

Review 2019

ABERDEEN
PERFORMING
ARTS

HIS MAJESTY'S
THEATRE

MUSIC
HALL

LEMON
TREE

aberdeenperformingarts.com



Welcome

Welcome to our Annual Review. 2019 was a very special year for Aberdeen Performing Arts, and our review sets out to shine a light on the achievements of the team and reflect on our mission, vision and values.

At the start of 2019 we moved back into the transformed Music Hall, and in October we were named Business of the Year in the North East at the Northern Star Business Awards. Throughout the year, we sold 385,568 tickets, staged 814 performances, welcomed over 1,000,000 people through our doors, supported 96 artists through our talent programme and delivered 20,348 creative learning participations.

We are well known for the high-profile work on our stages, but at our heart are our charitable aims to improve life chances through the arts, champion creative diversity, nurture the next generation of

talent and enrich the cultural life of the region, through projects like our Music Hall Babies, Everyone Can Play, youth theatre and community choirs.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated team, who live our values every day and work tirelessly behind the scenes to make the magic happen.

A huge thank you to our farsighted partners who share our vision for Aberdeen Performing Arts and for the arts in Scotland and the North East.

As we head into 2020, we continue to evolve exciting and ambitious plans and are proud to be passionate advocates and ambassadors for the arts in all of our lives.

Craig Pike, Chair
Jane Spiers, Chief Executive



Digital art commission by
ISO Design, *Christmas,*
Stepping In artspace,
the Music Hall



Our Mission

Creating a Spark

Our Vision

A vibrant cultural hub at the heart of city life, inspiring, exploring and engaging through live performance and creative projects

Our Values

Curiosity / Optimism / Loyalty / Teamwork / Resilience

Underpinning our success is a fit-for-purpose company and behind the scenes, an amazing, ambitious, award-winning team of people who always go the extra mile to create an inspirational environment for artists and audiences.

This year we achieved step-change across many of the themes that create the conditions for success – digital development, environmental, creative diversity and customer experience.

We adopted ‘Think Digital’ as our company-wide goal, laying the foundations for the digital transformation we need across the company to deliver an ambitious programme of work, from commissioning creative content for our new digital artspace, to investing in security compliance and HR software.

Our commitment to reducing our environmental impacts, for exceptional engagement with our artists, audiences

and workforce and for being passionate champions for climate change was recognised with a national SEPA Vibes Award for ‘Engaging Scotland’.

Our brand refresh was a Scottish Design Awards finalist, and the Music Hall Stepping In campaign was named CIPR Arts, Culture or Sport Campaign of the Year in Scotland.

Investing in our workforce and the future workforce of Aberdeen is really important to us. This year we were awarded the ‘Certificate of School Engagement’ by Developing the Young Workforce of the North East, and we gained our Healthy Working Lives Silver Award.

We achieved our Customer Service Excellence accreditation, ‘Compliant’ in all 57 criteria and ‘Compliant Plus’ in 20. We continued to expand our access services, including introducing the new Mobile Connect system in all of our venues. ■■■

People

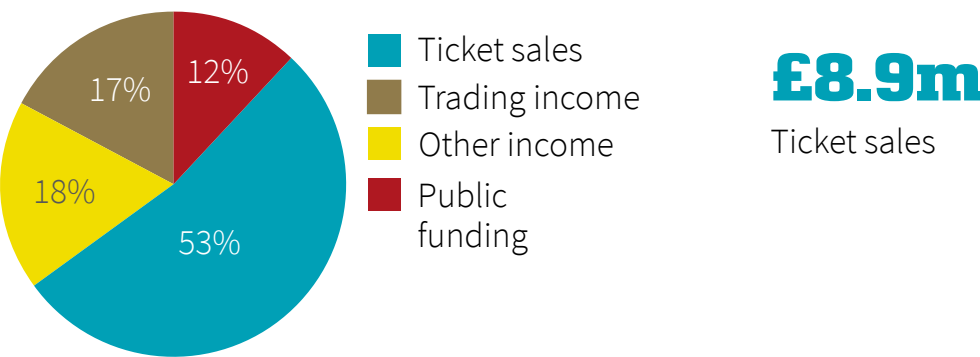
1,000,000+ visitors through our doors	385,568 tickets sold for our venues	57 venues & festivals (tickets sold for)
31,900 conference delegates	248 employees	53 work placements
1,400,000 website visitors	80,965 social media followers	75,000 ice creams eaten
4,214 tickets donated to charities, groups, schools	£59,933 raised for other charities	7 awards

