

Organisation: Aberdeen Performing Arts	
Year Covered:	2022-2023
Report completed by:	Sharon Burgess / Faye Barron / Ben Torrie
Position:	Chief Executive / Director of People / Director of Programming and Creative Projects

About the organisation

A brief description of the organisation and its vision

Aberdeen Performing Arts is the arts charity that runs three city centre venues – the Music Hall, His Majesty’s Theatre and the Lemon Tree and festivals - Granite Noir, Rise Up and Light the Blue youth arts festival. 2022/23 was a significant year of development as we strive to be a more inclusive and diverse organisation. We introduced a new role of Creative Change Maker for Inclusion and Relevance in our creative engagement team, created and delivered new programmes and festivals including Rise Up and Eat the Rich, and diversified our on-stage programme as well as our workforce. We provide a box office service for 30+ venues/events and provide an accessible and affordable conference facilities to ensure community engagement.

Our vision - Placing creativity and culture at the heart of inclusive transformational change in the North-east.

In line with our overarching vision, we remain dedicated to placing creativity and culture at the forefront of inclusive transformational change in Aberdeen and the North-east, aiming to make a lasting impact on the cultural landscape of our region.

Organisation Information

Organisation legal structure	Company limited by guarantee with charitable status
Number of years operating	18
Name of Director/ Chief Executive	Andy Eagle (from August 2022 - Dec 2022) Jane Spiers (from Jan 2023 – Mar 2023)
Number of venues operated	3
Number of festivals operated	5
Number of Board Members	13
Number of Full time staff	41 full-time (average head count for year)
Number of part time/casual staff	212 part-time/casual (average headcount for year)

SECTION 1 - Outcomes and outputs

Please provide a qualitative executive summary of outcomes, outputs, activities undertaken and progress made to date:

2022/23 was our first full year of activity following the closure during the COVID-19 pandemic. The year was one of continual development and growth as artists, producers, audiences and our team regained the confidence to present, produce and commission work across art forms, scales and locations.

PROGRAMME: distinctive, diverse and relevant programming on our stages

A full programme of performing arts activity was delivered in 2022/23 which included:

- **713 performances** took place at His Majesty's Theatre, the Music Hall and the Lemon Tree across the art forms of theatre, music, dance, comedy, literature, spoken word and work for young people.
- These performances were attended by more than **350,000** audiences.
- Programme highlights included the Scottish Premiere of hit West End musical *The Book of Mormon*, the first performance in Scotland by Grammy Award winning world music star Angelique Kidjo, and an exclusive performance by superstar pianist Alice Sara Ott.
- We delivered **5 festivals** – music festival True North, crime fiction festival Granite Noir, young people's festival Light the Blue, a showcase of black and people of colour creatives with the first Rise Up festival, and city-wide arts celebration Wonderland. Notable highlights from our festivals included:
 - The best attended Granite Noir with 15,000 audiences across 57 events.
 - The expansion of Light the Blue into a city-wide festival for and by young people.
 - The first Rise Up festival celebrating black and people of colour creatives in partnership with We Are Here Scotland.
 - The one-off Wonderland Festival, delivering 22 new commissions performed, displayed and exhibited across the city with partners, and the Wonder Hoose, a spectacular temporary venue created in the Marischal College Quad with 26 performances delivered across 3 weeks.
- We commissioned musician, performer, producer, composer Inge Thomson to curate a guest programme which became Delve – an exploration beneath the surface, highlighting work by women and non-binary artists, as well as the hip hop scene in Aberdeen.
- Our team curated a programme as part of Climate Week North East featuring theatre, music and comedy, and offering scratch performance opportunities to early career artists.
- We commissioned 2 new visual arts exhibitions for the Music Hall gallery spaces and 6 new digital art pieces for the Music Hall's Stepping In Screen.
- We increased diversity across our activity – our festivals were all majority female and non-binary artists, we increased the number of BPOC artists across our programme, introduced a cabaret programme featuring LGBTQ+ artists and drag performers, and commissioned work with a climate action theme.

TALENT: investing in the artists, performers and creatives of today and tomorrow

Our talent development activity in 2022/23 consisted of:

- The appointment of two new, innovative roles within our creative engagement team – Creative Change Maker for Inclusion and Relevance, Creative Change-Maker for Climate Action. Together, these posts contributed to:
 - Development of important new partnerships with organisations including Sanctuary Queer Arts, We Are Here Scotland, Scottish BPOC Writers Network, Four Pillars, Climate Week North East, Creative Carbon Scotland and more.
 - Introduction of new festivals and events including Rise Up festival, Eat the Rich cabarets, Climate Springboard events, curated programming for Climate Week North East.
 - 2 new commissioned exhibitions with a climate theme.
- Leading on the delivery of Wonderland, a festival for the city aimed at re-energising the city centre. 22 new commissions were delivered by 5 established and 12 early careers artists (who were paired with experienced mentors). The festival was visited by around 125,000 people over 4 days.
- The second of our three-year commissioning partnership with Capital Theatres and Eden Court Highlands delivering three early years festive productions.

- We recruited two interns attached to Granite Noir, providing developmental opportunities for two local aspiring creative professionals.
- Developed Light the Blue as a festival for and by young people in the North East with an extensive programme of workshops and development for young talent.
- Local artists were featured in all our festivals with specific projects such as the True North Sessions and Granite Noir's Locals in the Limelight.

