

ARTS IMPACT CHATS: Angela Dixon, Saffron Hall

SEVA: Hello and welcome to our first edition of Arts Impact Chats! A slight change to our usual webinar format, we thought we'd take a deep dive into the professional career of an arts leader that we work with as part of our Arts & Culture Finance initiative. This conversation is being recorded and we'll share it on our website for anyone that couldn't make it here today. Closed Captions are available.

Today's guest is Angela Dixon, who's the CEO of Saffron Hall, a 740-seat concert hall within Saffron Walden County High School. Angela has had a pretty fascinating career to date; she started in the music industry touring orchestras and then worked at the Barbican Centre for 15 years, first as a classical music programmer, working on festivals, commissioning projects and major orchestral residencies. In 2011 Angela became Head of Music at the Barbican, heading up three major projects that formed part of the Cultural Olympiad in 2012 and leading on the Barbican's Benjamin Britten season in Autumn 2013, which celebrated the composer's 100th birthday. In March 2014 Angela took up her current position as Chief Executive Officer of Saffron Hall Trust and in 2016 won the ABO/Rheingold Concert Hall Manager of the Year award. In addition to these roles, Angela is a trustee of the Young Classical Artists Trust and, in 2020, was chair of the jury for BBC Young Musician of the year.

I'm very much excited to speak with Angela and, in the spirit of innovation, encourage our audience to join in the conversation! If you have a question for Angela, please post it in the Q&A box and I will get to these a bit later in the session. So, Angela, welcome to arts impact chats, thank you for being here today, how are you doing.

ANGELA: Thanks very much, thanks for asking me to speak today.

SEVA: What are you working on at the moment?

ANGELA: I'm not just saying this, I'm working on a Nesta agreement! So, as you may or may not know, we're refinancing our current loan with you, in a new project and I spent the morning working through the draft agreement that you sent me in order to be part of the arts and cultural impact fund, so, you have been on my mind this morning.

SEVA: Yeah, so a lot of I guess paperwork that's involved as part of your role in addition to the more exciting side of speaking to artists and programming.

ANGELA: It is spreadsheets, long documents, yeah, lots and lots of budgets. Lots and lots of budgets.

SEVA: With Saffron Hall being a fantastic venue, I'll come back to that, but I'd like to ask about your career, you studied music at university, did you have aspirations to become a musician?

ANGELA: Well, yeah, my entry into the music world was an interesting one. Basically, I don't come from a musical family at all. My mother's record collection is mainly David Bowie and my dad's is Queen but they did have one record which I believed was a classical record although I didn't know that at the time, which was called Classic Rock - a record recording by the London Symphony Orchestra of pop songs played by orchestra, I was fascinated and played this over and over again, and I understood this was an orchestra and I understood what I wanted to be was be in an orchestra, so I asked my parents if I could take up an instrument and they bought me a guitar, it took quite a few years for me to realise that there were no guitars in orchestras.

So, at the age of about, I must have been about, nine or ten then, and then when I was 11 or 12 I took up the clarinet so I could be in groups I was in as wind band and school orchestra, but at that stage I realised I had missed the boat for being a professional orchestral

musician. I was playing acoustic guitar and singing when I first took it up, my singing voice is notorious, terrible so I switched to classical guitar and I ended up at the Junior Academy of Music where there was me and three other junior classical guitarists, they were all boys, all about three foot taller than me, hands about four times as big as mine, and that started giving me a message as well. Although you probably wouldn't be a classical professional guitarist, so instead of going to music college I went to university – why - no idea whatsoever what I was going to do at the end of it, but my family all come from Essex and four generations of my family worked for Ford Motor Company. On my holidays I was working at Ford head office, in the market research department, and I was lucky enough to get a temporary job there, and I did that for years actually for a gap year and all through university. When I finished with my music degree I had absolutely no idea what to do at this point, I didn't know anybody in the music business, so I took up an offer to join a graduate programme with Ford's main market research agency. So, which is part of the NOP group, and for two years I was on secondment to Jaguar and Nissan and various other car companies working on market research for them.

SEVA: Wow, OK, the first record you heard, that was the orchestral covers of pop songs - do you still have that record?

ANGELA: Yes, very much so.

SEVA: Who was the orchestra?

ANGELA: London Symphony Orchestra and I met somebody a few months ago that played on it. I said it to them and they said yes I remember recording that, I thought for a long time that was classical music and I don't think I saw a live symphony orchestra until I was 17, so it was a long time between hearing that music and realising there was a whole other world of repertoire, it wasn't pop tunes played by orchestras, there was a whole other repertoire, once I started doing GCSE music it became clear to me there was a lot of music out there that I didn't know.

SEVA: When you started playing a guitar, were you playing classical pieces or pop stuff?

ANGELA: To begin with, I was playing acoustic guitar so folk stuff, Bob Dylan, my teacher was hippy, so we played hippy stuff and classical was quite Spanish, so, yeah, yeah, it was niche I guess, guitar is quite niche and lots of composers that don't write for mainstream classical music. So, that wasn't really my way into classical music, when I played the clarinet in the school orchestra was more of a segue, I was at a grammar school in Southend, which was lovely but had no budget whatsoever and particularly during the teachers strikes, they kept the orchestra going but they only really had two pieces of music as far as I could tell so we played those two pieces of music.