Programme

814 performances	3 festivals	11 commissions
96 artists supported through talent programme	61 accessible performances (BSL, audio described, captioned and relaxed)	20,348 creative learning participations

Finance

For every **£1** of public subsidy we generate **£7**



MUSIC HALL Stepping In

The Music Hall transformation was so much more than a building project. We set out to breathe new life into our beautiful neoclassical concert hall and to create a fit-for-purpose, inspirational space for a new generation of artists and audiences.

Stepping Out

The Stepping Out programme during closure kept the spirit of the Music Hall alive in communities across the North East, celebrating its rich history and heritage and its place at the heart of cultural and community life. We really enjoyed taking the Music Hall on the road to venues around the city, making new friends and getting re-acquainted with old friends along the way.

During closure, we staged 115 Music Hall concerts in 15 venues around the city attended by 90,043 people.

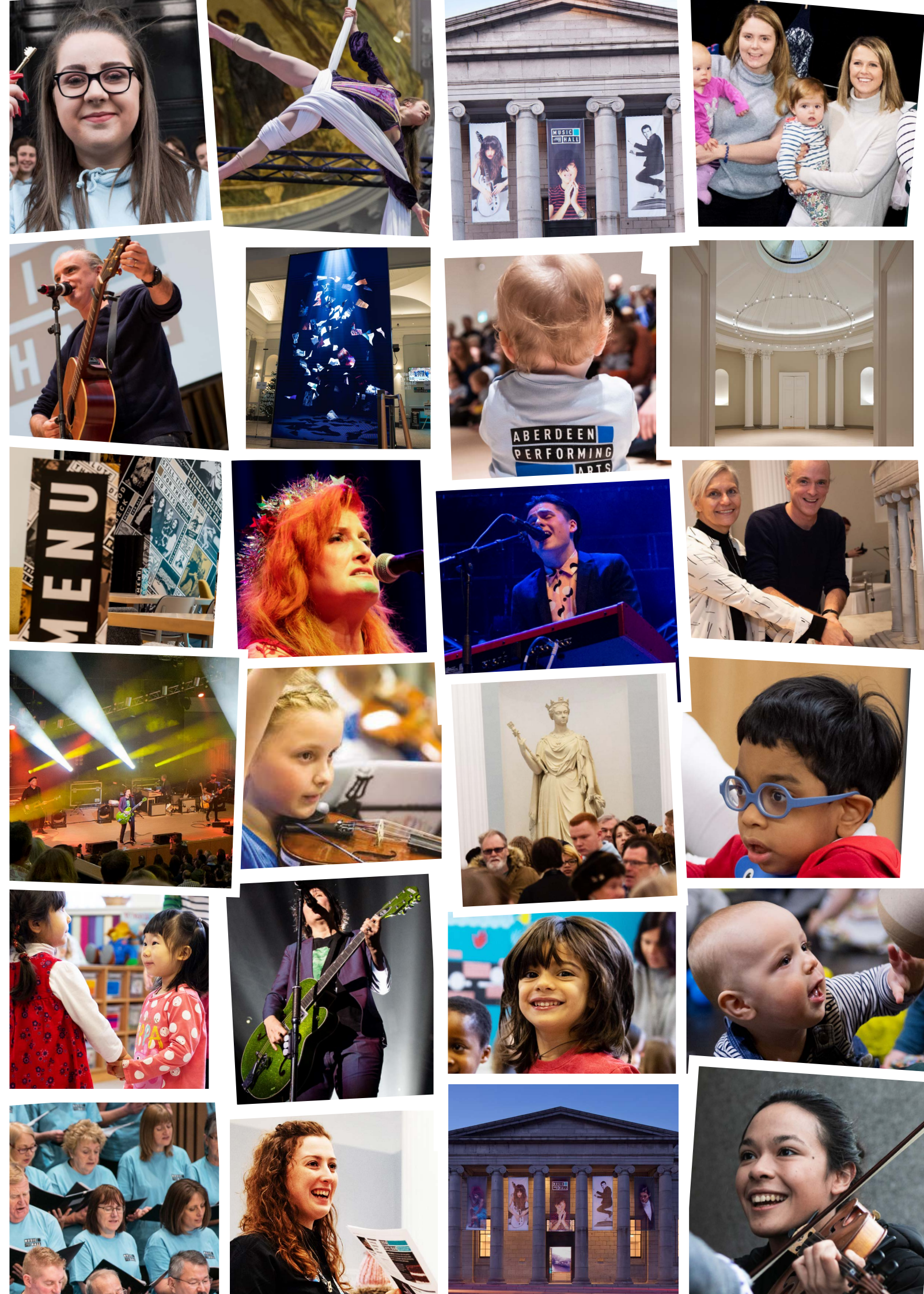
“The doors are now open and everyone feels part of it. The Music Hall truly celebrates community. Thank you for so many lovely forever memories.”