ARTS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES: creative engagement for everyone regardless of background and personal circumstances.

The creative engagement activity we undertook in 2022/23 was made up of:

- Three terms of workshops for our **5 youth theatre groups** for participants aged 5 to 19 years engaging with **261 participants** across the year.
- Three terms of workshops for our **2 early years music groups** for children aged 1 to 5 years engaging with **54 participants** across the year.
- The introduction of our new **Beats and Rhymes hip hop programme** for teenagers engaging with **22 participants** across two terms.
- The reintroduction of our group singing programme with our **Community Choir** (86 participants) and **Tutti Voices** vocal ensemble (28 participants).
- Three school holidays intensive workshop programmes in hip hop skills, technical theatre and filmmaking/sound production, delivered in partnership with Barnardos and Aberdeen City Council's care teams, engaging **43 participants**.
- The expansion of Light the Blue into a city-wide festival for young people delivering participatory activity with a range of local and national partners.
- Participatory activities led by our Creative Change-Makers including climate themed poetry workshop, drag performance workshop, writers' development with Scottish BPOC Writers.
- Workshop opportunities and schools' activities at our festivals including writing workshops and school talks at Granite Noir and anti-racism and music workshops at Rise Up.
- There were **9 talks** accompanying the main stage programme attended by **570 audiences**.

PLACEMAKING: strengthening communities, shaping place, helping to reinvent the North East through the arts.

The work we undertook in 2022/23 which contributed to placemaking in Aberdeen, included:

- Completion of the feasibility study for the redevelopment of The Lemon Tree.
- The completion of the £750K renovation works at His Majesty's Theatre including the creation of new foyer space and The Terrace Café and Bar, which subsequently won three awards at the Aberdeen Architects Society Awards.
- Successful delivery of five major festivals in the city – Granite Noir, Wonderland, True North, Light the Blue, Rise Up.
- Leading the delivery, on behalf of Culture Aberdeen, of the Wonderland festival across the city and the production of the Wonder Hoose venue in the Marischal College Quad.
- Active partnership and fulfilling leadership roles in Culture Aberdeen.
- Hosting and supporting festivals and events in the city through supported venue hire, programming partnerships, engagement activity, and box office services.
- Active presence at other local, regional and national networks including representation at Board level, including UK Touring Partnership, Scottish Theatre Producing Consortium, Theatres Trust, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce Policy Council, Visit Aberdeenshire, Arts and Business Scotland.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Our audience focused activity in 2022/23 consisted of:

- Identification of priority audience segments for development through data mining and analysis partnerships with the Audience Agency, and stakeholder mapping research with Creating Impact.
- Continued delivery of the 'Hello' campaign welcoming audience back to our venues, and development of the 'Enjoy' campaign highlighting the wider benefits and experiences of attending our programmes.

- Development of the brand and offer for The Terrace.
- Campaign for our festivals and key productions.
- Winning the 'Customer First' category at the Northern Star Business Awards for our Hello campaign and customer service excellence.

PEOPLE AND GOVERNANCE

Our key achievements in relation to people and governance in 2022/23 included:

- Interim arrangements put in place with support from Board, leadership team and former CEO to ensure stability and continued delivery following ultimate unsuccessful recruitment of CEO.
- New CEO recruitment process undertaken and successful for being in post in early 2023/24.
- Implementing real living wage across the organisation and achieving real living wage accreditation.
- Continued diversification of our workforce resulting in being shortlisted for the Workforce category at the Live UK Awards (UK-wide music industry awards).
- Leadership development programme started with all extended management team attending learning sessions and undertaking Insights Discovery profiles to help understand themselves and each other.
- Continued Disability Confident Committed accreditation.

FUTURE PROOFING

Activities undertaken in 2022/23 designed to assist with future proofing the organisation included:

- Successful establishment and embedding of new leadership team structure, including new posts of Head of Technical and Operations and Head of Finance and Sustainability.
- Successful establishment of new Creative Change Maker posts.
- IT hardware refresh across the organisation.
- Development of sustainability strategy and action plan to 2025/26, including the reinvigoration of our cross-organisational Green Team.
- Completion of capital redevelopment works at His Majesty's Theatre and opening of the Terrace café bar.

INDICATOR	ACHIEVED 21/22	ACHIEVED 22/23
Programme: Delivering a distinctive and diverse artistic programme		
Number of Performances (Aberdeen Performing Arts programme):		
Number of performances across venues (total) / digital	445	713
Number of performances at His Majesty's Theatre	176	299
Number of performances at Music Hall	115	166
Number of performances at The Lemon Tree	154	248
Number of performances at other venues / online	15	26
Number of performances at Light the Blue	-	22
Number of performances at True North Festival	27	29
Number of performances at Granite Noir Festival	53	57
Number of performances/events at Rise Up Festival	11	11
Attendances at Aberdeen Performing Arts programme:		
Audience numbers across venues (total) / digital	185,843	356,408
Audience numbers at His Majesty's Theatre	95,361	227,383
Audience numbers at Music Hall	62,776	93,153
Audience numbers at The Lemon Tree	13,981	35,230
Audience at other venues / online	1,000	1,537