SEVA: What was that?

ANGELA: William Walton Crown Imperial and I can't remember the other one I just fell asleep.

SEVA: What made you enter the music industry professionally on the programming side, how did you come back to it?

ANGELA: So, what I realised working in the car industry was that the people around me were very, very excited about cars and for me, they're red or blue and they go or don't go. People were very, very interested in seeing the new Jaguar or in the new naming study for the Ford you know, it's a saloon and I wasn't interested at all. I found market researching and people interesting, but I wasn't interested in the subject matter of cars. I was working on Oxford Street, so around the corner from the Wigmore Hall, I started stewarding there, and if you were a steward, you would get rota'd on the backstage steward to look after the artist, getting them water and towels and sort things out for them and I was hankering to be the

backstage steward, and after a while I realised this is the thing I really wanted to be doing. So, I gave up all my holidays and weekends and spare time to volunteering for arts organisations in order to get some experience. And I had to have quite a few interviews before I got my first job, but as you mentioned my first job was in the orchestral touring Department of Harold Holt which is called Askonas Holt, and I was in the orchestra for six years.

ANGELA: In the Green Room environment of Wigmore Hall, did you see classical music excesses?

ANGELA: No not really at the Wigmore Hall, they don't attract that type. It is all sedated there, but, there's a real etiquette to classical music which I think some people view it as a lead the way classical musicians and are revered and treated, I see it more as a ritual, I often compare classical music to sort of churchgoing in that there's a hierarchy of sorts and there's a format and there's a ritual about classical music concerts and the way they're put on and the way they're rehearsed and the relationship between the conduct at orchestra or participants in a quartet, that's all ritualistic and quite fixed. And I think that can be quite forbidding for people but when you understand it and know it, it is actually quite comforting.

SEVA: The structure there's a predictability that allows people to play with format in a little bit and that's what happened in the contemporary space.

ANGELA: It is knowing the format, it is like a quiz show on TV where you understand the format completely or the format of Bake Off and that allows you to enjoy it more, I think classical music is a little bit like that.

SEVA: You worked at the Barbican for 15 years I think, and did you go straight from the sort of automotive industry from the Barbican or was there something you did beforehand.

ANGELA: Orchestral touring for six years, two at Harold Holt and then another agency, and while I was at Van Morrison I was working with orchestras and Marc Anthony had started to enjoy contemporary music and I wasn't quite sure what my next move would be, but job came up at the Barbican to assist the Head of Music there, and I was delighted to get the job. And since then, I've overlived I've been at the Barbican and now I'm at the Saffron Hall but I'm very much the venues person, I never had an anchoring for work for an orchestra or any other kind of job, I made it my life's work to understand venues and presenting music.

SEVA: What is it about venues you found particularly interesting, or what appealed to you about that?

ANGELA: I guess that you are the conduit for a very particular kind of music, because not all classical music happens in a venue, a Concert Hall setting, not particularly these days it doesn't but I enjoy the inter-relationship between the programming and the building of an audience and familiarity with the audience of that space, and also really understanding the space. I think a thing that people don't consider enough when thinking about concert halls it is a very particular space that can do a very particular thing and you have to really understand it and really programme to your space.

SEVA: The Barbican is such a unique space as well, I've been there a handful of times and I'm always just amazed by how many performance venues there is in the space and each of those has its own idiosyncrasy and there's a lot of context that comes with the Barbican so rich legacy of different performances so you have to square many circles as it were and appeal to different audiences whilst also being focused on the specific space. So, I can imagine that being challenging maybe.

ANGELA: Yeah, the thing about the Barbican is when I arrived there, it was running for some time and in a very large organisation, I imagine but, you know the Barbican and the Festival Hall and Albert Hall these are the giants of concert venue world. Making changes

there is a little bit like turning the Titanic, but they're set it is difficult, but you are hand tide as you are a 2,000 seat venue and you have to fill it, the Barbican had a reputation for challenging audiences and moving things forward. And that was also quite challenging because I always used to say you know every time the Barbican opens its mouth it has to astound the withhold world. You felt the pressure of having to come up with the next big thing or doing that differently or we could do it like this, or we could do completely on its head and there was so much, every day you're doing more than 365 concerts a year, because we also had a remit from the Arts Council to go into East London and do programming over the summer. We had a resident orchestra in the London symphony orchestra and some organisations, and you have to take those into account as well and have a relationship with them. You're servicing your own programme; you're servicing your associates programmes and trying to interconnect with all the other art forms because the Barbican is also the biggest arts centre in Europe. So, also trying to keep an eye what the theatre is doing, and the three cinemas are doing, and art gallery is doing. And during my time the entire education department came into real focus and that was a whole other thing to consider on top of everything else. So, it was incredibly busy and there was a huge amount going on there all the time keeping up was quite a job.

