



Annual Report 2018/2019

BIRDS OF PARADISE
THEATRE COMPANY



2018/19 SNAPSHOT

BOP Theatre

Produced our biggest scale production ever to sold out audiences at Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

BOP Development

Delivered creative development workshops in Rwanda and Nepal, through partnership with British Council.

BOP Strategic

Delivered Disability Equality Training to 265 people across 7 organisations as well working on additional strategic accessibility projects.



Photo: MLRF company Pleasance Courtyard Frine First Awards 2018

AT A GLANCE

5336

audience members

1

production supporting new writing

31

disabled artists worked with

61,985

Access Scottish Theatre webpage views

41,363

boptheatre.co.uk webpage views

1

parliamentary event

5,600

copies of Access Scottish Theatre

1

fundraising revue

23

performances - all with integrated access

265

people across 7 organisations trained



Organisational

2018 marked 25 years of Birds of Paradise as an incorporated company and after kicking off the celebrations in March with a reception at the Scottish Parliament, hosted by Patrick Harvie MSP and with a speech from Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture - we closed out the anniversary year with our magnificent 25th Anniversary Revue, hosted by acclaimed performer and disability activist Touretteshero, aka Jess Thom.

Sandwiched between these two events, the company's largest ever production, a brand new production called My Left Right Foot - The Musical (a co-production with National Theatre of Scotland) had an official "sold out" run at Edinburgh Festival Fringe, garnered more stars than a Brian Cox documentary and picked up three awards, including a Fringe First and a Herald Angel.

There were no changes in the staff team but sadly Michael Richardson decided it was time for his role as a Trustee to end, and we welcomed new appointments in the shape of Amy Conachan and Jai Hutchison. The board continues to support and guide us as we grow our reputation and take on new and ambitious challenges.

BOP THEATRE

My Left Right Foot - The Musical

A co-production from Birds of Paradise & National Theatre of Scotland. Written and directed by **Robert Softley Gale**. Music & lyrics by **Claire McKenzie & Scott Gilmour**, with additional songs from **Richard Thomas**.

“ The local am-dram society is under pressure to comply with the equalities agenda. They come up with a cunning plan to create a gripping show starring ‘the disabled’. What could be better than the Oscar-winning ‘My Left Foot’? The only snag is they’re having real trouble finding any disabled actors - but that never stopped Daniel Day-Lewis! ”

- Asked questions about the process of non-disabled actors “cripping up” for disabled characters.
- Brought BOP’s process of embedding Creative Access into the fabric of a production to a UK wide/ international audience.
- New creative partnerships with NTS, Noisemaker and Richard Thomas Largest scale production BOP have ever tackled - and it was a huge success.

Assembly Roxy, Edinburgh 1 - 27 August, part of Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Part of Made in Scotland | Official Ed Fringe Sell Out performance.

More information on our [website here](#).

“Saw #MyLeftRightFoot last night. Deeply affected. Never seen anyone articulate how I feel as a person with CP before. Hilarious. Moving. Daring. Challenging. May it go to the West End.”

David Thorpe on Twitter (audience member)



Photo: Matthew Duckett and Dawn Seivewright as Chris and Gillian in MLRF. Photo by Tommy Ga-Ken Wan



Photo: John McLaron as Grant in MLRF. Photo by Tommy Ga-Ken Wan

“This co-production is hilarious; the gags are close to the bone, and important questions are asked about inclusivity.”

★★★★★ Craig Angus - The List

Winner:

Fringe First
Herald Angel
Best New Musical (Broadway World)

5277
audience members

23
performances

16
five-star reviews

30
people employed.

Untold
raised eyebrows

You've Got to be Ballsy (Stories from the Front Line of Cerebral Palsy)

As well as being at the heart of our new production 'My Left Right Foot - The Musical', the autobiography of Irish artist **Christy Brown** - My Left Foot - captures what life was like for people with Cerebral Palsy living in the early 20th century. During the development for MLRF we felt that an appropriate companion piece to the fictional musical would be a documentary exploring the contemporary experience of people with CP.

Working in partnership with BoBath Scotland (now know as Cerebral Palsy Scotland) and with support from National Theatre of Scotland, we supported **Jack Hunter** (a writer, performer and stand-up comedian with CP) to work with a filmmaker and conduct a series of interviews with other young people with CP, considering their lived experience; how they move through the world and how the world views them. The resulting film gets its title from one of Jack's poems, 'You've Got to be Ballsy to have Cerebral Palsy'.