Stepping In participant

Stepping In

On 8 December 2019 we welcomed 11,000 people through the doors to our Music Hall Stepping In celebrations.

Stepping In shone a light on all the talent and creativity we have in the North East. Our Stepping In participants, who had all been working behind the scenes in the run up to opening, gave us a day to remember – our Music Hall Babies, community choir, young ambassadors, projects with Drake Music, Scottish Opera, performances from our partner arts organisations across the city – Citymoves, Big Noise Torry, soundcollective and our own youth theatre. It was wonderful to see the Music Hall full of life and communities coming together in a celebration of the arts. It gave true meaning to the Music Hall project and made it complete. ■■■



MUSIC

Classical

We celebrated the re-opening of the Music Hall with a stunning concert by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Alpesh Chauhan with soloist Freddy Kempf.

This launched a season of exceptional orchestral music from Scotland's orchestras, all delighted to be back in the Hall. Music highlights included an all-Mozart affair with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and horn player Alec Frank-Gemmill and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's vibrant take on the *Enigma Variations*. The range and calibre of concerts throughout the year has been extraordinary, from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's Prom Concert with the Ayoub sisters to Scottish Ensemble's *Elemental*.

Rêverie, was a uniquely curated weekend of concerts, talks, workshops and art inspired by musical impressionism featuring the music of Debussy, Ravel,

de Falla and Fauré performed by BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Ensemble, Scottish Opera Orchestra, Javier Perianes, Bertrand Chamayou and Lucy Parham.

As well as welcoming global superstars like Sir Bryn Terfel and Dame Evelyn Glennie, we are passionate about our role championing and nurturing the next generation of classical musicians and audiences. Our new Classical Curtain-Raisers season in Big Sky Studio provided a platform for young, emerging talent in the North East. It was a joy to see our auditorium filled with children and families for *Peter and the Wolf*, the music from the Harry Potter films and the iconic film *Back to the Future* with live orchestral accompaniment. It was great to welcome our home grown talent back into the Music Hall – Grampian Youth Orchestra, Aberdeen Sinfonietta and Aberdeen Choral Society. ■■■

“The concerts introduced me to music I’d never heard before. The celebration was an inspired idea.”

Audience member, *Rêverie*



Royal Scottish National Orchestra Prom Concert, featuring the Ayoub sisters, the Music Hall

MUSIC

Contemporary

What a year! It started with Sharleen Spiteri and Texas in front of a capacity crowd at the Music Hall and then there was no holding back – Papa Roach, Black Stone Cherry, Ocean Colour Scene, The Cult, Jack Savoretti, Bastille, Primal Scream, the DMAs.

The Lemon Tree's reputation as the venue for discovering the next big act did not disappoint with gigs by She Drew the Gun, Ride, Kyle Falconer, Fatherson, John Newman, The Holydrug Couple and Jamie Lawson.

Our fifth True North music festival was the best yet with indie cult favourites The Twilight Sad headlining at the Music Hall and Shame, with charismatic front man Charlie Steen bringing the house down at The Lemon Tree.

We shone a light on female singer-songwriters throughout 2019, as we welcomed KT Tunstall, Heather Small, Beverley Knight, k. d. lang, Kate Rusby, Lucy Spraggan, Yola, Honeyblood, Nerina Pallot and Kathryn Joseph.

We hosted a world premiere with American saxophonist Bill Evans and the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, a spectacular club night with 2manydjs and introduced the Big Sky Sessions in our new Big Sky Studio.