SEVA: I can imagine, and it is sort of I don't want to use the word "elite" - what I mean by that is it is a prestigious venue, the top of the not necessarily music world but certainly the classical world and so, I would imagine there's a lot of people working there with you who are very passionate about the work and very knowledgeable about that work and what's interesting I think is given what you said about your background, you didn't come from a particularly musical family, you studied music at university so did you find their pregnancy around your own knowledge and how did you fit in I guess, did you have to up your game in terms of knowing about classical music and knowing about the contemporary musical world to I guess make your mark and make yourself heard?

ANGELA: I didn't actually apply to be a programmer; it wasn't the initial job I took on and in fact one of the questions in my spear view was do you want to be a programmer and the answer they were looking for is no. They had three programmers and didn't want another one and didn't want somebody else who wanted artistic control and I genuinely said no I don't. And by a series of circumstances found myself in one of the programming roles, without really asking for it, and thinking oh goodness how do I do it, I had absolutely no idea, there was no training to be a programmer. It is very difficult, and it took me a long time to really understand what I was doing and what the fundamentals of it are. And now, here at Saffron Hall I have somebody who works with me on programming and essentially, I'm training that person to be a programmer. And I just wish I'd had somebody in the early days telling me the fundamentals of programming because I did speak to somebody about programming and said I don't really know what I'm doing, they said you just have to get into it really, and that was the only advice I was given.

SEVA: Is that one of the fundamentals of programming curious about those?

ANGELA: I know what you meant, event eventually you have to take the step and programme about something, you can be nervous and faff around but there's that immovable deadline of somebody producing a brochure with your concerts in it and eventually you have to take the plunge and put something on and see what happens. But the Barbican was a very, very big testing ground, very public, if I had a bad day, I generally had to read about it in the next day in the guardian so that was pressurised.

SEVA: Yeah. So, during your time there, countless I think performances that you staged and projects you were involved in, so, I was reading about the work the celebrated the works

of Steve Reich, in the country Olympiad in 2012, is there anything that stands out in particular from your career in the Barbican?

ANGELA: The festivals you've just pointed out and also, there was another one, Traced Over Head there was a few big contemporary festivals, that I did while I was there which are very memorable and you know the big Steve Wright marathons I did and still talked about today because they were ground breaking but they stemmed from a conversation that I had with the then Head of Music, when I probably been there about 18 months, where we were talking about contemporary music, and we'd been putting on some small contemporary music concerts and as in many cases you put on a small contemporary music concert and even smaller audience comes. We were doing concert after concert and getting these tiny, tiny audiences and having to ask yourselves the question, should we be doing this in 2,000 seat halls because nobody is coming but at the same time contemporary music feels like such a fundamental part what the Barbican should be doing, you know, what is the answer? And I really wrestled with it for a while but came back with the answer I think we should do more of it, which was counter intuitive, and I was challenged quite robustly on this idea, but my idea being that if, instead of doing lots of one-off concerts, if we gathered it all together in a big, huge splurge, we planted some really attractive things around it, that we would get bigger audiences. Now, this is, can sometimes be used in the wrong way I think by for example orchestras who say we need to do a contemporary work so we will sandwich it by two pieces with Beethoven, it is people will come for the two pieces and stay for the piece in the middle. It is not like here is thing you really like, like drumming, something you know at least 1,500 people will want to see and then we get Steve to do it, and over 2,000 people will want to see that, and then we take something that isn't that far removed from it, but nobody knows, no-one's ever heard of this composer or this group and we put it next to it, and then we'll put another couple of things around it and keep extending it, until you have to twelve hours of music that's punctuation waited by things that people do know and understand and they also understand the things you put between those pieces are related. They're in the same family of the same sound world, they're in some way connected to these pieces by Steve or Philip or whoever it was we were doing. And we got a reputation for context, and really learnt this lesson about context in that there was an artist who brought his band, going to bring the band to the South Bank to do some new pieces of his music and they were only 20 people had signed up to the concert, so it was cancelled. And then four months later he was exactly the same ensemble was part of the Steve Wright marathon the first one we did, because he was part of the marathon and part of the day, 2,000 people heard his music that day. Even he got one of the biggest standing ovations of the day. It was a huge lesson to me, it doesn't matter how good the thing it is you are that your programme, or how talented the person is or how great you think they are, all that matters is how good do the audience think they are and have you persuaded them to come. So, these were the things that I now, uppermost in my mind when programming.

You know, it is if a tree falls in the forest and no-one hears it, has anything happened, it is like concert, it is no matter how good it is, no-one is going. I look at that development, that's the whole point so I think those are the lessons I learnt from that. And again, really stand out moments at the Barbican, it had the ability to do really incredible things. The Benjamin Britten centenary had every venue we had, the theatre, Concert Hall and the church up the road and newly mill ton court, dance companies, everybody was in that. And the Barbican is in unique position to do those kinds of things. So, the standup moments for me were when we manage today utilise everything that was at our disposal at the Barbican.