True North Festival Attendance	2,000	c.4,000
Granite Noir Festival Attendance. (In person event with some streamed events)	c.10,500	c.15,000
Light the Blue Attendance		960
Rise Up Festival Attendance	225	225
Wonderland Festival Attendance		c.125,000
Tickets Sales for Aberdeen Performing Arts programme:		
Ticket Sales: His Majesty's Theatre	3,272,142	7,439,016
Ticket Sales: Music Hall	1,159,725	1,948,863
Ticket sales: The Lemon Tree	190,712	390,882
Talent: an incubator for artists and talent development in the North-east		
Number of artists participating in talent initiatives (produced, curated, commissioned and festivals development)	70	441
Number of Associate Artists (in residence in the city)	0	1
Number of local, emerging artists participating in talent initiatives	37	67
Number of artists commissioned to make new work	46	153
Number of exhibitions commissioned	4	33
Number of sharings	2	2
Creative Engagement:		
Providing inspirational community engagement & participation		
Number of participants in music making & youth theatre engagement projects	102	1,161
Number of participants in youth theatre digital engagement projects	39	0
Number of subsidised/free places provided to children/young people in our creative engagement workshops	7	92
Number of subsidised/free tickets provided to community groups, charities to attend Aberdeen Performing Arts events/performances	47,561	170,229
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:		
Number of BSL signed performances	22	26
Number of captioned performances	5	16
Number of audio described performances	7	26
Number of Touch Tours	0	10
Number of relaxed performances for people on autism spectrum	2	2
City Vision: provide cultural leadership to shape city vision and a creative Scotland		
Accreditations		
Customer Service Excellence Standard accreditation	57 compliance 22 compliance plus	55 compliance 24 compliance plus
Volume of customer service interactions		
Volume of customer service email interactions	23,062	17,150
Customer service calls answered	32,645	31,717
Environmental		
Reduce electricity consumption by 5% year-on-year	(5%)	(11%)
Reduce gas consumption by 5% year-on-year	(5%)	(7%)
Reduce water consumption by 5% year-on-year	(5%)	(12%)
Reduce waste to landfill by 5% year-on-year	(5%)	(1%) (already at 99% diverting from landfill)

If you have not met the targets set, please give any reasons or explanation for this:

This section is an opportunity to provide context and reflect on particular challenges, what learning has come from the experience which will feed into future planning. This section should really demonstrate your organisation's commitment to continuous improvement.

It is important to acknowledge that while there have been notable strides in recovery post-COVID-19, this was the first full year of trading post-COVID, and although we witnessed a positive return to our venues by producers, artists, and audiences, the recovery has not yet reached pre-COVID trading levels.

The escalating costs related to touring have constrained the performance dates of some producers and, in certain instances, led to entire seasons being cancelled. However, we remain a favoured venue for prominent producers, and our confidence is bolstered by our reputation for robust marketing support and exceptional technical assistance provided backstage. We believe that these strengths will sustain this preference among producers, despite the current challenges.

The resumption of regular service levels led to a stabilisation in the number of customer service inquiries, aligning with figures from the previous year, as there was no longer a need to respond to fluctuating restrictions. This decrease in reactive communications enabled us to consistently assess and enhance our customer communications, focusing on proactive customer service. As a result, we have been able to continually refine our access and inclusion communications, underscoring our commitment to providing the highest standards of service to all our patrons – resulting in winning the Customer First category at the 2023 Northern Star Business Awards.

We have witnessed substantial progress in our creative engagement programmes, underlining the necessity for ongoing investment in our engagement activities. The opportunity for our communities to reunite is validated by the participation of over 1000 individuals, confirming the significance and impact of these programmes. This underscores our commitment to fostering community connections and reinforces the importance of continuous support and investment in these vital initiatives.

This year posed a series of challenges, primarily driven by the external environment and the lingering impacts of the pandemic. However, the experience has provided valuable lessons that will be integrated into our future planning. Our ongoing efforts to adapt and improve reflect our dedication to overcoming these challenges and delivering the highest level of service to our community.

Please provide a summary of particular successes or case studies:

Wonderland

Aberdeen Performing Arts led on a successful partnership bid to the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund to produce a festival in which artists and art re-invigorated the city centre. We worked with a range of cultural partners, city businesses and the local authority to deliver the festival which included 22 new commissions from 17 local artists/collectives, a spectacular temporary venue The Wonder Hoose in the Marischal College Quad, and which attracted around 125,000 attendances across 4 days. This represented the highest city centre footfall of any Thu-Sun period in 2022 to that date. All of the commissioned artists were from, or had a meaningful connection to, the North East of Scotland, and produced performances, exhibitions, installations, displays and sculptures which told the story of city or encouraged audiences to view the city in new ways. The commissions were across music, theatre, dance, aerial, film and visual arts. Early career artists were paired with experienced mentors. The Wonder Hoose was conceived and created by local artists and production companies, and featured a diverse programme of performances for all ages over a three week period launching at Wonderland.