It was also a year of collaborations and unforgettable one-offs including three Northern Arc Sessions with Scottish artists Capercaillie, Session A9 and Old Blind Dogs joined by exceptional artists from Spain, France, Norway and Finland. Lau Land brought together the cream of Scottish and Irish musicians for a weekend of inventive music-making. ■■■

“Music has always been there for me and is what’s helped me through everything. It’s like my solace.”

Sharleen Spiteri, Texas



Texas, the Music Hall re-opening concert

Theatre

We love telling a good story, and that is guaranteed with our theatre programme, from small-scale and experimental drama at The Lemon Tree to the biggest, most spectacular West End and Broadway productions at His Majesty's Theatre.

The West End truly came to town this year with fabulous productions of *Calendar Girls the Musical*, *Kinky Boots*, *Annie*, *9 to 5 the Musical*, and *The Bodyguard*.

His Majesty's Theatre is the home of Scottish Opera in the North East, and we were treated this year to two of the greatest operas ever written with stunning productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Tosca*, and our first dementia-friendly performance.

This year's lovely, wintery adventure for under 7s at The Lemon Tree was *Ice House*,

commissioned by Aberdeen Performing Arts and created especially for us by Ailie Cohen and Sarah Corbett.

The Lemon Tree theatre programme is always thought-provoking and never more so than this year with productions like Gary McNair's disturbing piece *Locker Room Talk* exploring male identity, Hannah Lavery's performance-poetry monologue *The Drift*, about race and belonging, and Ellie Stewart's *Hope & Joy* exploring love, loss and parenthood.

Scottish work was also represented on our stage at His Majesty's Theatre with North East writer Morna Young's poignant tale *Lost at Sea*. And we love our partnership with Òran Mór to bring *A Play, A Pie and A Pint* to Aberdeen with seven productions this year all playing to sell-out audiences.



"I was transported to an innocent place. *Ice House* made me feel like a child again."

Audience Member, *Ice House*



Ice House Christmas Show, The Lemon Tree

Comedy & Spoken Word

Our literature programme continues to grow in scale and popularity with more readings, more author conversations, our new Big Sky: Big Horizons series in Big Sky Studio and our signature literature festival Granite Noir, now in its third year.

In 2019, we hosted 51 events and welcomed 64 authors from 9 different countries. Authors like Harriet Evans, Colin MacIntyre, Janice Galloway, Jess Kidd, Leah Hazard, Abir Mukherjee, Stuart MacBride, Vaseem Khan, Anthony Horowitz, Adam Kay, Yrsa Sigurdardóttir, Jørn Lier Horst and Alex Dahl inspiring conversations about every topic under the sun, from life working in the NHS to life growing up on the Isle of Mull.

We commissioned a beautiful exhibition of new work from 12 UK poets, inspired by music, illustrated by artist Andrew

Cranston and with contributions from Jackie Kay, Simon Armitage, Gillian Welch, Liz Lochhead, and Sinead Morrissey.

Our spoken word events gave our audiences the unique opportunity to experience the world of inspirational commentators, activists and media personalities like the legal team from hit show *Making a Murderer*, 'History Guy' Dan Snow, *SAS: Who Dares Wins* star Ant Middleton, the Hairy Bikers, Aberdeen FC legend, Willie Miller, and mountaineer, Sir Chris Bonington.

Stand up comedy this year brought massive names to the Music Hall – John Bishop, Frank Skinner, Ben Elton, Frankie Boyle, Rhod Gilbert and Paul Merton – and we continue to champion the next generation of stand ups at The Lemon Tree – Flo and Joan, Kiri Pritchard-Mclean, and Susie McCabe. ■■■

“Thank you all for a wonderful event and such warm hospitality – I couldn’t ask for anything more.”

Vaseem Khan, Granite Noir author



Susan Calman in conversation with Stuart MacBride, Granite Noir 2019, the Music Hall



Dance

Scottish Ballet celebrated its 50th anniversary year, bringing three special productions to His Majesty's Theatre.

Starting with a spell-binding production of Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, complete with a 'Wee' version for children, followed by a Spring! double bill featuring the premiere of *Dextera* by Sophie Laplane, alongside Sir Kenneth MacMillan's *Elite Syncopations*, and finally a stunning new adaptation of *The Crucible*.

