EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

ANNUAL REVIEW
2023



NOTE FROM OUR FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

This year, the Edinburgh International Festival opened its arms to form a dialogue with audiences and artists. We took risks, broke down barriers, and warmly welcomed the world through our doors to provide the deepest level of experience through the highest quality of art.

I dreamt of a Festival that felt truly welcoming: a Festival with a shared sense of ownership and pride over its future and profound contribution to Scotland's culture and conversation. The response from artists and audiences has been resoundingly uplifting, filled with a tangible energy pulling us closer together. We asked, 'where do we go from here?' – and we heard from thousands of people, sharing different perspectives from around the world. Now, we are confident in forging our path and deepening next year's conversation together. This Festival is not a commercial enterprise, nor is it esoteric and exclusive. Its honest place is to defend and invest in an uncompromising level of artistic and cultural richness for the broadest range of people to experience. We achieved this with pride this summer and will deepen this ambition next year.

As we look towards the 2024 Festival, we do so with a greater sense of togetherness, shared pursuit and confidence.

Nicola Benedetti
Festival Director

Nicola Benedetti © Mihaela Bodlovic

NOTE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This year marked the start of a new phase when the Festival was joined by Nicola Benedetti as our first Scottish and first female Festival Director, as well as the first performing artist to hold the post. Nicola has brought with her not only her passion for the arts and her infectious enthusiasm but also a refreshed vision for a deeper connection between our incredible visiting artists and our audiences. This has given us a new energy and a clear sense of direction. This summer, the change was already palpable with so many people reporting that they felt that this year's Festival had a particular warmth and welcome.

The team has been working on a new strategic plan to guide us for the next five years. Our priorities over this time will be:

Programme – Present an artistic programme of the highest excellence, that connects people and cultures from around the world

Audiences – Reimagine a distinctive audience experience with broad appeal that results in a deeper culture of listening and understanding

Cultural Leadership – Demonstrate global leadership and contribute to the civic and cultural life of Scotland

Financial Sustainability – Put the Festival on a sustainable financial footing

People & Culture – Offer a welcoming and inclusive culture where people are supported and enriched by working with and for the Festival

We are living through an extraordinarily challenging time and yet the ambition of the Festival in many ways has never been greater. We have a plan to deliver an ambitious programme for the people of Scotland and our international partners. The importance of bringing great art into people's lives has never been more crucial as together we navigate our way through an uncertain future borne out of constrained public funding, skills shortages, inflation and a cost-of-living crisis. Throughout the last year I have again been awed and humbled by the passion and dedication of the Festival team, one of the best in the world. Many thanks also to our Board of Trustees who give their time, their wisdom and their encouragement so generously.

Francesca Hegyi
Chief Executive



THE 2023 FESTIVAL

The 2023 International Festival was charged with the central question 'Where do we go from here?'. It considered the Festival's founding vision of internationalism and openness alongside questions posed within Dr Martin Luther King, Jr's book: *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*. Each week of the programme invited artists and audiences to explore this question through a different lens, through themes drawn from the book: *community over chaos*, *hope in the face of adversity* and *a perspective that's not one's own*.

The 2023 programme comprised nearly 300 performances across music, dance and theatre and blended genres and experiences across 13 venues to give all audiences, of any background or perspective, access to the world's greatest artists. An expansive programme of free talks and debates, participatory events and intimate concerts brought artists and audiences closer than ever before, including in 12 conversation events in our Festival green room, The Hub.

Our audiences enjoyed experiencing music in a variety of different ways. As part of the Budapest Festival Orchestra's residency, audiences sat on beanbags amongst the musicians and were immersed in the symphonic experience. Audiences delved deeper into the context of the programme, thanks to a new series of audio introductions hosted by Nicola Benedetti and BBC Radio's Tom Service, which shared insight into the Festival's music and theatre offerings through conversations with creatives involved.