Rise Up

We have developed an excellent partnership with the team at We Are Here Scotland and together produced the first Rise Up festival celebrating and showcasing black and people of colour creatives in Scotland. The festival is unique and offers a safe space to explore issues which are important to the BPOC creative community and offered showcase performance opportunities for BPOC artists. The first festival in May 2022 consisted of a series of panel discussions on themes including representation, decision making, community support, funding. There were workshops on social media and marketing, climate futures and writing funding applications. There were performances including a poetry and spoken word event, music gig, and *One Mississippi* a verbatim theatre piece by Middle Eastern writer Mariem Omari. The festival was incredibly well received by the BPOC community and recognised as an important development and positive reflection on our aspirations to ensure our work is more inclusive, diverse and representative.

Thanks to our work on Rise Up and other inclusion initiatives, Aberdeen Performing Arts was a finalist in the inaugural LIVE UK Awards in recognition of our equality and diversity work. We were one of only 4 Scottish finalists and the only one of those outside of Glasgow.

Granite Noir

The 2023 Granite Noir crime fiction festival firmly established the event as one of Scotland's signature literary festivals with the biggest audience attendance in its history, international writers and audiences, and a unique programme rooted in the city of Aberdeen. The festival was attended by around 15,000 people who came from Scotland, across the UK and from countries including Germany, Poland, Switzerland and the USA. Writers attended from Finland, France, Sweden and the USA alongside Scottish and UK counterparts who collectively delivered 57 events in seven venues across the city. High profile names like Val McDermid and Charlie Higson appeared alongside debut writers and aspiring local talents. In addition to the author programme, there were theatre productions, music gigs, food and drink events, and films all inspired by the darker side of life. A fascinating exhibition was curated from material from the city's archives exploring juvenile delinquency in Victorian Aberdeen. We are delighted that the 2023 Granite Noir festival is a finalist for Outstanding Cultural Festival or Event at the Aberdeen City and Shire Tourism Awards.

Please provide a summary of any problems or issues that have required attention or action:

Although we have seen a positive return to our venues by producers, artists, and audiences, we have not yet recovered to pre-COVID trading levels.

The increase in the cost of living and inflation has negatively impacted sales. However, we are confident that by maintaining affordable ticket pricing, we can withstand these pressures and continue to provide accessible and affordable entertainment to our communities.

Additionally, the rising costs associated with touring have limited the performance dates of some producers and, in some cases, resulted in the cancellation of entire seasons.

The unexpected departure of the newly appointed CEO during his probationary period placed significant pressure on the executive team. Thankfully, with the support of the board, the entire leadership team, and the interim arrangement of the former CEO stepping back in, we were able to ensure uninterrupted business activities.

Despite these challenges, we remain committed to providing accessible and affordable entertainment, supporting our communities, and navigating the ongoing challenges presented by the current economic landscape. Our proactive approach and the support from our board and leadership team have been instrumental in addressing these issues and will continue to be vital as we move forward.

Delivering on Key Strategic Priorities

Please provide a summary of how your activities have delivered against key local (and national) strategic priorities relevant to your organisation

Culture Aberdeen 2018-2028 Action Plan Ambitions	Regional Economic Strategy 2018-2023 Action Plan	Creative Scotland Priorities 'Unlocking potential, embracing ambition'	Aberdeen Performing Arts Delivered Actions (a summary of achievements – more detail is located elsewhere in this report)
<p>Releasing our Creativity - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city opening doors, where everyone can be transformed and inspired through engagement in the arts and culture.</i></p>		<p>Everyone can access and enjoy artistic and creative experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We deliver a diverse programme with wide appeal including touring production, signature events, and exclusive curated shows. • Our festivals attract audiences from a range of backgrounds and boost pride in the city. • Our ticket pricing has accessible entry points and discount schemes. • We curate unique events which are rooted in the city. • Developed Light the Blue as a youth festival for the city. • An extensive access programme for people with disabilities including BSL, captioning, audio description, and relaxed adaptations. • Partnerships with organisations such as Sanctuary Queer Arts, We Are Here Scotland, North East Sensory Services, Barnardos and more. • Innovative change-maker posts with a focus on inclusion. • Creative Engagement activity with participants from under-represented communities and free/subsidised spaces.
<p>Becoming Scotland's Creative Lab - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city to experiment in, a home, a place, a destination and testing ground for artists, creative enterprises and new ideas</i></p>		<p>Excellence and experimentation across the arts, screen and creative industries is recognised and valued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joint festive commission with counterparts in Edinburgh and Inverness. • Led the city-wide Wonderland festival commissioning 22 new pieces of art and building the Wonder Hoose venue. • 2 new visual art commissions • 6 new digital art commissions • Established the Rise Up festival celebrating and showcasing black and POC creatives • Curated a programme for Climate Week North East. • Introduced the Eat the Rich cabarets for LGBTQ+ artists.