SEVA: That's great. I guess the advantage of an institution like the Barbican that everybody has heard of, I guess most people have heard of, certainly in London, is that you can create that context for work that's maybe underappreciated or not very well known. I suppose that festival format where you have a headline act and then smaller acts maybe up and coming or underappreciated acts is a perfect format for that, and to raise awareness and enjoyment of that work. That makes a lot of sense. And then, just I had a question about what it is like working in programming, so, I guess if you're a fan of music and of a particular genre, be classical or contemporary or whatever, you're living and breathing that genre through your programming role, so it sounds like a dream job on the face of it. But is that true? I mean, does that limit how much you can enjoy that music outside of work? Do you get tired of it?

ANGELA: I don't listen to classical music often. Mainly because I'm so spoilt I hear so much live classical music that I don't, when I listen to it on CD or radio, it just doesn't grip me in the same way because I am lucky to hear so much of it, it is really a privilege to hear a live symphony orchestra, it is expensive and difficult thing to make happen and I appreciate that and I appreciate the blessing of being able to hear it live. I think the thing about being a programmer, there's - it is a very funny thing - and my particular view of this is if you're too close to the music, too into it, you can't really be a good programmer. And there's plenty of people I meet who say I absolutely love music so much, I'm obsessed with it, I think I could be a programmer, and the first thought is can you though? Because you have to be so objective. In fact the Barbican never, it never, I don't think it ever won a Royal Philharmonic Award and just after I left one of our festivals that I had programmed but hadn't been there to actually see through, did win a Royal Philharmonic Award, this was the music of Harrison Birtwhistle, not for one second would I listen to it, but I understood the importance of that composer within the genre, and to the development of music and we programmed a festival around him and obviously a very successful one because it one a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, but that was fine. At no point I said I don't like it so we're not doing it, but programmers can be like that, they become obsess with the things they love and programme it too much and then not programme the things they do not like. And again, I go back to the thing that really for me doesn't get talked about enough in the music business is the audience, it is all about the audience. If there is a place for it with the audience, if there's an audience for it, then we should be programming it. And the other thing is the role of the programmer is often really understood, because the role is to be a conduit between the audience and artists. So, really for me the starting point is, the only skill really that I would say that I have as a programmer if any at all, would be to back the right horse. So basically, you have to fit the rice composer or artist or performer and then you invest in that person, you get to know them and understand them and then you are really you're teasing out their ideas and what they want to do. you're putting them, your programming filter to say that's a great idea but, you know in this venue it might be better if we did it better this way or not sure that thing will work in this place, or I'm not sure we will get an audience if we did it like this, or if we did it like this or involve this person, that's the skill really is to understanding your audience, understanding your venue, and understanding all the things about that, the biorhythm of your audience. If your audience are very churchgoing don't programme on Sunday morning, you need to know everything about people. When they takeover holidays, everything then you take your artist and filter their ideas through all that to come up with something that people really want to engage with.

SEVA: That's fascinating and when you say it like that, it makes so much sense, sense of objectively and perspective is so important and if you're too into it, maybe you need to

alienate people and knowing your audience is key. OK, that's really fascinating, to just to hear about your experiences in the Barbican, I wanted to move on to Saffron Hall, so, you joined Saffron Hall as Chief Executive Officer in 2016. Now, it is a relatively new venue and sits within a secondary school, so it is pretty unique and opened in 2013 so quite a new venue as well. What excited you about that role?

ANGELA: Yes, so actually I joined in April 14, not 16, so, very soon after it opened. So in fact, the story of this, was that for a short while at the Barbican before it became Head of Music I was freelance and I did a maybe four or five days of consult tannery on this Saffron Hall I live not far away and I heard someone was building a Concert Hall and I advised them they needed to employ somebody to work on the hall during the build and get the thing ready to open. So, I helped employ that person and then I toddled back to the Barbican, didn't hear anything about it for a couple of years and then suddenly got an invitation at the opening, when I arrived at 2013, I told the lady that was leaving the next day, this is not unusual with project, she was leaving the next day was I interested in taking the role. I said no, I'm Head of Music at the Barbican, I'm very important. In fact, and fact, I wasn't. And I then went into the hall and I listened to the opening concert which was with Barbara Hannigan, I am again and it was a great concert but there was something about being in a school and seeing the community in there, some people I recognised from the community, from my village just surrounding area, and then also the world class musicians on stage, in a million second I saw it, I saw how the school the community and the professional musicians were all going to come tucket in this place in a natural way. It was about context, somehow this worked. I tried to mix amateurs and professionals and holding to integrate but it was hard to do in Barbican, there was no context for them do that. It is a, you are really shoving a square peg through a round hole in those big organisations that have been around for a long time. But this was a new thing in a new situation, and different context. And I just thought to myself, this could be really, really exciting, because it's new, brand new, and all the things that frustrate me about London and the Barbican could be solved here and we could start the whole thing off on the right foot from the get-go. And it could be amazing and by the end of the concert I thought this all through and I told the chair if he hadn't appointed somebody else in the last hour-and-a-half I was interested in the job. I handed my notice two days later, I worked my notice and arrived in April.

SEVA: Amazing how you get epiphanies in such a short space of time. It is such a unique venue; I don't know any other major Concert Halls based in schools, but I think that's not the only thing that makes it automatic neck. So, can you tell us a bit more about that side of things.