There was breath-taking athleticism in Wayne McGregor's spectacular show *Autobiography*, which featured a soundtrack by US electronic composer Jlin and was choreographed based on the sequencing of McGregor's own DNA using an algorithm for each performance that ensured no two audiences saw the same work.

At The Lemon Tree, the DanceLive festival hosted three diverse contemporary dance works including Rob Heaslip's evocative *Endling* and Julia James-Griffiths' *The Box*, exploring depression.

Strictly Come Dancing fans were very well looked after this year with Anton and Erin's first visit to the Music Hall alongside *Remembering the Movies* with Aljaz and Janette, and *Here Come the Boys* featuring three of the leading male dancers from the show.

In a Scottish exclusive, Dame Darcey Bussell brought the final of her Schools Get Dancing programme to the Music Hall, featuring performances by 500 local school children in a day that made forever memories for the participants. ■■■

"Autobiography looked so brilliant on your stage"

Studio Wayne McGregor

Autobiography, Wayne McGregor, His Majesty's Theatre

Digital Art

We have had a brilliant time this year commissioning work for our new digital playground for artists and audiences, the Stepping In artspace at the Music Hall.

It has brought new creative collaborations, added a whole new dimension to programming and transformed the way we see the world around us.

Invisible Landscapes of Music by Bright Side Studios, in collaboration with ASCUS Art and Science was an immersive, augmented reality piece that explored the dramatic beauty of the hidden ecosystems of musical scores and instruments.

You Are Here, by Ray Interactive mapped the stars directly above the Music Hall in real time, bringing the heavens alive and reminding us that all life originates in the stars.

Our Stepping In space has added a new dimension to programming and transformed the way we see the world around us.

Charles Young's *Assembly* created a series of HD animations based on an intricately designed 3D paper model of the Music Hall neighbourhood to explore perceptions of space, imagination and memory.

Cliona Harmey's *Aberdeen Ships*, explored the romance and reality of the sea, tracking vessels arriving and departing Aberdeen Harbour, and ISO Design's *Meet Me at the Music Hall* drew on the rich Music Hall archive to share the story of our re-imagined Music Hall.

We commissioned 5 new works in 2019 and hosted a Look Again festival commission *Glisk* – Design and Code and Jo Gilbert's interactive celebration of all things Doric. ■■■



**Invisible Landscapes of Music,
Stepping In artspace, the Music Hall**

Festivals

Our three festivals are rooted in the North East and firmly established in Scotland's cultural calendar.

True North is our award-winning, indie music festival now in its fifth year. In 2019 we staged concerts in more venues around the city, welcomed more artists and had our biggest audiences to date. The Twilight Sad, Shame, Self Esteem, Bill Ryder Jones and Ibibio Sound Machine were among the bands and artists who gathered in Aberdeen in September to rock the city.

True North's much anticipated heritage concert this year, *Rip It Up Live*, was curated by Vic Galloway and was inspired by the National Museum of Scotland's celebratory exhibition of Scottish pop and indie artists.

For year three of Granite Noir, our annual crime-writing festival, we pushed ourselves to bring more – more Nordic and Scottish crime fiction, more authors writing about far-flung places, more psychological insights and more workshops, exhibitions, conversations and special events in quirky

places and spaces across our wonderfully atmospheric city. Only in Aberdeen could you see Nicola Sturgeon in conversation with Abir Mukherjee, Stuart MacBride chatting to Susan Calman and join us for a live link with the Murder in the Mountains Festival in Colorado.

Light the Blue is our youth arts festival co-designed with young people. It started as a sharing and celebration of the work of our youth music and youth theatre groups throughout the year. This year, it expanded to include partner organisations with an outdoor adaptation of *Dracula* by Theatre Modo in the Marischal Square Atrium, and a musical climate change workshop with Admiral Fallow.

We also collaborated with 7 city and Scotland-wide festivals in 2019, as producing, commissioning and programming partners – DanceLive, sound, Look Again, Aberdeen International Comedy Festival, Aberdeen Jazz Festival, Puppet Animation Festival and Luminare.



“Massive congratulations on a genuinely fantastic True North. Programming and vibe both brilliant.”

Scottish Music Industry Association



Ibibio Sound Machine, True North Music Festival 2019, The Lemon Tree

Family

For so many children and young people in the North East, their first experience of the arts is a family visit to one of our venues, and we want to make that experience extraordinary.