<p>Making All the City a Stage - <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city which inspires, where exciting cultural experiences are around each and every corner and where there are no creative boundaries.</i></p>	<p>Delivery & marketing of cultural, heritage and tourism attractions of national significance, and of international standard (existing and new assets) and maximising tourism potential of accredited archives.</p> <p>Support and attract events that will be of international and national significance as part of the delivery of the Aberdeen 365 events and festivals plan.</p>	<p>Places and quality of life are transformed through imagination, ambition and an understanding of the potential of creativity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staged large scale West-End productions at His Majesty’s Theatre, attracting strong audiences from across the region and beyond. • Produced signature festivals featuring events, workshops and exhibitions in various locations and venues across the city • Led, on behalf of Culture Aberdeen, successful bid to UK Government fund, to produce Wonderland festival (Making all the city a stage) and create Wonder Hoose venue. This festival aimed to commission experienced and early career artists, to exhibit across all artforms in locations across the city centre, and encourage people back into the city to enjoy arts and culture.
<p>Connecting Us to the World- <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city like no other, where we celebrate and promote our culture and heritage, the things we make and create.</i></p>	<p>Support and promote the arts and cultural venues of the North East to attract and promote national and international exhibitions and programmes.</p>	<p>Scotland is a distinctive creative nation connected to the world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granite Noir invites international writers and welcomes international audiences to the city and online. • Rise Up • Curated programming which attracts artists of global significance (e.g. Alice Sara Ott – Nov 2022, Angeliqve Kidjo – Mar 2023) • Retained all the programming of national and international significance at our venues – home of Scotland’s national companies in the North, key touring stop for prestigious national organisations.
<p>Shaping our Future- <i>Our vision for Aberdeen is a city whose cultural sector is growing in ambition and confidence with a strong collective of cultural leaders collaborating to realise the city’s potential.</i></p>	<p>Support development of projects and delivery of Culture Aberdeen Plan and the Aberdeen Culture Strategy.</p>	<p>Ideas are brought to life by a diverse, skilled and connected leadership and workforce</p>	<p>Active participation in city-wide initiatives; development of the cultural strategy for the city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant contribution to the delivery of the cultural strategy for the city • Membership of city-wide groups including Culture Aberdeen, Events 365, AGCC Policy Council, Visit Aberdeenshire Tourism group, Aberdeen Youth Music Partnership. • Led successful bid, on behalf of Culture Aberdeen, for UK Government funding • Staff learning and development programmes; cross-departmental working groups: • Participation in Aberdeen Inspired Umbrella Project raising awareness for neuro-diversity <p>Future proofing:</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continually review and update business readiness including business continuity, infrastructure, information and data security, GDPR adherence, cyber security audit, environmental impacts, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion
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Local Priorities:

Please highlight where your outcomes, outputs or activities align against the priorities of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and or Council Delivery plan. <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/aberdeen-city102-local-outcome-improvement-plan-2016-26/>

Aberdeen Performing Arts is not currently a statutory community planning partner but contributes and aligns to the LOIP stretch outcomes as follows (pre-revised LOIP Priorities 2018-9)

Aberdeen Performing Arts is also a member of Culture Aberdeen, who currently sit on the Outcome Improvement Group 'Aberdeen Prospers'.

LOIP Stretch Outcome	Key Driver	Aberdeen Performing Art Actions
Aberdeen Prospers		
<p>Investment in Infrastructure Aberdeen City is a robust and resilient economy providing a vibrant built environment and attractive place for residents, students, business and tourists</p>	<p>We will regenerate our city centre to become a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and invest in</p>	<p>Aberdeen Performing Arts is not only a custodian of iconic buildings, but also a provider of diverse cultural programming. This support underpins the vision of Aberdeen City as a vibrant, welcoming city and strengthens our position as a destination venue, attracting visitors from beyond our immediate shires. By providing reasons to visit the city, we positively impact local businesses, contributing to significant economic value.</p> <p>The capital investment made in recent years to both the Music Hall and His Majesty's Theatre, in particular, continues to add value to the city. These venues, with their rich history and modern upgrades, not only serve as cultural and community hubs but also as catalysts for further investment and development in the surrounding areas.</p> <p>The investments made in infrastructure, and in the cultural assets of Aberdeen City, align with the key driver of regenerating the city centre. This has resulted in a more vibrant and attractive city, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to making Aberdeen a desirable place to live, work, and invest in.</p>

<p>Innovation Aberdeen City has a reputation for enterprise, innovation and world class solutions</p>	<p>We will accelerate the transition to a more balanced economy</p>	<p>Despite the challenges posed by the post-pandemic landscape, with audiences slow to return to pre-pandemic levels, rising living costs, and an increased focus on reducing carbon footprints leading to a reduction in touring, Aberdeen Performing Arts has showcased its ability to diversify and adapt.</p> <p>Aberdeen Performing Arts has played a crucial role in supporting the city and our cultural partners by ensuring the delivery of significant new activities, thereby maintaining Aberdeen’s position as a cultural leader in the North East. Key activities outlined in this report include, but are not limited to, the Wonderland project and Granite Noir. These initiatives underscore the organisation’s commitment to innovation and cultural leadership. Additionally, we take pride in having retained over 250 full and part-time staff employed during these challenging times, demonstrating our commitment to supporting our employees and the local economy.</p> <p>Together, these efforts underline Aberdeen Performing Arts dedication to innovation, resilience, and supporting the community. Despite the numerous challenges encountered, our commitment to fostering a culture of enterprise and innovation remains steadfast, ensuring that Aberdeen City continues to be recognised for its world-class solutions.</p>
<p>Inclusive economic growth A skilled workforce for the future that provides opportunities for all our people</p>	<p>We will develop the people and skills necessary to deliver economic development and, as a result, support diversification of businesses and economy</p>	<p>We provided 441 artist employment, development, mentoring and training opportunities across our festivals, produced work, curated programme and engagement activity. There are extensive opportunities across our core work for developing local creative</p>

