem for the Dispossessed* by multi-disciplinary Visual Artist Imran Perretta, *Songs of the Bulbul* and *Māyā* by Rushil Ranjan, and *The Night Overtook Us* by violinist, fiddle player, collaborator and composer, Donald Grant. Collectively, these new works demonstrate Camerata's role as a champion of new and diverse voices.

This year, we pushed the boundaries of our productions and audience experience further than ever before with our show for all ages, *Space: The Sound of the Stars*. This immersive experience blended live performance, storytelling, tuned wine glasses, and large-scale projected visuals suspended above the audience and players, to transform the Great Nave at The Monastery into a giant planetarium. Internationally, Camerata performed two sold-out live Top Gun in-concert screenings in Bahrain, showcasing the orchestra's global appeal and versatility across genres.

In January, Camerata was proud to receive an Association of British Orchestras Award for its pioneering Camerata 360° Ruth Sutton Fellowship programme, an important recognition of our commitment to talent development for the next generation of musicians. The programme continues to create paid, holistic opportunities for emerging professionals, creating the next generation of curious thinkers, now performing regularly with Camerata and across the wider sector.

When the Pet Shop Boys were awarded the Pop Pioneer award at this year's MTV European Music Awards, they decided to partner with Manchester Camerata. Together, we performed an orchestral arrangement of their classic, West End Girls, live at the awards show, as well as re-recording this hit single for release. We also performed together on the BBC TV show *Strictly Come Dancing* for their iconic Blackpool episode. These landmark TV broadcasts amassed a combined viewership of millions internationally, placing us on the same platform as some of the biggest names in the music industry.

This year saw more trips to our nation's capital with a performance of Vivaldi's Four Seasons at Kings Place, narrated by Stephen Fry. This was part of a sold-out tour, marking the release of our recording with Daniel Pioro for Apple Music's Platoon record label.

We also made a return visit to Wigmore Hall, showcasing the music of Camerata collaborator Daniel Kidane, who invited us to perform his works, including a piece that we commissioned during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Further expanding the orchestra's talent and skills, we held multiple workshops in collaboration with Dance Company, Company Chameleon, as well as sessions on improvisation in raag with Rushil Ranjan, and the performance of an improvisational work, *Missing Pieces*, by Camerata member Gemma Bass. These projects have each expanded the orchestra's skills and reinforced the fearlessness our players are known for.

Looking forward »»

The coming year will focus on deepening partnerships, exploring bold new repertoire, and extending our international profile. This focus on originality, talent and innovations ensures our artistic excellence continues to grow stronger with every performance.

Community

This year has been defined by delivery and meaningful impact, demonstrating at scale how music transforms lives, improves wellbeing, and strengthens communities.

Our first full year as the UK's first Centre of Excellence for Music and Dementia marks a significant achievement and major step forward in our mission.

With twelve Music Cafés now open across all ten boroughs, and a further 8 committed over the next year, they are providing spaces of connection, creativity, and joy for people living with dementia and their carers.

In total, during 2024-25, Camerata delivered an extraordinary 380 weekly Music in Mind sessions across Greater Manchester through the Centre of Excellence funding, involving over 4,000 participant sessions. Beyond



this, a further 188 weekly sessions ran independently across Oldham, Rochdale, Wigan, and Manchester, providing more than 1,100 additional participant sessions. These figures reflect the scale of growth and the appetite from communities to be part of Camerata's work.

In addition, the Centre of Excellence established a National Learning Network of 60 organisations and more than 160 individuals, all united in their commitment to using music to transform dementia care. At the same time, our partnership with The University of Manchester continues to generate robust evidence of impact. A study published this year, evaluating our 20-week Music in Mind training programme for care home staff, reported a general increase in their motivation, wellbeing, and confidence. Further evaluation by Healthcare Analytics of our previous UKRI-funded programme also reported on the positive impact that being part of Music in Mind sessions had for people living with dementia.

Over the past year, we have recruited 85 new Music Champions, more than halfway to our three-year target. These exceptional volunteers trained by Camerata's musicians and music therapists allow the Music in Mind model to scale up and be used independently in a variety of care settings.

We increased our international presence with successful Music in Mind training visits to Hong Kong and Taiwan, demonstrating the global relevance and adaptability of our approach. These visits forged new partnerships and showcased Camerata's unique blend of artistic excellence and social

purpose to international partners.

Alongside our dementia work, Camerata has continued to expand its children and young people's programmes. Highlights included projects with Webster Primary School, the Youth Culmination Event at Factory International, and the New Connections project in Leeds. Additional collaborations with Orchestras Live in Withernsea, and performances in Cannock, continued to celebrate the role that creativity can play in bringing joy, connection, and a sense of belonging.

