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## LSO looks to new audience with Berlioz for babies

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Orchestras have long been trying to boost their ageing audiences. Now the London Symphony Orchestra, widely regarded as the most glamorous of Britain's orchestras, is taking the fight to the frontline by marketing itself to babies.

The orchestra has developed a series of DVDs aimed at babies aged above six months, with themes such as "shapes and patterns", "the world around us", and "seasons". Images of swirling paints, cloud-filled skies, wooden animals, and fields of rustling lavender, are accompanied by Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, or Holst's *The Planets Suite*.

Kathryn McDowell, the LSO's managing director, called it a "cradle-to-grave" audience development idea, put together with a company called Baby IQ. "If you introduce people to music [when they are] toddlers, then perhaps later they come to family concerts or get involved in an LSO education project. Then they know it's the LSO. It's all about brand recognition."

Chaz Jenkins, of the LSO, who developed the project for the orchestra, said: "The LSO already reaches people from as young as three years old with education work ... babies are much more difficult to reach but a lot of research suggests [they] are very receptive to classical music, much more than to music with more beats."

Four DVDs will be distributed from September through the Early Learning Centre chain, and possibly also through

A character from the London Symphony Orchestra's DVD aimed at babies aged above six months



supermarkets. A spokesman for Baby IQ said: "We can't promise to make babies brighter, but we will make them smile."

Other emerging markets that could also prove a lifeline for the orchestra include eastern Europe, India and China, said Ms McDowell, a former director of the City of London Festival.

In 2004 the LSO completed a tour in China and the group has plans for a further, more extensive, trip next year. Plans to tour to India are less advanced, but talks were going ahead with the Delhi Symphony Orchestra.

The internet is increasingly identified as a powerful way for orchestras to achieve a global reach. The LSO sells its own-label CDs through its website, and sells downloads through iTunes.

But Ms McDowell said: "We have to remember who we are and point people towards live performance. If they discover us through a download, that's great, but I want them to get to hear us live."

Of the LSO's new principal conductor, Valery Gergiev, who takes up his post next year, she said: "His recent Shostakovich concerts with the orchestra were extreme events. You can feel the adrenaline; it was a similar feeling to that which so many people go for in pop concerts."

She said in the past it was "the trappings of classical concerts that tended to put people off [going to a performance]".

The LSO now communicated through text messages, and had LSO ringtones available on its website.

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