		<p>talent. We led on the conception and delivery of a city-wide festival which had a core aim to celebrate and develop local artists and introduced formal mentoring for 12 early career artists.</p> <p>We supported, developed and provided permanent employment for our team, converting casual contracts to salaried/guaranteed hours contracts where possible, and creating new roles including Creative Change Maker, Head of Technical and Operations, Head of Finance and Sustainability. We also built and developed our Hospitality team, with the relaunch of our hospitality services at His Majesty's Theatre and provided development opportunities for members of our team to step into Duty Manager and Supervisor roles. We also created two Granite Noir internships for early career graduates. We also created freelance opportunities for practitioners/artists including producers for Wonderland and Light the Blue, and practitioner and class assistant roles for our creative engagement classes in youth theatre, youth music and hip hop (Beats & Rhymes).</p> <p>We provided training and professional development opportunities for all staff as part of our annual training plan.</p>
<p>Internationalisation Aberdeen City is a location of choice for investment, high value business activity and skills</p>	<p>We will attract the best possible range of incoming exhibitions and events and showcase the city's internationally recognised sports, arts and culture offer</p>	<p>We are proactively planning and organising distinctive events, festivals, and projects that play a pivotal role in promoting the city. This not only encourages international visitation, but also boosts the standard of living, attracts a talented work force, and encourages inward financial investment.</p> <p>During the year under review, we have significantly increased audience and community</p>

		<p>engagement, showcasing continual growth in our festivals and ticketed performances, and most impactful events. Our efforts not only support the city's cultural vitality but also contribute to city-wide partnerships, placemaking projects, and destination marketing for the North East of Scotland. Furthermore, we continue to attract regional and national conferences and events to our venues, reinforcing our commitment to making Aberdeen a destination hub for arts, culture, and business activities.</p> <p>Together, these efforts demonstrate Aberdeen Performing Arts dedication to enhancing Aberdeen's international appeal, contributing to the region's quality of life, and supporting economic growth through increased audience and community engagement, partnerships, and attracting inward investments. We remain committed to promoting Aberdeen as a location of choice for investment, high-value business activities, and a vibrant arts and culture scene.</p>
Prosperous People – Children are our future		
<p>Children are our future and people are resilient, included and supported when in need</p>	<p>Children have the best start in life – children in Aberdeen City are healthy, happy and safe, and enjoy the best possible childhood</p>	<p>We have an extensive programme of performance and participatory activity for children and young people and produce Light Blue as a festival for and by young people across the city. All our programmes have free and subsidised spaces to support families from lower socio-economic backgrounds.</p> <p>Our creative engagement programme has a strong focus on deep engagement with communities and under-represented and marginalised groups. We've worked with local council services and charities to support young carers, care experienced young people, and refugee communities.</p>

	<p>Children are safe and responsible – from all forms of harm</p>	<p>Our partnerships with organisations such as Barnardos and the care services at Aberdeen City Council, as well as extensive training within our team, ensures we offer a supportive, welcoming and safe environment for children from all circumstances.</p>
	<p>Children are respected, included and achieving – children and young people are listened to, respected, valued and involved in the decision-making process</p>	<p>We believe in co-design of our activities wherever possible, and encourage participants to help shape and evaluate all we do. Light the Blue festival has been developed in collaboration with young people and in response to what they say they need. We provide career pathways, mentoring and support, and support early career development through internships, work placement and performance opportunities across our programme.</p>
<p>Prosperous People – People Are Resilient, Included and supported when in need</p>		
<p>People and communities are protected from harm – Individuals and communities are made aware of the risk of harm and supported appropriately to reduce this risk.</p>	<p>We will develop systems and approaches that raise awareness of harm</p>	<p>Cultural programmes aimed at young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and marginalised groups, that improve resilience, health and wellbeing and empowerment.</p> <p>Our Equalities, diversity and Inclusion policy and action plan continues to raise the bar in our support of our communities, under-represented and vulnerable groups</p> <p>Our Head of Creative Engagement undertook Designated Child Protection Officer training.</p> <p>We provided training in conflict management, as well as first aid.</p>
<p>People are supported to live as independently as possible – able to sustain an independent quality of life for as long as possible, take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing</p>	<p>We will empower citizens to feel they have real and meaningful choice and control over their own lives.</p>	<p>Supporting, growing and developing as a healthy, supportive and engaging workplace/culture for our employees, with opportunities for development and promotion.</p>

		<p>We are an accredited Real Living Wage employer.</p> <p>The further embedding and promotion of our Open House access scheme to enable better access and booking processes for customers with a range of access needs.</p> <p>Continued to be a Disability Confident Committed accredited employer, working towards being Disability Confident accreditation in 2023/24.</p> <p>Implemented standard recruitment practices allowing candidates to apply for roles in the most suitable way for them – including written, audio and video applications.</p> <p>Providing regular performances which as BSL signed, audio described, captioned and relaxed performances.</p> <p>Ensuring our venues and events are as welcoming and open to all through training of staff, accessible buildings, inclusive language and marketing, and working with relevant groups to review and sense check our processes.</p>
<p>Prosperous People - EMPOWERED, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES</p>		
<p>People friendly city – a city where people to choose to invest, live and visit</p>	<p>Build a child friendly city to ensure that the best interests of the child is a primary consideration</p>	<p>We provide a child and family friendly programme in all our venues.</p> <p>We are continually reviewing our offer and looking at ways to make our programme more relevant to children and families.</p> <p>We offer subsidised and free opportunities where possible. We have further trained our Head of Creative Engagement in Child</p>