Looking forward »»

In 2025-26, as part of the 2nd year of the Centre of Excellence programme, we aim to expand our international partnerships and pilot a new *live well through music* initiative, which will focus on broadening our support through music to the health and wellbeing of young people with autism, additional needs and those needing support with their mental health.

Through all of this, the shared goal with our communities and donors remains unwavering - to use the power of music to create impactful human connections, both in Greater Manchester and beyond.

Communications

In 2024-25, Manchester Camerata's voice reached further and resonated with more people than ever before. This has been a period of creative communications, brand visibility, and record-breaking engagement. Our work in 2024-25 demonstrated that our message of accessibility and excellence is connecting powerfully with audiences far and near.

June 2024 saw the launch of our first *Support Your Local Orchestra* beer, created in collaboration with Manchester craft brewers, Cloudwater. Stocked in more than 200 pubs, bars, and shops, each can displayed images of the orchestra in performance, alongside stories of our community impact and the work orchestras do across the UK. The beer sparked a national conversation online, including more than 500 check-ins & comments on the beer reviewing social platform, *Untappd*, raising both profile and donations.

September brought further expansion into merchandise. We marked the culmination of the acclaimed *Mozart, Made in Manchester* series with bespoke baseball caps worn proudly by Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Gábor Takács-Nagy, and the orchestra on-stage at a sold-out Stoller Hall concert.

This subtle subversion of traditional concert attire is just one of the many ways our comms team is presenting the orchestra in a fresh and innovative way, whilst breaking down the barriers perceived for our artform. This concert was also broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

In October, we launched our boldest audience campaign to date. Our £10 *Under 30s* poster and digital series flooded Greater Manchester with striking visuals and contemporary slogans such as "*Centuries of Clout*," "*Hits Different*," and "*Orchestra and Chill*". The campaign, supported by a playful behind-the-scenes film of the Camerata marketing team 'flyposting' iconic city locations, led to a 70% increase in uptake of the under-30s ticket offer, firmly establishing Camerata as one of the UK's most audience-savvy orchestras.

The same month, we became Classic FM's only partner organisation in Greater Manchester - a major milestone that cemented our reputation for both excellence and accessibility. As Philip Noyce, Classic FM's Managing Editor, commented: "Manchester Camerata is blazing a trail in classical music. Their captivating live concerts and impactful community work make classical music relevant to everyone, regardless of age or background."

Camerata's national and international profile continued to rise through broadcast and digital media. We

performed live with Pet Shop Boys at the MTV European Music Awards, reaching an estimated 300 million viewers worldwide, and appeared on *Strictly Come Dancing*. A performance with Imran Perretta drew praise from international contemporary arts magazine *Frieze*, which described it as "hypnotic," while a BBC Radio 4 feature on Christmas Day celebrated our *Storytime* performance, bringing Camerata's work into homes across the UK on a special day.



Our digital channels saw their strongest ever performance, with 2.75 million online engagements and 126,500 live audience members reached in person. Among the highlights was a Facebook reel that went viral, amassing nearly one million views, a testament to the creativity and authenticity of our storytelling.

January saw Camerata receive an Association of British Orchestras Award for our Camerata 360° Ruth Sutton Fellowship programme, a recognition of how our internal culture of innovation continues to underpin our external success. In February, *The Telegraph's* Ivan Hewett published a feature exploring the profound impact of our *Music in Mind* dementia work, further amplifying national awareness of our social mission. And in May, our team turned motivation into messaging, creating the playful *Just Play It* Nike bootleg T-shirt - a nod to our genre-defying spirit and a celebration of the orchestra's breadth of collaborations.

Together, these activities have strengthened Camerata's brand, broadened its reach, and reinforced its reputation as a leading innovator in the arts. More than any statistic, they show an organisation confident in its identity and unafraid to connect with audiences in fresh and joyful ways.

Looking forward ☺

In 2025-26, Manchester Camerata will continue to position itself as the innovative, accessible and excellent orchestra it is, leveraging our enhanced profile to drive audience growth, attract new supporters, and deepen relationships with existing ones.

Fundraising

Manchester Camerata's artistic and social impact is made possible through the extraordinary generosity of our donors, supporters, and partners who share our belief in music's power to change lives. In 2024-25, we have been translating strategy into measurable growth and meaningful impact.

This year, we were proud to welcome 142 new donors across every level of giving - from one-off contributions at the box office, to transformational gifts that sustain our most ambitious programmes. Our Camerata50 scheme has grown to 30 regular donors, providing vital unrestricted income that underpins our day-to-day work. We were deeply grateful for a generous legacy gift from John Pantall, which now supports the Chair sponsorship for our Principal Horn, Naomi Atherton, and were also thankful that our new Chair, Nic Hailey, chose to sponsor our Principal Clarinet. Our continued thanks go to our longstanding Chair supporters - the Grindrod family, John and Penny Early, Ron and Jill Robinson, Kathy Arundale, Realstrings, John Caine, and several anonymous donors, including one supporting our Principal Double Bass, Di Clarke.