As part of this project, Jack was also partnered with **Laurence Clark** (a stand-up comedian with CP) who provided mentoring to Jack in developing his own career as a comedian and also contributed to the film by sharing his experiences of navigating the world of stand up as a person with CP. The film is completed but we are currently exploring different options for publishing it.

[Watch the trailer here.](#)

This project was generously funded by the RS MacDonald Trust

Visit our [website](#) for more information.

BRAW

During this year BOP worked with The Touring Network on their BRAW initiative. The aim of BRAW is for artists, theatre companies and rural promoters to look at how we can make theatre that appeals to rural communities in Scotland. BOP worked with writer and director Heather Marshall (of Creative Electric) and rural promoter Argyll Arts Collective, based in Lochgoilhead.

Heather visited Lochgoilhead twice, one three-day visit and then a second week-long adventure where Heather and two actors she often collaborates with explored the surrounding areas of the Faslane Peace Camp, Helensburgh and Loch Lomond. During these research trips Heather attended the Lochgoilhead Gala Day, held a story exchange, danced at the village ceilidh and spent a lot of time getting to know the locals and the residents of the nearby Holiday Village.

We look forward to producing a brand new piece of work in partnership with Heather in 2019/20 that will tour rurally across Scotland.

Read about BRAW on [our website here.](#)

BOP DEVELOPMENT

Rwanda

In February 2018, BOP was invited to Kigali by the British Council, to deliver a series of workshops in association with Amizero Dance Company & East Africa Nights of Tolerance Dance Festival.

Robert Gale, **Mairi Taylor** and frequent BOP creative collaborator, choreographer **Rachel Drazek**, delivered capacity building workshops as part of East Africa Arts; a British Council project working with artists and companies from across East Africa with a focus on cross-artform practice and disability equality.

In September 2018 BOP was delighted to host one of the young disabled artists, **Anisia Byukusenge** - a blind poet, for a week in Glasgow. BOP organised development time for Anisia with Scottish-based disabled artists **Aby Watson** and **Amy Rosa**, who together with BOP worked with Anisia to develop one of her poems *My Journey is a Sign of Hope* into a spoken word piece. A scratch performance of this piece was performed at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland as part of an evening of performance organised by Glasgow company Indepen-dance.

Finally, in October 2018 BOP returned to Kigali to continue the work with the group of disabled artists they had met in February. The aim of this second week in Kigali was to work with 5 developing disabled artists, including Anisia, to create a performance using her poem.

“I thank you that we are able to make something beautiful and something great. ”

- Anisia

For more information on this work please visit [our website](#).



Photo: Valentin Dusabe and Robert Gale, BOP, Kigali workshop. Photo by Mairi Taylor

Nepal

In March 2019, BOP was invited by the British Council to Kathmandu, Nepal, to deliver workshops that explored access and inclusion within theatre to a diverse group of participants ranging from a disabled people and those with a new interest in theatre to non-disabled staff from Kathmandu theatres. The workshops focused on disability equality, BOP's use of creative access and collaborative working while developing ideas for a British Council grant which was due to open for applications at the end of the workshops.

For more information please see [our website](#).



"So the main thing that he learnt from the workshop is, before the workshop there was an unseen barrier created because it had been a social barrier and he did not know how to approach a person with a disability, how to communicate with them, how to say things and now after this workshop he feels more confident. He is more confident on how he can deal with disability."

- Workshop Participant (through Nepali - English translator)

BOP STRATEGIC

Training

BOP delivered its biggest year of Disability Equality Training and Accessibility Consultancy services to date by being hired as the official equality trainers for Edinburgh Festival Fringe, working with venue hubs at the festival to improve accessibility for audiences. Sessions were also delivered to Edinburgh International Book Festival, Dancebase, Traverse Theatre, Royal Conservatoire for Scotland, amongst others.

You can find out more about our training by [visiting our website](#).

7
organisations

265
people trained

Creative Licht

Creative Licht is a joint research project worked on by Solar Bear, National Theatre of Scotland, SignArts and Access Scottish Theatre. The purpose of the project is to deliver training to sign language interpreters that builds skills and confidence in interpreting live performance. The format of the initiative involves professionals from different sectors within the theatre industry (movement, lighting, directing) so interpreters and professionals can share knowledge and learning with each other. This format enables not just the interpreters to develop skills but also creates awareness in industry professionals in how they can work in a way that is more accessible for interpreters and Deaf audiences.

More information on the [Creative Licht website](#).



Photo: BOP welcome Anisia Byukusenge from Rwanda to National Theatre of Scotland

Access Scottish Theatre

Our partnership with the Federation of Scottish Theatre producing the Access Scottish Theatre guide continues.