The 2023 Festival also provided a special platform of connection and participation. To kick off the Festival, the Opening Fanfare in Princes Street Gardens brought together 500 performers from across Scotland, creating a beautiful sense of community (over chaos!) between young and old, Festival regulars and first time attendees. We hosted an emotional reunion between star conductor Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, with their first performance together since 2007 taking place at the Usher Hall. Artistic development of emerging talent was a prominent thread. This included a week of exchange between 24 dancers from Scotland and *The Rite of Spring* company members from across Africa, a brilliant night in The Hub featuring five aspiring young musicians joined by three professionals and in the Festival Theatre, 25 young dancers had the opportunity of a lifetime performing alongside Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Our Focus On Korea programme, delivered in partnership with the Korean Cultural Centre, spoke to our enduring commitment to connecting people and cultures around the world. We invited audiences through an extraordinary and diverse programme including the pansori *Trojan Women*, the KBS Symphony Orchestra performing Dvořák and Tchaikovsky, as well as intimate recitals from Novus String Quartet, Yeol Eum Son and Clara-Jumi Kang.

The 2023 Festival garnered high-profile and far-reaching coverage across media platforms in Scotland, the UK and internationally – demonstrating the Festival's reach and leading reputation worldwide. Whilst the August Festival deservedly receives the most public acclaim, the Festival's work continues year-round through arts learning, community engagement and efforts to improve our accessibility, sustainability and financial resilience. We're pleased to share our annual review of all that took place at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2023 – both onstage and behind the scenes.



Learning and Engagement at The Hub © Andrew Perry

MISSION

We exist to promote the exchange of ideas and deepen understanding between cultures through a global celebration of exceptional performing arts.