Our Director's Circle continues to expand, now including several new major gifts from anonymous donors who are directly funding Gábor Takács-Nagy's artistic vision and the excellence of our musicians. Their support has been instrumental in sustaining Camerata's flagship *Mozart, Made in Manchester* series, which remains entirely underpinned by philanthropy. What began with a single founding donor has grown into a network of half a dozen and rising members, reflecting the deep resonance of this work.

2024-25 also saw Camerata's donor programme recognised nationally through the Association of British Orchestras Award, which acknowledged the transformative role of philanthropy from the Ruth Sutton Trust in supporting our Camerata 360° Ruth Sutton Fellowship - now in its second year and producing outstanding early-career musicians who contribute to the sector as a whole.

Our relationships with major trusts and foundations also deepened. The Garfield Weston Foundation confirmed a new grant of £25,000, while The Michael Bishop Foundation pledged £150,000 over three years, providing crucial long-term support for Camerata's talent pipeline and creative innovation. These partnerships, together with continued international collaboration, are helping us to broaden

both our reach and our sustainability. This year also saw Camerata's first-ever team challenge event, with musicians, staff, and trustees taking part in the Manchester 10K Run, raising over £5,000 for the orchestra's work. Beyond the funds raised, this was a joyful expression of the camaraderie and commitment that unite our team and supporters.

Looking forward ☞

In 2025-26, we will continue to secure and grow our foundations by building on our Camerata50 membership, expanding our major donor and legacy programmes, and cultivating further long-term partnerships with trusts and foundations. We will also begin to develop a residency programme that supports Camerata musicians in their artistic development. This will deepen their connections with audiences and communities over the next three years.

The generosity of our supporters continues to make everything we do possible - from world-class performances to life-changing community work. Together, they are helping to secure a bold, sustainable, and inspiring future for Manchester Camerata.



Governance

Robust governance remains the cornerstone of Manchester Camerata's success. 2024–25 has been a year of succession, consolidation, and continuity – ensuring that the foundations laid in recent years now support sustainable growth and confident leadership for the future.

In January 2025, Nic Hailey CMG succeeded Stephen Dauncey as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Stephen's extended term, originally designed to guide the organisation through the development and implementation of its refreshed strategy, came to a close after more than seven years of dedicated leadership. His tenure provided the stability and strategic clarity that now underpin Camerata's artistic and social impact.

Nic's appointment marks a new chapter, one that builds on those achievements while bringing deep experience of governance, diplomacy, and cultural leadership to the role. Over the past year, the Board has continued to strengthen Camerata's internal systems and financial resilience. New measures introduced in 2023–24, including enhanced financial controls and improved reserves management – are now fully embedded, providing

greater transparency and oversight across all areas of operation. Regular scenario planning and detailed budget monitoring have helped ensure stability amid an increasingly complex funding environment.

The Board also continued to play an active role in shaping Camerata's expanding portfolio of work, particularly in relation to the Centre of Excellence for Music and Dementia. As this national initiative moved from concept to implementation, trustees worked closely with the executive team to clarify governance arrangements and ensure that the structure is both legally robust and strategically aligned. The resulting model, with Camerata as the lead charity partner, has simplified operations and reinforced accountability whilst maintaining flexibility for future partnerships.

The year also saw an ongoing focus on board development and performance. Following the 360° appraisal process completed in 2023–24, trustees have implemented a programme of targeted training and reflection to ensure continued high standards of governance. This commitment to learning and improvement ensures that the Board remains forward-looking, diverse in expertise, and united in purpose.

Looking forward »

In 2025–26, Manchester Camerata's governance focus will be on embedding the new leadership structure, strengthening succession planning across the organisation, and ensuring continued alignment between artistic ambition and financial sustainability. The Board will also oversee the early phases of the Future Fund and the long-term evaluation of the Centre of Excellence, maintaining its commitment to transparency, accountability, and strategic oversight.



Looking back



As we look back on 2024-25, Manchester Camerata stands as a beacon of what a 21st-century orchestra can achieve. The strategic investments made in recent years – in people, partnerships, systems, and vision – are now yielding tangible results. Our musicians are performing at the highest level, our communities are feeling the benefits of music-led wellbeing, and our supporters and partners are helping us grow with confidence and purpose.

This has been a year when we demonstrated that our strategy works and has generated momentum that will carry us into the next stage of our journey. From concert halls to community centres, from international stages to local Music Cafés, the impact of Camerata's work continues to deepen and expand.

Building on renewed leadership, a campaign for a new Future Fund, and an ever-stronger artistic and social mission, Manchester Camerata accelerates into 2025-26, pushing forward the next decade of innovation, excellence, and music that makes a difference.

Manchester Camerata

to move forward

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