More information on [Access Scottish Theatre website.](#)

2 x print runs of **3500** guides.
(Jan - Jul & Sep - Dec)

20 venues,
2 festivals,
3 national companies.

Performances listed:

AD - **248**
BSL - **265**
Captioned - **235**
Rel - **327**

449 subscribers to ebulletin.

25,087 website users,
61,985 page views.

34 distribution points across Scotland.



Photo: YACs Amy, Jack and Poppy at early planning session.

Youth Arts Consultants

The Youth Arts Consultants are a group of young disabled artists who are trained by BOP to deliver accessibility consultancy to organisations, giving the YACs paid work and an opportunity to develop skills and networks. Organisations worked with include Magnetic North, Edinburgh Performing Arts Development, Youth Theatre Ireland.

Find out more about our [Youth Arts Consultants here.](#)

£525.00
in fees paid out to YACs

£907.50
restricted income reserved for YACs



2018 marked 25 years since **Birds of Paradise** officially became registered as a Charity and Company. We recognised this landmark with two major events: a reception at the Scottish Parliament and a Revue, featuring lots of disabled performers.

Parliamentary Reception

Hosted by **Patrick Harvie** (MSP - Green Party) this was a wonderful evening of speeches, performances and canapes, that looked back on the success of the company and the impact we have had on the cultural landscape of Scotland, specifically considering how things have improved for disabled people who want to engage in live performance, either as a creative or an audience member.

Speakers included: **Fiona Hyslop MSP** (Cabinet Secretary - Culture, Tourism, External Affairs); **Mark Fisher** (Theatre Critic - The Guardian); **Amy Conachan** (incoming board member and actress, Hollyoaks).

There were also performances of songs from past BOP productions. **Audrey Tait** and **Lauren Gilmour** performed a song from The Tin Soldier, and **Kinny Gardner** performed a solo from Blanche & Butch.

You can read the speeches in full and [look at the pictures here](#)

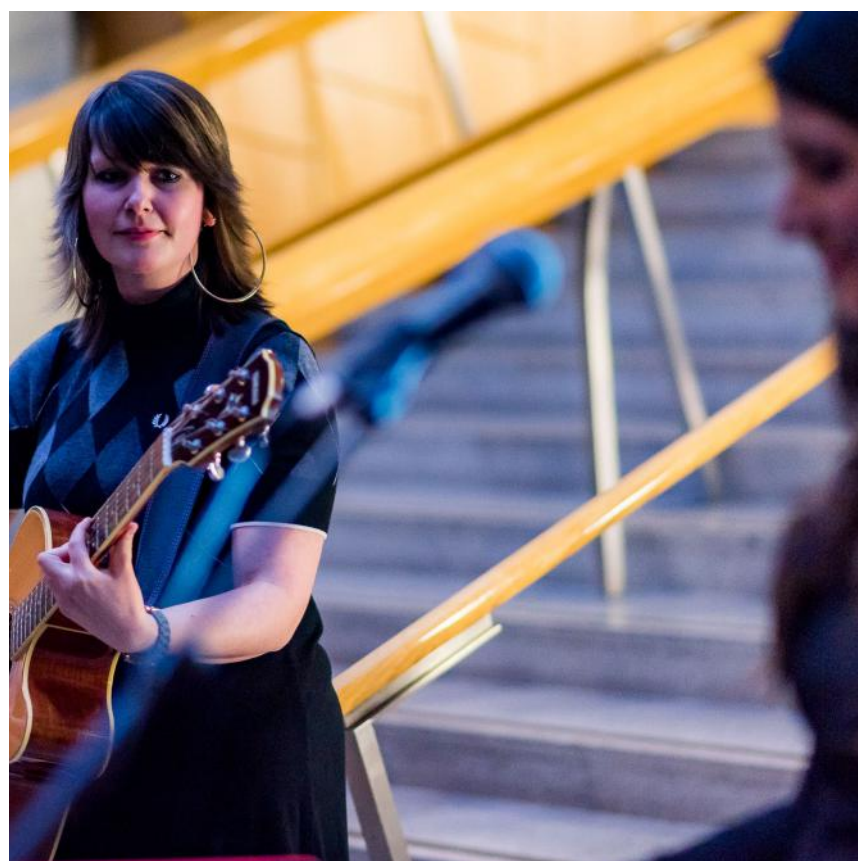
75
attendees

25
years of BOP

3
birthday cakes

5
speeches





25th Anniversary Revue

To close our celebratory year we invited some of the most talented disabled performers from the UK to join us for an evening of comedy, music, performance and an auction, in the main hall at Deaf Connections, Glasgow.