ANGELA: Actually, quite a lot of schools have built very good Concert Halls or theatres, in fact most private schools now boast either a theatre or an arts centre or Concert Hall. The thing that makes Saffron Hall different is well, usually when it is private schools, and it is mainly the private schools they have the money to keep the whole thing to themselves. So, they control it and their Director of Music usually programme some concerts. 9 saving grace of Saffron Hall is it is in a state school and the school has no capacity whatsoever to do anything with this space. And so, acknowledging that from day one, the donor who built the hall firstly made it probably 50% bigger than other halls I was discussing, usually they're a maximum of 500 seats, we're 740. Secondly, he built into the agreement when he donated the money to build it, that the hall had to be available for public performance at weekends and school holidays. So, this meant that the school had no option they couldn't keep control of that time, even if they'd wanted to, they had to give it up. And then Saffron Hall trust was formed to be the outside body that put the programme into the hall so the programme that's

going in is not, I say not owned the control of the school, but they have right of refusal, if I did something that brought the school into disrepute, they would be able to contest that. And they sit on my board but essentially, we have a number of arts professionals working on that and most schools don't have that. They don't have a team of arts professionals working on the programme for their Concert Hall. They usually picking up high hires, so they hire out the hall and that's the usual model, but this is the thing that's quite different.

SEVA: I suppose that most other halls and schools are trying to be loss of different things, right. They want, they need to facilities for theatre, for music, for assemblies and et cetera so does that happen in this hall?

ANGELA: It used to happen more; I was told before tariffed there was a conversation about the kids eating their sandwiches in the hall at lunch time. Thankfully, that had gone away by the time I arrived because that would scupper things. The point about Saffron Hall is it is a dual-use space and we're not trying to push the school out and they're not trying to push us out, they're trying to make this work harmoniously, this is the school hall they don't have another one. There is another hall, Wiltshire music centre, a Concert Hall on the site of a school but it is a separate building and the school have a school hall, Saffron Hall is the school hall so, what we're trying do is allow the school to use the hall as much as possible, for as much activity that needs to be in that hall as we can, and similarly they do the same back to us. So, to begin with, we had less access to the hall because the school were having for example year group assemblies in there during the week. But they actually stopped doing that now and found another way of doing that in order to free up the hall for more for their arts departments but also more for us, so there's a lot of flexibility around the diary now. Sometimes we can up to, if we have English touring opera, we have a week in the hall. Which is very the school gives up that time and similarly if the school want to do something at the weekend, we give up that time.

SEVE: It is great exposure for the school and young people come into contact more so than they would, than maybe a typical school with these world class musicians and this really well thought is thought through programming which must be a privilege that I hope the kids appreciate it, if I would have done at that stage. But every little helps and being aware of the names it exposes you in ways that maybe you only appreciate later in life to these sorts of things.

ANGELA: Sometimes, people get frustrated they think that the kids take it all for granted that you know they do their school concert in the hall and then the next day they're invited to see an open rehearsal with the London philharmonic orchestra, and they don't understand that's a big deal. I think it is good they don't think it is a big deal because it shouldn't be a big deal because kids should automatically have access. I know they can't have all access in their school, but certainly all the kids in this area have access to those experiences, because we obviously to begin with, they were focused on our school, but we now worked with 56 schools in the area over quite a wide area. And we don't feel it should be this unusual thing that oh this is incredible once in a lifetime thing I'm seeing a live orchestra, we feel it should be part of their every day and they should take it for granted. It is sad really that all kids can't.

SEVA: Absolutely the context here, or rather how Saffron Hall the venue came to be I guess is important, so, it was initially kind of supported by a charitable foundation from a private donor, and that's very fortunate in, and great that happened, but that's obviously, that can't happen everywhere, right? So, there's still, that's why the model is unique, and I guess how we make it happen elsewhere right if we can't access.

ANGELA: The model is the thing. On top of - so just briefly touch on that, yes, there was a private donor whose children all went through the school. And he had ambitions around world class art outside of London before it was a thing for everybody else. For the Arts Council caught a hold of that, world class art outside London, music education and lack of it in state schools want to level that up with private schools, also being a facility for amateur musicians which feature heavily, and he wanted to encourage philanthropy to starlet schools, that's how it came about, what attracted to me, and senior managers here is the model. The model is the thing that's very exciting because so many Concert Halls stand dark for a lot of the time and school halls stand dark, ours is never dark, it is teaming with live all the time so we're interested in the dual-use model, they have low overheads, we don't own that building, I always say, I used to say to people, if the hole in the roof, the Department of Education has to fix it. Recently there was, and the school said can you help us fix it, I said no the Department of Education will fix it and in fact they did. So, the fabric of the building is taken care of by the a all the world class tech kit inside it, which a school would not have access to, is provided by us, so the model works really well, it is clever, it keeps our overheads really low, it stops us feeling compelled to programme, because that's the other problem with a serene knew is you're compelled to fill it if you're alerted venue and you're dark half the time, people will be asking you why you're dark. Whereas here if there's not anything worth putting on for a week, I don't do anything, and it is a clever model which is very cheap to run, but also cheap to do because the donor who built it, bearing in mind he has one of the best acoustics in the country, it was to build the hall was only £11 million, absolute drop in the ocean. When they were talking about the new Concert Hall in London it was going to be £360 million, so, we could fill 30 Saffron Halls for that. So, I think that what we're really interested in in alongside developing this model to its maximum is also then the next stage would be to look at replicating it.