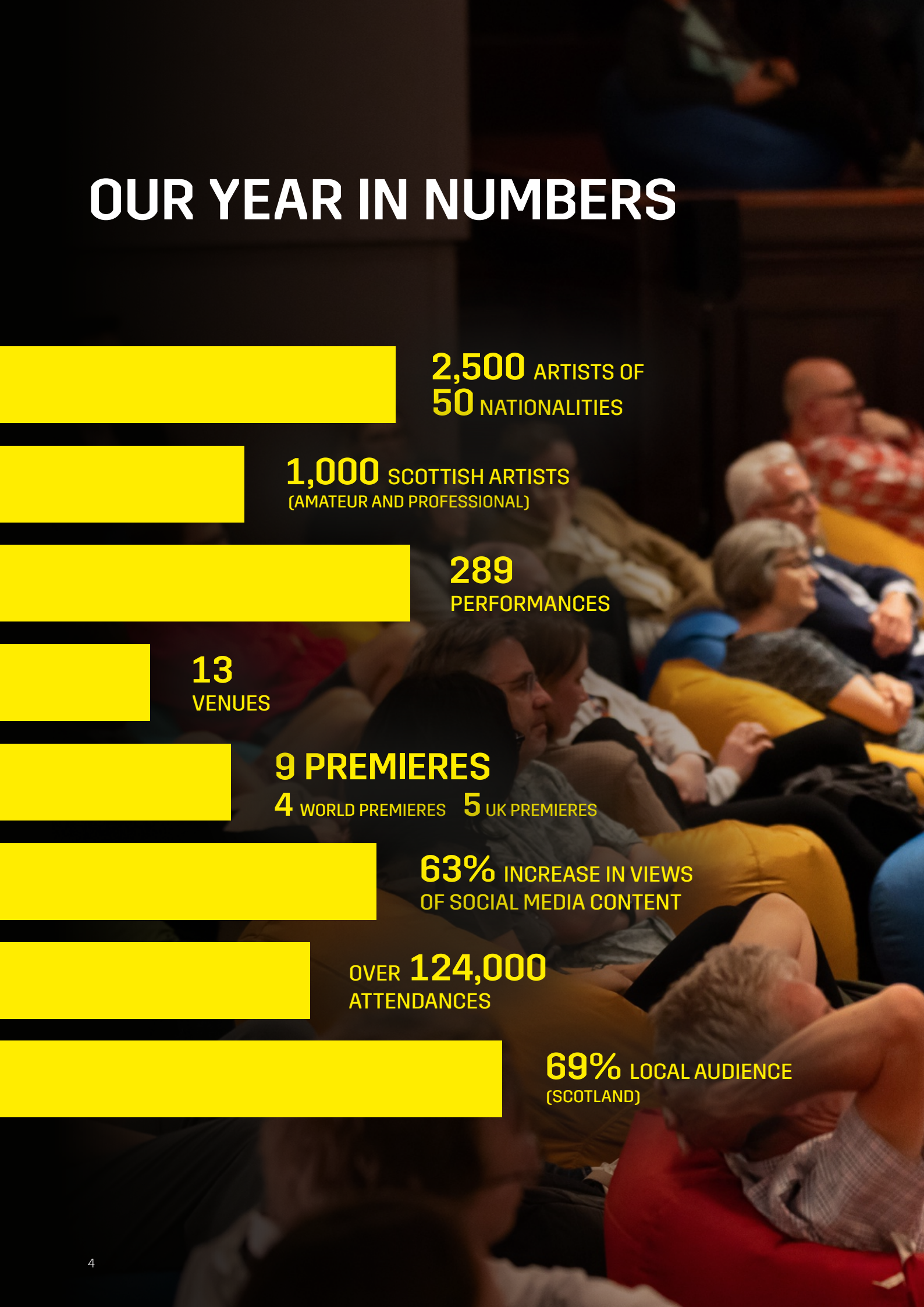
VISION

To provide the deepest experience of the highest quality of art, for the broadest possible audience.

VALUES

Discovery, Internationalism, Connection

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



2,500 ARTISTS OF
50 NATIONALITIES

1,000 SCOTTISH ARTISTS
(AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL)