The evening was hosted by **Jess Thom** (Touretteshero) and featured performances from **Laurence Clark**, **Sally Clay**, **Harry Josephine Gilles**, **Leah Francisco**, **Dream World Theatre**, **Toni Jerrett** and **Oasissy**. The auction was hosted by Creative Electric's resident queens **Nick & Chanel**.

For a look at all the pictures from the evening you can go [here](#).

£1616.67
raised for BOP

12
disabled performers

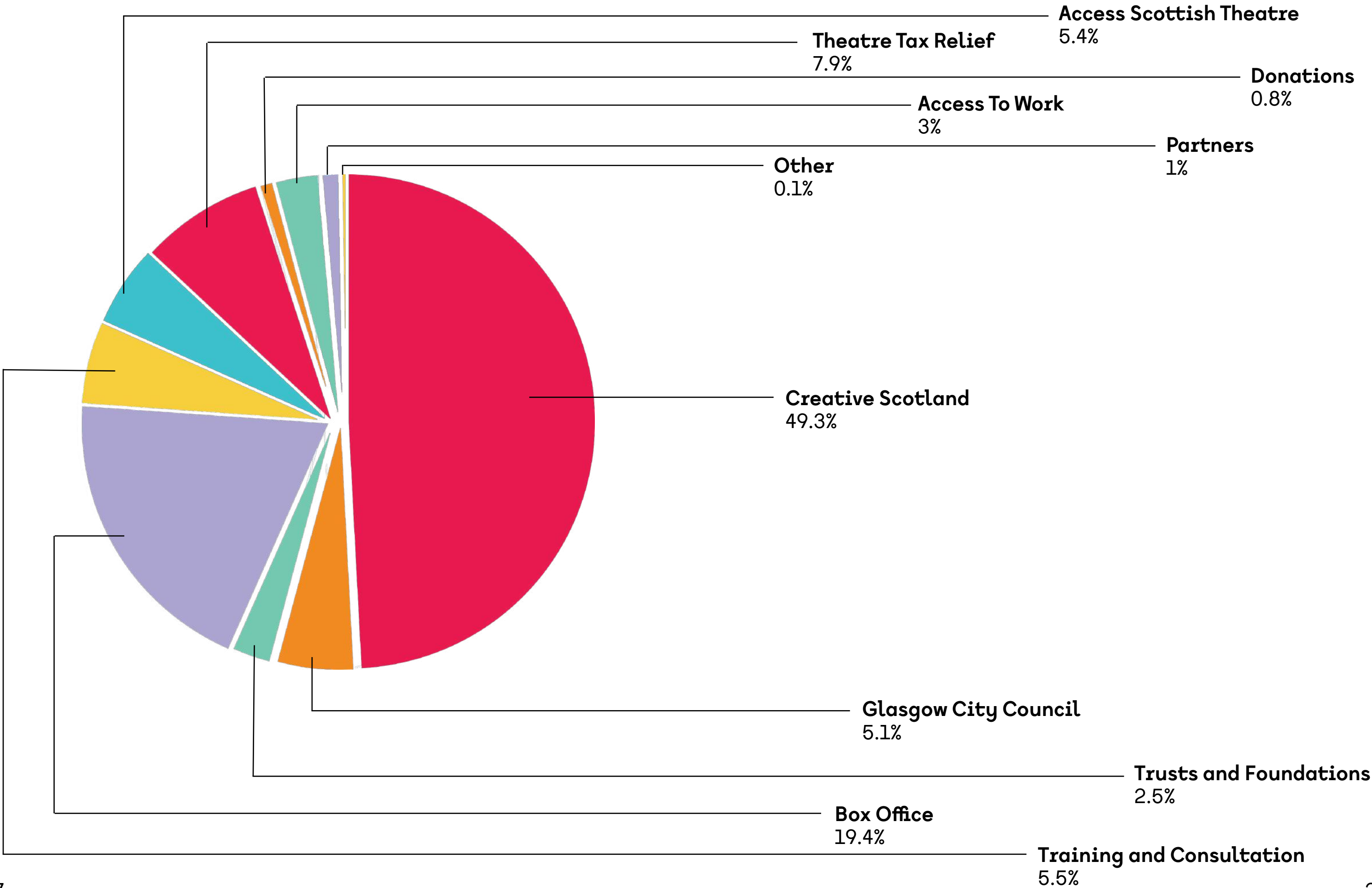
13
donated gifts auctioned off

59
audience members

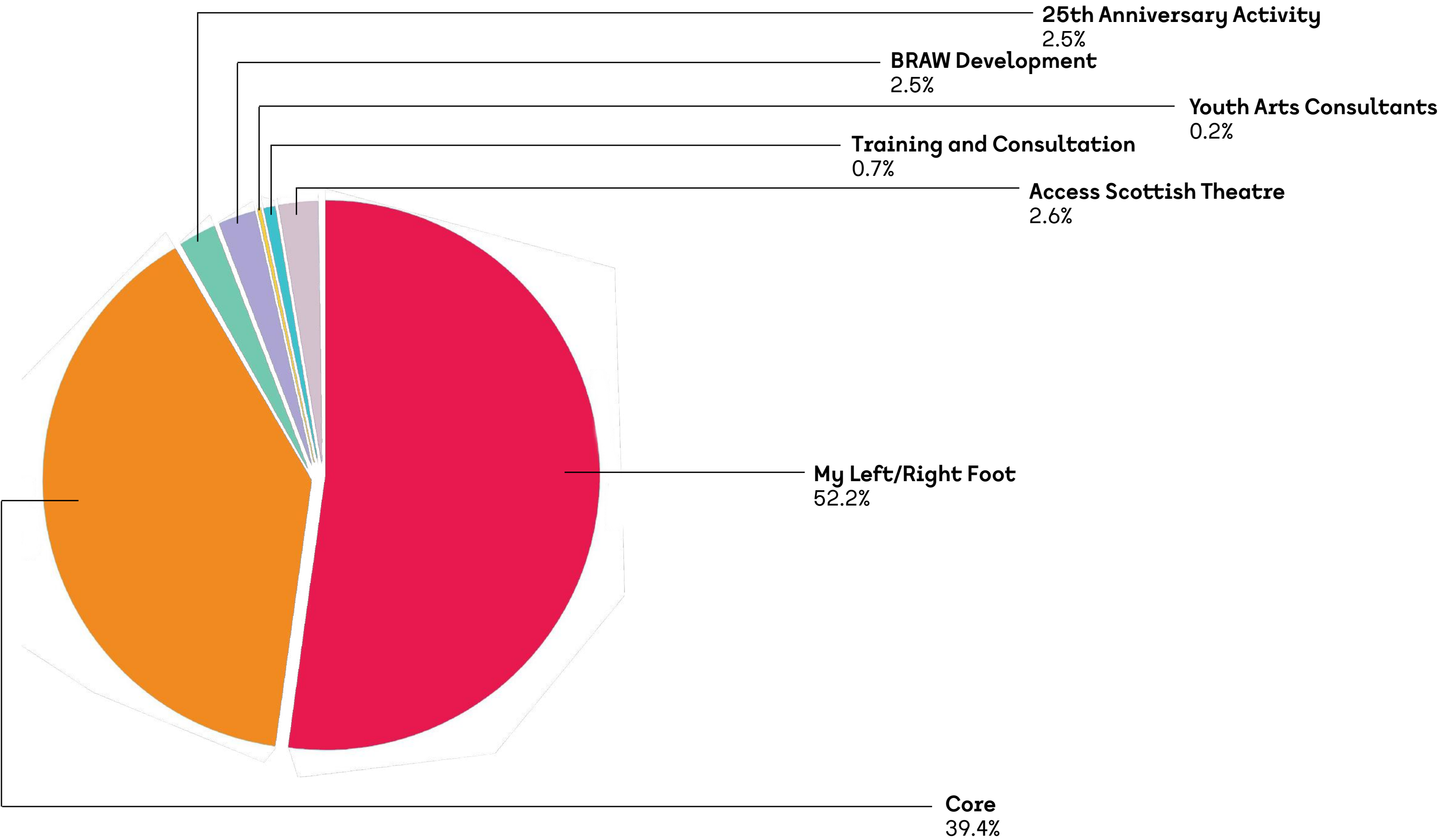




FINANCE
Income



Expenditure





Who we are

Staff 18/19

Robert Gale: CEO & Artistic Director

Mairi Taylor: Executive Producer

Michelle Rolfe: Producer

Callum Madge: Projects Officer

Board 18/19

Miles Harrison: Chair

Nazli Tabatabai Khatambaksh: Vice Chair

Simon Hodgson: Treasurer

Michael Richardson (outgoing)

Amy Conachan (incoming)

Jai Hutchison (incoming)

Supported by:



LOTTERY FUNDED



With thanks to:



Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, Old Sheriff Court, Brunswick Street, Glasgow, G1 1TF

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Registered in Scotland No: SCI43878

Designed by Becky Dann