SEVA: Yeah.

ANGELA: Of course, everybody can't have a Saffron Hall in the school, but my vision is there could be a network across the country in areas which are outside major cities forming a base where major arts organisations dance companies, orchestras or theatres, theatrical companies can come and use as a base and point of parts of the country that have nothing there because they're outside major cities.

SEVA: Do you think that dual model for school halls, could be replicated elsewhere, so you know, maybe they have a hall that does have the basic infrastructure to run live music and maybe space for an orchestra, to what extent that can be replicated, so charitable trust form or even an Association of Local people, and provided that there's that strong relationship with the school, could there be some kind of arrangement where the school hall is used more, maybe in the evenings and on the weekends to host touring musicians, be they bands or orchestras?

ANGELA: Absolutely. I mean, on the one hand, it sounds quite easy, on the other, and absolutely it should be being done, it is actually quite difficult because, I went in very big. With the London philharmonic orchestra, and 16 days later we have a world class violinist, I had gone big with it, and we are a big organisation that requires a lot of support, we have to raise £900,000 and we have no public subsidy or regular funding, the reason for that is it is, if you don't go in big enough you won't get the support to continue. That's the thing, I realised that you almost had to be too big to fail. Because just to say, anyone for listening that doesn't know the original donor who supported us for the first few years had his own financial difficulties and ceased all funding from that's private trust in 2016. So, we haven't had any regular funding since then. And in some ways the bigger and bigger I get the more

stable I get. It is always very tempting to go in small and be very conservative but sometimes that's less stable. Lots of people, yesterday, we hosted a school from the south-west, we are constantly seeing schools, local authorities, people were all over who want to come and see what we're doing at Saffron Hall. A few people are picking that up, in fact the composer James Macmillan, he runs a festival in Ayrshire called the Cumnock Tryst, they were knocking down schools and building a super school, we had talks to them and they came down to see Saffron Hall when they rebuilt the school they put it a theatre at the heart of it, the amount that's done is not on the same scale as Saffron Hall but, it is now a Concert Hall that they use for their concerts that they didn't have before. And I think that situation will only build and build. And I know that James Macmillan is working hard to really utilise that space and that opportunity. So, it is spawning other ideas and other things.

SEVA: Great. Just to give our listeners maybe help them visualise the kind of events that you have at Saffron Hall can you give us examples what artists and orchestra you've had?

ANGELA: Classical music is the forte because that's what the hall was built for the donor was a classical music fan and he wanted it to be have the best classical acoustics so we naturally do a lot of classical so resident orchestras is philharmonic orchestras and we do 20-25 concerts a year, from the large orchestral concerts because the stage at Saffron Hall is huge, it is like a symphonic stage in chamber size audience but acoustic hold, we did a child of our time with a full harmonic orchestra, conducted by music director, Ava Gardner, and we do very small recitals down to solo classical guitar recitals and piano, recitals, we regularly have Paul Lewis who chose our wonderful stein way piano for us, we have a jazz and folk series, and in the hall and we also do foyer folk and jazz on a Friday we have a talks programme which has been really great actually because, a lot of as you can imagine, a lot of the artists that come in, engage with our school and the local schools and one of the greatest things about the talks programme is it allowed us to engage with departments other and the arts department, when Robert Winston came to talk about genetics he spent a long time talking to A-level biology students before his talk. When David Starkey history students so it was a nice way to involve other subject A-level students other than just music. And we also do before the pandemic we did a lot of dances and we're building our dance programme back up again. So, we've had Boy Blue hip hop dance group and we've had Alexander. We do opera, we've had every year.

SEVA: Sounds like a very diverse programme. So, yeah, it is not just whilst maybe it is built to be a classical music venue, you know, the kind of thought child of a classical music fan but you've diversified the programming which is great. Can I, because we're running up against the clock, I just wanted to field a couple of questions from our listeners, so, I'm going to ask these questions, because I think they're kind of similar, they're complicated questions but I think let's give a shot. So, this is from Louise and Tessa, so Louise asks do you worry about the currently cuts in schools, affecting the future pipeline of talent that will play in hall and elsewhere. And Tessa asks, what can arts organisations be doing to encourage the next generation of performance, and how can we ensure this next cohort is diverse and representative of the general population. So, there's something about future generations, and ensuring that it is diverse and representative but obviously cuts to funding for the arts is making it more difficult, maybe for young people to get involved with music, whether that's playing it or going to see it perform live. So, just your thoughts on that very light subject.