289
PERFORMANCES

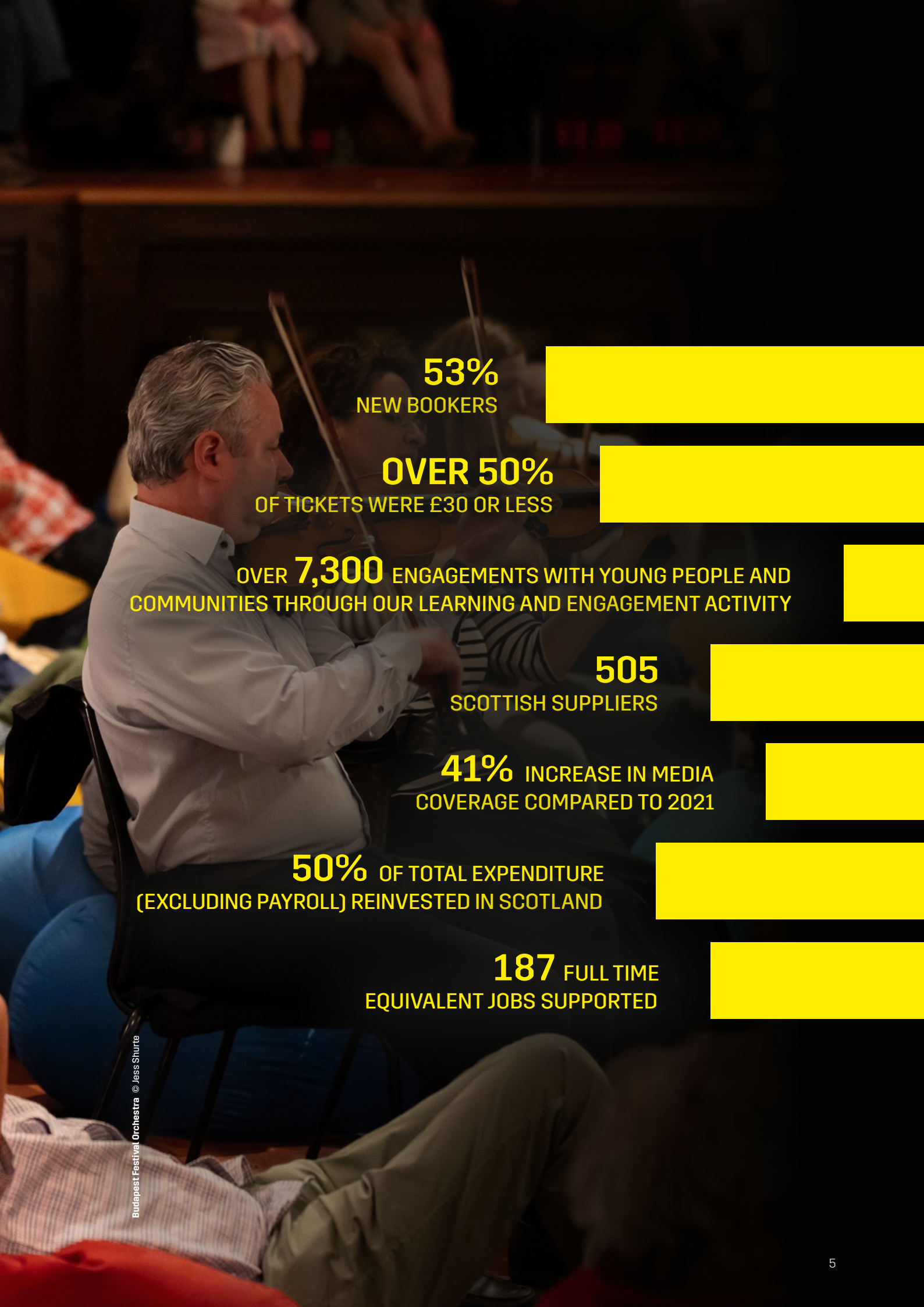
13
VENUES

9 PREMIERES
4 WORLD PREMIERES **5** UK PREMIERES

63% INCREASE IN VIEWS
OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

OVER **124,000**
ATTENDANCES

69% LOCAL AUDIENCE
(SCOTLAND)



53%
NEW BOOKERS

OVER 50%
OF TICKETS WERE £30 OR LESS

OVER **7,300** ENGAGEMENTS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

505
SCOTTISH SUPPLIERS

41% INCREASE IN MEDIA COVERAGE COMPARED TO 2021

50% OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE (EXCLUDING PAYROLL) REINVESTED IN SCOTLAND

187 FULL TIME EQUIVALENT JOBS SUPPORTED

Budapest Festival Orchestra © Jess Shurte

ACCESS INITIATIVES

We take a comprehensive approach to access, with a strategy focused on removing barriers for audiences with access requirements. The 2023 Festival included a total of 25 accessible performances.

The Access Pass is a ticketing scheme to help D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent audience members book and record their access needs so that they can have the best possible experience. The Access Pass saw 263 new registrants, bringing the total membership to 600. We produced 1,500 Access Guides, plus 120 large print, 25 braille and 30 audio CD guides. The Access Guide explains all the access provisions available, including details of our accessible performances and the D/deaf and disabled concession. A total of 2,334 tickets were sold under the D/deaf and disabled concession. We also facilitated a free Access Shuttle bus to mitigate physical barriers in getting to The Hub.

As we look forward to 2024, we are also revisiting our initiatives and practices to ensure that other barriers—such as the cost of tickets, knowledge of art forms and perceived cultural elitism—are also addressed.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Festival has had an environmental sustainability action plan in place since 2021 and, in December 2022, the Festival took the important step of employing a full-time, permanent Environmental Sustainability Manager to expand our capacity in this important area. During the 2023 Festival we grew our residency model to reduce the amount of travel required from artists whilst increasing their impact once in Edinburgh. On stage, climate issues took centre-stage in theatre productions *FOOD* and *Dimanche*. Behind the scenes, in 2023 we were awarded the Green Tourism Silver Award and were shortlisted for a VIBES Award for Vision in Business. Looking forward, we will continue to implement our action plan, whilst adding rigor to our carbon emissions management processes by completing the PAS 2060 certification, which is an internationally recognised standard that verifies carbon neutrality claims and helps organisations achieve true carbon neutrality.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

This year we made progress in three priority areas:

- We improved our access provision, focusing on removing barriers for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people.
- We took proactive steps on our journey to become an anti-racist organisation.
- We expanded the ways in which young people from all backgrounds contributed to and experienced the Festival.

Our ongoing review of recruitment practices led to a partnership with BE United to advocate for and celebrate Black, African and Caribbean creative talent in Scotland. Additionally, the recruitment of a full-time Access Manager has enhanced our status as a Disability Confident Employer. The 2023 Festival saw an unprecedented number of opportunities for young people, including a communal composition at our Opening Fanfare and the formation of a youth dance ensemble.



Phaedra – Minotaur Touch Tour © Andrew Perry



Art of Listening Workshops © Andrew Perry

LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

The Festival engages with young people, communities and educators year-round to forge connections with the International Festival and its programming. In 2023, nearly 2,400 P6 pupils from 48 primary schools in Edinburgh participated in a significant expansion of our flagship Art of Listening programme, which provides an introductory music workshop at The Hub, teaching active listening and exploration through all different forms of music.