		<p>Protection and all practitioners working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are fully disclosed.</p> <p>Signed up to breastfeeding friendly Scotland scheme.</p> <p>Took part in the Warm Spaces initiative, providing space in the Music Hall for anyone who required a warm space during Winter 2022/23.</p>
	<p>We will be a city whose built environment is fit for keeping an ageing population safe and healthy and puts the child at the centre of design</p>	<p>In 2022/23 we have continued to play a sector leading role in raising awareness around sustainability and climate action which has resulted in us being named finalists in the 2023 Thistle Awards for climate action.</p> <p>We embedded further two new roles with specific focus on sustainability, and this means not just looking at the here and now, but also the future for the sustainability of our buildings and our city (Head of Finance and Sustainability, Creative Change Maker Climate Action).</p> <p>Our cross-organisational Green Team was reinstated and reinvigorated continuing our desire to be an organisation as sustainable as possible.</p> <p>We have invested in the maintenance and development of our venues, ensuring they continue to be fit for purpose, safe and future-proof</p>

Education:

Please provide further information in respect to any education programmes delivered.

Self-explanatory but helpful to highlight any links with specific schools, further education institutions, geographic areas.

To avoid repeating what has been said previously you can highlight in depth some example of particularly successful projects/programmes, feedback from participants or schools or provide context for longer term vision and partnerships.

Light the Blue – Festival for and by Young People

This festival was first established in 2018 and in its first form brought together the performance outputs from our creative learning programme. We had always had ambitions for the festival to grow into a wider opportunity for young people from across the city as performers, participants, audiences and influencers. Those ambitions began to be realised at the festival in 2022 with an expanded approach working with schools and further education establishments as well as cultural organisations locally and nationally. The programme was shaped by young people and featured performances by local groups. Our engagement with schools included a gig for school groups at the Lemon Tree, a beat boxing workshop delivered in school, and a showcase gig for young bands. We established a great partnership with North East Scotland College and students performed and participated in a range of festival events. Discussions continued immediately following the 2022 festival with school and college participation growing considerably for the next and future festivals.

“A unique experience like no other the city has seen, for young people to create and celebrate creativity” Participant from LTB 2022

“The variety of the performances for young people to perform. It was incredible to see and memories were created for life for young people.” Audience member from LTB 2022

City Crew – School Holiday film and sound project

In October 2022, film maker Graeme Roger and sound artist Dave Martin spent five days working with a group of 8 young people aged 13 to 16. All the participants were care experienced. The free workshop used city centre locations as the inspiration and the group of young creatives were taught how to use digital cameras to make a short film, how to record sound and music for a film soundtrack, and how to create a film using these assets.

This is a statement from lead artist Dave Martin on the objectives and successes of the project:

“This style of working is high impact in regard to self-esteem and confidence building as well as in developing confidence in building relationships, feeling valued and being listened to. It creates an environment where young people are heard and have opportunities to explore and create and play in a creative way allowing each individual to be expressive and to get the opportunity to use this way of working as a way to communicate and express personal, social, political, gender related feelings etc.

It is hugely powerful and the level of engagement through this style of working is very high. It also gives every young person an experience and idea of what is possible for themselves as a career and how you can make a living and have a career in the creative industries. It also allows for freedom of expression and encourages creative playfulness which is very valuable. It is very powerful when the work that the young people have created is presented as an experience/event. This is the ultimate in confidence building.”

Employment

Please give us a bit more information about your volunteers, if you have any:

What roles do your volunteers undertake within the organisation

Fundraising, advocacy, legal advice, tour guides, archiving, board membership.

Training and Policy in action

Training

In 2022/23 we invested in the start of our leadership development programme for all members of our extended management team – circa 20 staff. The team completed Insights Discovery profiles, helping them to understand themselves and each other, and beginning the journey of this knowledge to improve team work and communication across the organisation. This will be further expanded wider across the organisation in the latter half of 2023/24.

Our team undertook training in a variety of topics with a particular focus on safety and compliance this year, including first aid, conflict management, personal safety awareness, fire evacuation, fire marshall/warden, licensing, forklift operation, evac-chair, train the trainer, child protection and legionella control.

Employment

We continued our focus on attracting and retaining a wide and diverse range of staff through our recruitment and onboarding processes, continuing our Disability Confident Committed accreditation and being recognised for this work through being named finalists in the Workforce Award at the UK-wide Live Music Awards.

We also created opportunities for early career graduates, with two internships during Granite Noir festival. This provided two graduates the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience of arts management and festival/event coordination.

Artists/ Creative practitioners Opportunities:

Please provide further detail on examples of projects or programmes which have created employment opportunities for local residents, artists and or creative practitioners.

2022/23 was a significant year for us in terms of providing employment opportunities for local artists and creative practitioners.

