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£9m is sweet music to Olympics culture

THE Youth Music foundation is to give £9 million to kickstart arts projects for the Olympics, it said today.

It becomes the first cultural institution to make a financial pledge towards the Cultural Olympiad — a programme that will run for the four years up to and including the 2012 Games.

Youth Music's plans include the creation of Britain's biggest youth choir and a national singing week.

Chief executive Christina Coker said they would need co-sponsors but it was important to break cover. "If we don't make that opening gambit, nothing will actually start."

Jude Kelly, the chairwoman of culture, cere-

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monies and education, said the International Olympics Committee had been "thrilled" by the idea of restoring the cultural ambitions of the original Olympics to the mix. London had the chance to offer a "unity of culture and sport that has never happened before".

Details are as yet thin on the ground. Plans under development include Olympic Proms by the BBC and a 2012 carnival. The UK Film Council is organising Film and Video Nation, a UK-wide, four-year festival. Museums are organising Stories of the World.