> ***'It certainly reaffirmed that you should not make assumptions about how your class will respond to classical music – I was pleasantly surprised by the reaction of many of my children.'*** **TEACHER**

Twelve secondary schools took part in this year's Opera Project exploring *The Magic Flute*, and 42 young people took part in our Youth Takeover Day.

Community initiatives took inspiration from the artistic programme:

- 415 children visited *The Lost Lending Library* and participated in storytelling workshops
- 1,085 NHS staff, visitors and patients enjoyed pop-up performances from the London Symphony Orchestra
- Culture Clubs took place with partners including Deaf Action, Vintage Vibes and The Welcoming

In our commitment to platforming emerging Scottish talent, a company of 25 young dancers had a career-defining opportunity to perform alongside Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at the Festival Theatre, following a nationwide callout and two-week intensive rehearsal process.

> ***'Performing with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was like a dream. This company is so inspiring from its choreography to its diversity. What they put out onto the stage makes you feel something and to work with a company that shows so much love for dance on the stage was truly inspiring and an experience I'll never forget.'***
> **YOUTH ENSEMBLE DANCER**

Looking ahead, our ambitious programme fits into three clear pathways:

YOUTH CONNECTIONS

Year-round work in primary and secondary schools inspiring children across Scotland to experience and explore the Festival.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Developing long-term relationships with community hubs across Edinburgh, presenting annual opportunities for large-scale intergenerational participation, and expanding activity in healthcare settings.

INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

We will make a significant contribution to building a pipeline of emerging talent on and off the stage, connecting and inspiring a future generation of Scottish and international arts leaders.

We would like to thank Baillie Gifford Investment Managers for their support as our Learning & Engagement Partner.

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The Festival is a major moment in the international relations calendar. As we occupy a global stage during August, we are at the forefront of cultural diplomacy.

In 2023 we welcomed more than 20 international delegations including ministers, ambassadors, city leaders and other international festivals representing nations including Australia, Brazil, Germany, Norway, Korea and the US.

We have worked collaboratively and constructively at all levels of government — the City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Government and the UK Government — and we are grateful for their support which is critical for our ability to plan for the future.

Artists can explore difficult issues in ways that our politicians and leaders often cannot, but those decision makers see value in coming to experience, to listen and to learn.

FESTIVAL OF POLITICS

We were delighted to work in partnership with the Scottish Parliament and Scotland's Future Forum to deliver several events for this year's Festival of Politics. The Festival offered people living in or visiting Scotland an opportunity to come to Parliament and discuss issues facing society today.

Our events were themed around the International Festival's opening question for 2023: 'where do we go from here?'. This included talks with star conductor Gustavo Dudamel and the legendary percussionist, Evelyn Glennie. We look forward to building on this partnership in the years ahead.

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

In October 2022, we received the sad news that the parent company of Edinburgh International Film Festival had gone into administration and its future was very uncertain. As one of Edinburgh's original festivals, and the world's longest continually running film festival, everyone at the International Festival was determined to do all we could to support the Film Festival whilst it regrouped. We were delighted to be able to support a team for the Film Festival – comprising EIFF and International Festival staff – who worked tirelessly to bring EIFF 2023 into the world.

A boutique festival across six days encompassed new releases, rediscovered classics, a selection of short films by Scottish Filmmakers, and six short documentaries from the Scottish Documentary Institute's talent development initiative. From the opening film *Silent Roar* (the debut feature from Scottish writer and director Johnny Barrington) to Cinema Under the Stars in the Old College Quad, it was a joy to see the EIFF return. The film programme and associated events were met with genuine affection and appreciation from a loyal audience.

The support from Screen Scotland was outstanding and recent developments including the creation of a new Board led by film producer Andrew Macdonald give us cause to be hopeful for the return of the Film Festival in future years.