2019 was a bumper year of family work at His Majesty's Theatre with stage adaptations of Dreamworks' *Madagascar*, Julia Donaldson's beloved tales of *Zog* and *The Gruffalo*, and Scottish Ballet's introductory ballet show *Wee Hansel and Gretel*. In December, everyone's favourite panto, *Cinderella*, came to town with a star cast and mind-blowing effects. During the run it will be seen by 55,000 people.

We both present and commission work for children and families, and the highlight of our year is always our festive show for under 7s, which this year was *Ice House* created especially for us by Ailie Cohen and Sarah Corbett.

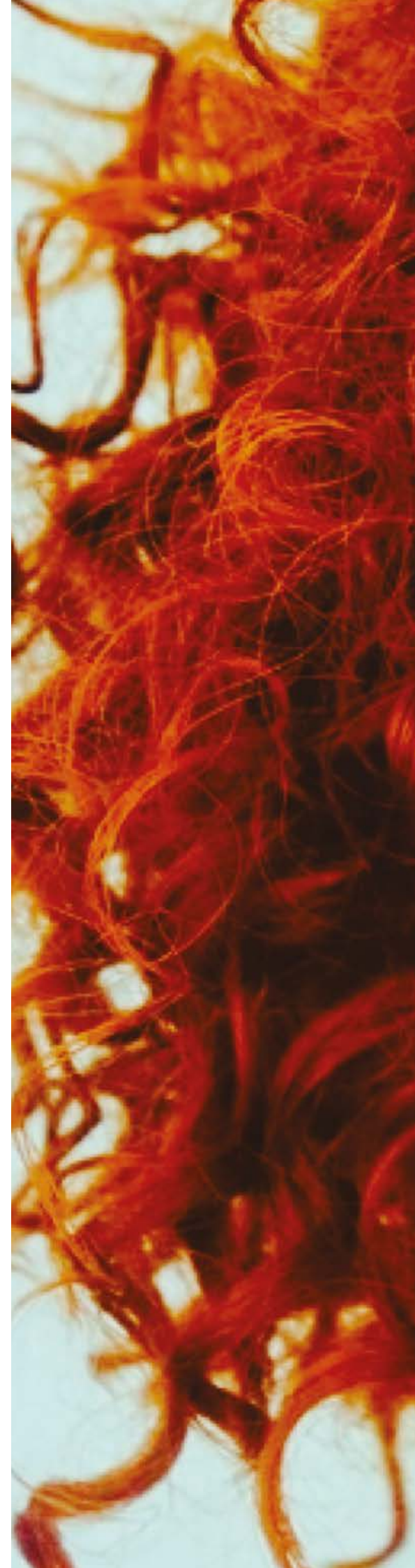
The new Big Sky Studio at the Music Hall has given us a new, much longed-for stage for our family programme, and at the start of the year we introduced our *Big Sky: Little Stars* early years' strand with *Four Go Wild in Wellies* by inclusive dance company Indepen-dance. The *Whirlybird* by environmental company EcoDrama, and *Little Top* by early years specialists Starcatchers – all 12 performances sold out.

The Lemon Tree hosted three shows as part of the Puppet Animation Festival as well as new productions by two of the leading children's theatre makers in Scotland with Shona Reppe's *Atlantis Banal* and Andy Manley's *Stick By Me*.



“Magic is real... well it certainly is at His Majesty's.”

Evening Express on Cinderella



Atlantis Banal, Shona Reppe, The Lemon Tree

Creative Learning

We believe in the power of the arts to change lives, bring diverse communities together and effect social change. We continue to make connections across the city to invest in creative learning and to co-design projects with partners and participants. We delivered 20,348 learning and participation attendances during the year.

Our early years music programme is well-established in its new home in Tutti Studio at the Music Hall. Our Music Hall Babies project, in partnership with Starcatchers, is in its second year and we have added an outreach project for teenage mums and babies in Seaton. Imagine Tiny and Imagine Tots cater for pre-school budding musicians with the opportunity to progress to Mini and Mega Maestros for primary aged children.

Our Community Choir attracts around 100 singers every week, and public performances included the launch of Luminate's Dementia Friendly Choirs Network and a Winter Showcase concert in the Music Hall. Our newly formed vocal ensemble, Tutti Voices, performed the world premiere of a new commission *Motherhood* by Ailie Robertson and

participated in Aberdeen's Christmas Light switch on.