Wonderland

In addition to the overall objective of reanimating the city centre, a central objective of the Wonderland festival was the commissioning of local artists. 22 commissions were handed out and these performances, sculptures, installations, exhibitions and films resulted in paid employment for 59 artists. The Wonder Hoose temporary venue was created by local artist and production company, and we engaged a producer and safety consultant. In total more than 200 individuals were provided with paid work as a direct engagement with Wonderland.

Wider Opportunities

In addition to Wonderland, the opportunities for local artists and creatives in our ongoing core programme has increased. Each of our festivals features local performers from the True North Sessions to the Locals in the Limelight at Granite Noir. Our Creative Change-Makers have established another key route for engagement with local creatives and this has resulted in two major visual arts commissions for local artists, performance opportunities in specific programmes such as our Climate Week North East curation, presence within the LGBTQ+ led Eat the Rich cabaret, performances during the curated Delve weekend, National Poetry Day events, partnership with Scottish BPOC Writers, and a commission for A Play, A Pie and A Pint. Beyond 2022/23 we continue to embed artists within our work and develop key producing and curating partnerships. Within our general programme, we continue to support performances by local people from amateur theatre productions to school concerts to dance school performances. We worked with our panto producing partner to ensure strong local presence within the principal cast and continue to offer support slots and other performance opportunities to local artists wherever we can.

SECTION 2 – Audiences, Participants and Investment

Please complete this section to report on the number of participants from each of the identified areas who have participated during the year.

Participants	Target	Total 2022/23
Total number of participatory opportunities created throughout programme	236	1,161
Number of participatory opportunities targeted for priority groups		
Children and Young People 0-25	215	435
Adults 26yrs+	21	726
Disability (mental health physical, sensory (e.g. BSL users) and carers of disabled people)	22 BSL performances 5 captioned performances 7 audio described performances 2 relaxed performances 2 performances specifically for young people with profound and multiple disabilities	26 BSL performances 16 captioned performances 26 audio described performances 2 relaxed performances 4 performances specifically for young people with profound and multiple disabilities
Ethnic minority communities	25	261

Please complete this section to report on audience/visitor numbers in relation to your programming.

Audiences	Target	Total 2022/23
Total Audience Numbers	174,232	356,408
Total Visitor Numbers (note this is footfall ie non paying visitors)	520,000	1,200,000
Audience number from Aberdeen City	74,357	153,037
Audiences who are residents of regeneration areas within Aberdeen City	26,122	43,355
Audience number from the wider region or further	99,875	200,952
% of audience survey rating experience as 'excellent' or 'good'	94%	96%
<i>The above may not be relevant to your organisation or known – however if you use ticket/box office analysis, visitor books, audience surveys, event impacts studies etc. it should be fairly straight forward to complete.</i>		

We are keen to evidence the added economic value and social return of investment in culture, as such we request that you please complete the Cultural Impact tool kit as well as the table below.

Income 2022/23	Total £
Value of Grant(s) from Aberdeen City Council – Revenue	1,119,750
Value of Grant(s) from Aberdeen City Council – Capital Contribution	225,000
External Grant funding	
External Grant funding	333,333
Sponsorship	0
Earned income	10,752,795
Other (incl. Job Retention Scheme and other COVID related grants)	245,434
Total add income	11,331,562

Section 3 – Support Material

We recommend you provide up to five items of support material to help demonstrate the quality and impact of your activity. This may include; case studies, photographs, videos, web links, publications, marketing material, reports, participant testimonials and feedback. If emailing please keep all support material to under 5mb. Please supply details on your support material below

Please note that any material submitted may be included within an annual Cultural Investment report and/or material promoting the Creative Funding programme. By submitting this you are providing permission for each item to be used for publication. You should ensure you have the creators consent and accreditation is provided where necessary.

Support Material 1:	His Majesty's Theatre & Music Hall Brochure – Summer 2022
Support Material 2:	Lemon Tree Brochure – Summer 2022
Support Material 3:	Granite Noir 2023 infographic
Support Material 4:	Wonderland Festival weblink
Support Material 5:	Light the Blue 2022 wrap up
Support Material 6:	City Crew film and sound making project (Oct 2022) – link to video

Section 4- Declaration on use of information

Aberdeen City Council collects and maintains the data on this form about your organisation for the purpose of contacting you in relation to the funding, monitoring purposes and to collate information for statistical and audit purposes. We will retain Personal Data for six years in accordance with the organisation's Corporate Records Retention and Disposal Schedule and for the purpose of administering, processing and assessing your report.

For the purposes of processing this information Aberdeen City Council is the Data Controller. The Information Commissioner Office is the UK's regulator of data protection law (www.ico.org.uk). More information about all of the rights you have is available on our website at: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/your-data>.

Whenever the Council processes personal data we need to make sure we have a basis for doing so. We understand our basis in GDPR to be Article 6(1)(e) as we consider that it is in our public task to collect this information under our powers set down in the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act, 1982 section 14, as amended by section 128 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act, 1994. The act provides for us doing or contributing towards the expenses of providing or doing, anything necessary or expedient for the purpose of ensuring that there are facilities available for recreational, sporting, cultural or social activities as we consider appropriate.

To confirm that all information included in this report is accurate and that you have read and followed the terms and conditions, please sign and date below. If submitting by email an electronic signature or the typed name of the appropriate contact should be inserted.

Name: Sharon Burgess, Chief Executive, Aberdeen Performing Arts
Date: Sept 18th 2023