ANGELA: How long have we got? So, obviously the cuts are bad and short-sighted and it's very wearisome when you work in the arts to be continually justifying why you're fighting something hard. And it often comes across as you're fighting for yourself or your job and that the thing you love, and it is not actually something is benefit to the whole of society. But

it won't surprise you to know that I passionately believe that the arts in all its forms are absolutely essential to society. And it is not just a feel-good fuzzy thing, there are real clear dividends to investing in the arts. The greatest example of this is always London, you know, we say that there's too much money going to London, well, in my view there isn't too much money going to London there's not enough money going to the other places because what happened when so much money went to London, London just became the cultural capital of Europe and that drove tourism and it drove the buzz in the restaurants and the hotels, and it really massively contributed to the economy. And when the pandemic happened and tourism started to tail off, we noticed the impact of that. So, I think that it is very clear, it is very, very clear in London what the arts contribute. And instead of draining the money out of London they should have just tried to put a similar investment into other cities around the country. And then thought about Saffron Hall-type models to fill in the gaps, that's very clear to me and we recently did a social and economic impact survey here at Saffron Hall and it was absolutely irrefutable we are contributing on economic and social impact ground before you even get to health and wellbeing of the general population so it is very short-sighted to not invest in the arts, it is an easy win of people slashing a budget but long-term, people will regret, regret, regret what they've done at this point. And in terms of young people - I get I'm genuinely worried about young people and hugely worried about music education. I think that justifies like a tragedy and as people talk more and more about music becoming elitist, I don't know why I always think about French and think years ago French used to be elitist thing, you could only learn French if you had a governess, and now you don't question, everyone learns French at school. Why is it that music is cut and why is it seen as elitist as it goes, it is seen that because it is cut, it is self-fulfilling prophecy, everyone is scrabbling to replace the music coming out of the curriculum but the trouble is you'll never replace the music coming out of the curriculum you can only do your best, here we started Saturday morning music school with collaboration with Essex Music Education Hub, and that's a schoolchildren are can join and learn their instrument or learn it somewhere else and come to ensemble and make music together, that's not just classical but composition, sound recording, there's always sorts of things going on there, but the key to that is it is bursarial, if you pay you pay if you can't you don't have to. And again, for me, it is very much part of the Saffron Hall model that there is along with the sort of world class inspiration, there's also the ability for people to participate in the arts and learn themselves and for adults and children. And there's also that first contact with the community work that gets out there and brings art to people that wouldn't otherwise be aware, you need those three things working in harmony for it to really work. But in terms, I make a general point in young people and classical music, often people are asked are you worried young people not engaging with classical music. One of the things I feel and I have three young people in my house myself, one of them is, will be a classical musician is they're engaging with music all the time, classical music, most people are, either on gaming console or film music or Spotify play list or they love that theme from that advert or programme they watch, they, it is around them all the time and they are either conscious of it or not and it doesn't really matter. The point is it is there, and they're absorbing it, but sometimes we get hung up on them coming to concerts. Because, that's what we see as engagement, that's what we measure, that's what is being funded a and that's why therefore we like to see, for me attending classical music concerts at a hall is one part of a big jigsaw of classical music and we shouldn't over fixate on it, attending a concert in a Concert Hall is something that young people should have access to, but we shouldn't get upset if they only do it a couple of times a year, or a couple of times in their childhood because it is something they may well come back to if they're older, if they

had a sound music education it is the way they decide to engage with classical music at a later date.

SEVA: What's important is exposing young people to the richness of cultural life, both in music and other art forms. It is interesting what you say about, well, I interpreted it as being a question of cultural place making, what I think is really short sighted is the things that make places desirable and interesting are the cultural activities that happen in those places I mean culture in the widest possible sense, so obviously arts but also sports, and things that just make places fun and enjoyable and interesting to go to. And by focusing purely on maybe businesses, and Retail offers, we're making things transactional and how much intrinsic joy really there is there in shopping? I don't know. So, it feels like, there's more to be done to advocate for that, because it seems quite, such a straightforward argument, that culture makes a place. And I think, we get in a muddle around the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of the art and all this stuff, because if you simply put it that way, that you are having an exciting venue and programme in a place, is going to pull people to that place, I think that's quite a powerful and straightforward thing to say. I've been a couple of times to Saffron Hall I enjoyed the experience and what I have come to that part of England, where it not for the hall? Possibly, but I think it is unlikely, so, yeah thank you for having me there.

We're running up against time really, so, gosh, there's a lot of questions that I haven't got around to asking you. But, if you've got the time Angela, I just wanted to say, you were Chair of the jury for BBC Young Musician of the Year in 2020, and I think that was the year percussionist won with his incredible playing on the Marimba and I would encourage people playing that, he was playing it back by an orchestra, and it was amazing, I have anticipate been curious, it is such a highly level of musicianship how do you decide who wins, what is it like being on that jury, is it fiercely contested among your fellow jurors, is it a big argument, what is that like?