We have 130 young people in our youth theatre at His Majesty's Theatre aged 4 to 18, and this year we launched our new Young Company for young people aged 18–25 and a new beginners class for adults. Our participants have the unique experience of being part of a living, working theatre and learn about all aspects of theatre practice. This year our young people took part in the National Festival of Youth Theatre, and we staged two sold-out Summer Schools.

We work closely with schools in the region offering great ticket deals, workshop opportunities, tours and careers advice, and we host a teachers' network to help shape our work with schools. 11,756 young people attended a schools' event in our venues this year.

Creative diversity is at the heart of everything we do. This year we piloted a music project for young people with Drake Music Scotland, Everyone Can Play, and our Dance for Parkinson's project which, we deliver with Citymoves Dance Agency, Scottish Ballet and Dance Base, is more popular than ever. ■■■

“Thank you for this wonderful opportunity for me and my baby.” Music Hall Babies mum



Orchard Brae, Light the Blue Festival 2019, The Lemon Tree



Project Band's The 101 supporting Texas at the Music Hall

Talent

Freshly Squeezed Productions is our talent pipeline. It provides artists with opportunities to experiment, play and shape great ideas. It is our unique, cross art-form, flexible talent development, production and commissioning framework.

Under the umbrella of Freshly Squeezed Productions, this year we created new work for the stage – *Ice House*, our festive show for under 7s. This forms part of a body of work that has gone on to tour widely. In 2019, a previous Christmas production, *A Ladder to the Stars*, was performed throughout Scotland and then toured to Singapore, and *Flutter* completed a Christmas run at The Studio in Edinburgh.

We also appointed two associate artists, staged Scratch Nights and provided mentoring and coaching to young talent through initiatives like Project Band.

Our associate artist Frances Davis was resident at the world-leading James Hutton Institute, which undertakes research on the sustainable use of

land and natural resources. Associate artist Fiona Soe Paing, a Scottish-Burmese sound artist based in the North East, developed an initial concept of contemporary re-imaginings of local ballads with musician and producer Clutch Daisy.

In 2019, in response to demand, we established our new Young Company, which provides training, mentoring and performance opportunities for aspiring young theatre practitioners.

Our Scratch Nights provide a supportive space for young and emerging artists to try out new work and get professional input from practitioners across artforms – theatre, music, comedy and spoken word.

Our talent pipeline gives emerging artists supported opportunities to perform on our stages as part of our year-round cultural programme. For example, our Project Band alumni performed at True North, The 101 opened for Texas at the Music Hall last December and six of our Locals in the Limelight performed at Granite Noir.



“Aberdeen Performing Arts did wonders in raising our sense of being valued as artists as part of the local arts community.”

Fiona Soe Paing, associate artist

Events

Since the re-opening of the Music Hall our conference and events offering has gone from strength to strength, hosting over 56 conferences and events in 2019.

We have welcomed 31,900 delegates through our doors to a diverse assortment of events, including the VisitAberdeenshire Tourism Conference, The National Whisky Festival, The Aberdeen Art Fair, The Sausage and Cider Festival, DataFest and the Robert Gordon University Graduations. We hosted the MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards 2019 broadcast live from the Music Hall and showcasing the very best talent in

Scotland from our stage in Aberdeen. We also welcomed a global audience to the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament over 5 days in the Music Hall.

All of these events add so much value and are a pleasure to host. They bring new partnerships and new audiences to our venues and to the city. The income we generate from our conferences and events activities helps our charity to continue to make a difference to individuals, communities and the city through the arts. ■■■

“I just wanted to say a massive thank you to you and all the team at the Music Hall for making yesterday such a success.”

MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards 2019



The Aberdeen Art Fair, the Music Hall

**Thank you to all of our friends,
investors and supporters who
share our vision for Aberdeen
Performing Arts and the arts in
Scotland and the North East.**

**Best wishes for 2020!
Team Aberdeen Performing Arts**

If you would like to hear more about the work we do and how you can support us, please visit our website aberdeenperformingarts.com, follow us on social, phone our **Box Office 01224 641122** or email development@aberdeenperformingarts.com



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The Aberdeen Art Fair



Ice House, The Lemon Tree Christmas Show, 2019





**Step In to the
Music Hall
(click to
watch)**