Anoushka Shankar © Andrew Perry

FINANCIAL REVIEW

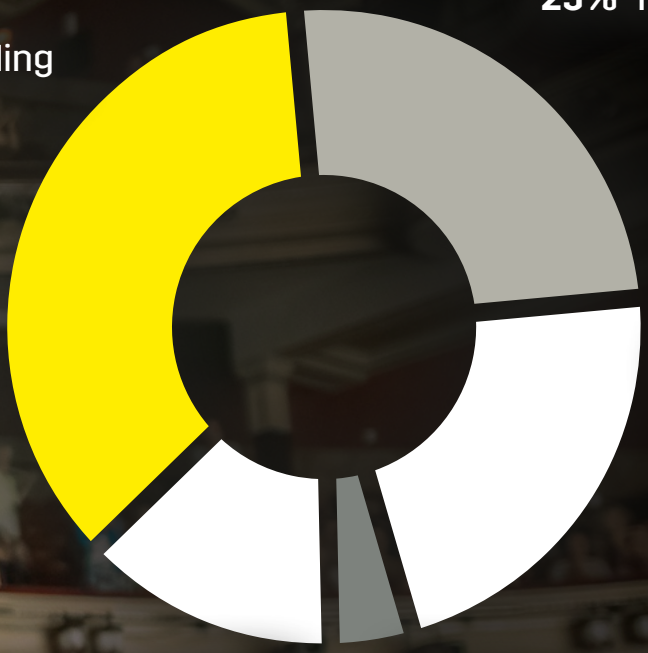
2023 was a successful year on many fronts, and financially this was no exception. The costs of presenting our Festival programme and our Learning and Engagement activities make up nearly 70% of our expenditure—ensuring the highest quality experience for our audiences and artists alike. Notably, more than 20% of our total expenditure went directly to 505 Scottish suppliers, with a further 16% spent in the rest of Scotland, supporting a wealth of businesses and freelancers across the nation.

Fundraising and partnerships support, paired with public funding, remain the main sources of income, representing 61% of total revenue, whilst ticket income accounted for less than a quarter. In the current challenging economic environment this support is more important than ever and allows the Festival to fulfil its mission to bring the highest quality of art to the broadest possible audience. We are grateful to our public funders, Creative Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council and DCMS for their support. We are equally grateful for the support of the trusts and foundations, corporate partners, international partners and thousands of individual supporters for their continued generosity.

Looking ahead, the financial outlook continues to be challenging. Our public funding has remained at standstill levels for more than a decade, and high inflation continues to drive up costs across all aspects of the Festival's operations. To continue to present a festival of the same quality and scale will require increased investment both now and into the future.

Trojan Women Curtain Call © Mihaela Bodlovic

INCOME



25% Fundraising

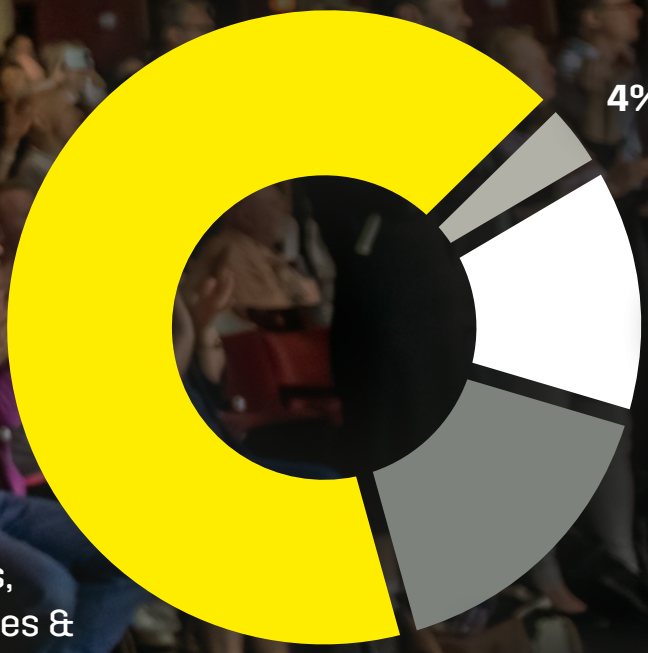
36% Public Funding

22% Ticket Sales

13% Creative Tax Reliefs

4% Other Earned Income

EXPENDITURE



4% Fundraising

13% Marketing & Ticketing

67% Productions, Performances & Learning and Engagement

16% Administration

YEAR ROUND STAFF

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