ANGELA: It is very stressful. Very, very stressful, dealing with young people at that age because their level of achievement is so high and every one of them is so amazing, genuinely that telling think of them they've in some way failed seems extremely ridiculous. And I struggled with it slightly because, it is so subjective. The way that particular competition works is that there is a Chair of the jury and in 2020, who is me, who is in every category final and in each one I was joined by two different jurors who were specialist in that instrument. So, for the strings, when I was joined by two string players, percussion one joined by two percussions, because when it came to percussion, I had no idea, I know nothing about those instruments, so that was help. But I think in that, I don't know if it was the same every year, in every heat there was five people, and they were two of them could have easily been the winner. So, every discussion afterwards was about two people. And it could just go either way, and there was just no, I mean, one we spent 40 minutes trying to separate the two of them because there was no separating them. It is really hard and totally sublime. And also, it is really important to remember it is a competition. I could sit here for half an hour, telling you the famous high profile musicians that have not won competitions but entered them, it is a particular thing, it is looking for a particular thing and goes a particular way. So, for example, in some of those heats, there was discussions about who would win the concert toe round, in the heats people play with pianist, but the final is concert toe with orchestra, as you say and some people did the most brilliant solo performance but felt by the jurors they wouldn't necessarily be the best person to win the concert toe round, and each instrument is vying for their instrument to win the concerto round, so, there was lots of discussion around how will this person stand up to concerto, even though they've done the best performance in the heat. That's a difference with the competition because it is

not necessarily about in the moment and now, it is about winning the competition. So that was quite interesting.

SEVA: Yeah, gosh.

ANGELA: It is very, very stressful, as much as you're making someone's dreams come true every day, you're destroying some other people's, I found that emotionally exhausting, I wasn't ready for that at all.

SEVA: It is such, it is all of them are very young, right. So, incredible amount of pressure for those young people to experience.

ANGELA: Yeah.

SEVA: Wow. OK. If you've got time Angela, one of the things that I wanted to ask was that we work, so, at arts and culture finance we work with many great arts organisations and what amazes me is there's always so much more than simply, always so much more than simply a theatre, museum, music venue, there's a lot of work that happens in the community that flies under the radar for most people and you get the sense that the average person in the street may think it is just a theatre, museum or music venue but there's so much more going on for the communities. Saffron Hall is no exception; can you tell us the programmes you deliver for the community?

ANGELA: Yeah. In terms of Saffron Hall of course we don't even own Saffron Hall so I wouldn't say we're not even a venue. But of course, the thing that makes a hall and this is really, really a very key point about a hall it is not the building of course it is the people in it, the people and team that work for the audiences and spiderweb of influence connected to the hall I always liked to think if I stopped anybody on the street, I would find a connection between them or Saffron Hall. Even though I'd never heard, I would know a grandchild was attended a performance and attending a meeting, so we try to meet as many as we can, 8,000 a people a year are involved in projects that nothing to do with our concert programme. It won't surprise you we have a big school programme and in primary level that's taken the form of on-line resource, that we developed with the saxophonist, and all that is available at our website and Saffron sounds is upskill the teachers to teach the music curriculum to primary schoolchildren, in extension to that, they can ask live workshops that go alongside to musicians can come into their school, and perform as part of that term of lessons. And also, if they live near enough to Saffron Hall, they can request to be part of Saffron sounds live, where one happened recently, and we had 900 primary schoolchildren come through the hall and take part with big interactive concert to connected to the things they learnt. That's our primary school offer, and we have various secondary programmes, one of the popular ones is the year nine residency, for 13-year-olds, and I say 13 or 14, however old they are in year 9, who are at a difficult stage, and we take about 25-30 children off timetable for three or four days. And get them to work-in-intensely with sometimes it is musicians, sometimes it is dancers, but we take an art form or sometimes a combination of art forms and get these kids to work very intensively for four days to produce a piece of work which is then performed back to their year group. When I tell them that he wanted to run away they're terrified, by the end they're desperate to do it is a really interesting process. And then, we also have a music and dementia project which we run in partnership with another university, music therapy project with people living with dementia and careers, and we run three groups every week in Saffron Hall with a waiting list, and we've recently started-to-a group in Braintree in partnership with Braintree Museum so that's another big programme for us.

And run a series of community workshops. All over the area when requested by community groups.

SEVA: So, again, you know, not only does it make, put Saffron Walden on the map and is it peace the parish the district. And not only put the place on the map, it's delivering so much for the community, and I think that's really worth shouting about more for not just Saffron Hall but for all arts venues, across the country. I think that brings us to the end. I wanted to leave on just asking you, what next for Saffron Hall, do you have aspirations for maybe have the original song you had and getting a live orchestra playing those pop songs, I didn't ask you what kind of music you heard on that record.

ANGELA: Painted Black by The Rolling Stones is on there and White Shade of Grey. I was proposed something similar; I was chatting to opera north going to come for the first time and I think they're going to bring a Mother's Day programme of Puccini which would be lovely, they said we also have a programme of orchestral versions of 80s, pop tunes. It went straight to my head.

SEVA: That will sell out.

ANGELA: We'll do it at some point for sure.

SEVA: I'll get a ticket. Angela, thank you so much for coming on arts impact chats, it has been a real pleasure, speaking to you and hearing about your experiences, really fascinating career and work and I hope that our listeners find it interesting too. Yeah, that's it for us, we will be back with maybe another one of these conversations, and but now, I'm going to sign off and wish everyone a really great day, wherever it is that you are and whatever it is that you're doing. Thanks very much everyone. Bye.

ANGELA: Thank you.