



Annual Report 2019/2020

BIRDS OF PARADISE
THEATRE COMPANY



Organisational

This year was another busy one for the company. We began by welcoming a brand new staff member, Morna McGeoch - Development Officer, to deliver a new and exciting BOP Young Artists initiative; supported by The Robertson Trust. We produced three plays, two revivals of previously performed work and one piece of new writing - including performances at the Shizuoka Festival in Japan, Brighton Festival and Edinburgh International Festival.

We worked with fourteen disabled artists through three different development projects, one delivered in partnership with Imagine: Edinburgh International Children's Festival and another delivered in partnership with Stellar Quines Theatre Company. We continued our strategic work building on the accessibility of the wider sector, including the wrapping up of the three year performance sign language interpreter training project Creative Licht, worked on in partnership with National Theatre of Scotland, Solar Bear and Sign Arts. We concluded the year delivering training in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Our board remains a constant source of support and guidance and we were very happy to have two new members joining their ranks; Joy Parkinson (Press Manager, Scottish Ballet) and Dr Ksenija Horvat (lecturer in Drama & Performance at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh).



My Left/Right Foot - The Musical (2019) - image by Mihaela Bodlovic

2019/20 Snapshot

BOP Theatre - Produced three plays: My Left Right Foot - The Musical; “___ is where the heart is”; Purposeless Movements - touring to Scotland, England and Japan.

BOP Development - Worked with multiple young disabled artists through the BOP Young Artists, Imagine at BOP Artists and Make Do & Mend initiatives.

BOP Strategic - Delivered Disability Equality Training to 494 people across 8 organisations as well as workshops in Brazil.

At a glance

5744 audience members 3 productions

3 international festivals 30 performances

2 theatre sign language interpreters integrated

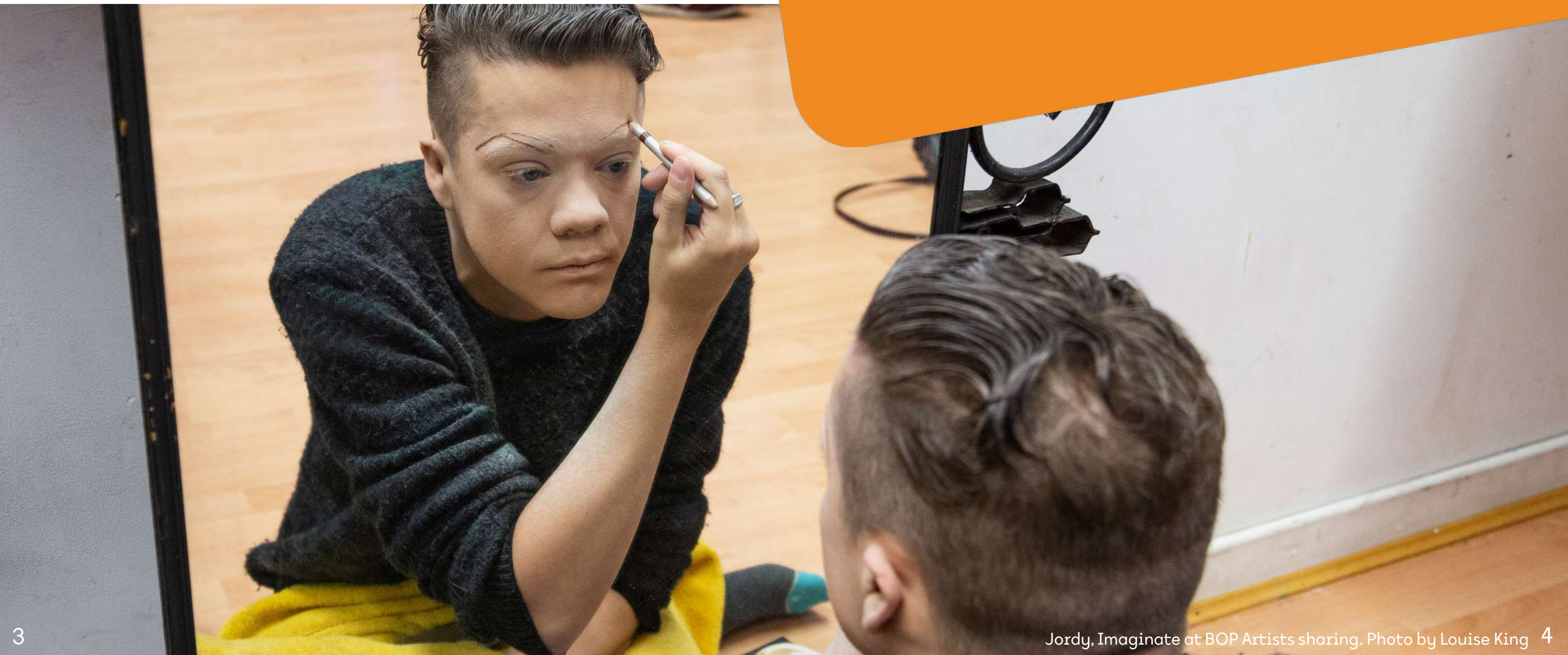
24 disabled artists worked with

494 people across 8 organisations trained

27,187 boptheatre.co.uk webpage views

5,600 copies of Access Scottish Theatre

63,079 Access Scottish Theatre webpage views



BOP THEATRE

My Left Right Foot - The Musical

A co-production from Birds of Paradise and National Theatre of Scotland.

Written and directed by **Robert Softley Gale**, music & lyrics by **Richard Thomas**, with additional songs from **Claire McKenzie** & **Scott Gilmour**.

“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!”

In May our outrageous 25th Anniversary success returned reworked for two acts and festival touring for the absolutely normal touring route of Dunfermline, Shizuoka (Japan), Brighton and Dundee! It was exciting to be appearing as part of the Shizuoka and Brighton Festivals and to share this story outside of Scotland. We were equally pleased to be able to finish this run in front of a homegrown audience in Dundee.

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

“...a riotously funny, often potty-mouthed take-down of actorly pretensions”

★★★★★ Evening Standard

- Asked questions about the concept of non-disabled actors “cripping up” as disabled characters.
- Demonstrated internationally BOP’s process of embedding Creative Access into the fabric of a production.
- Enabled us to develop BOPs largest scale production and prepare it for international travel.
- Translating the captions into Japanese and working with Deaf audiences in Japan.



My Left/Right Foot - The Musical (2019) - image by Mihaela Bodlovic



"Outrageous, provocative, funny musical loosely based on Christy Brown's life.

Explores presumptions about disability & Am Dram pretension with brilliant singing & a scene-stealing interpreter. Hilarious (with swearies) & so insightful."

- Audience Member

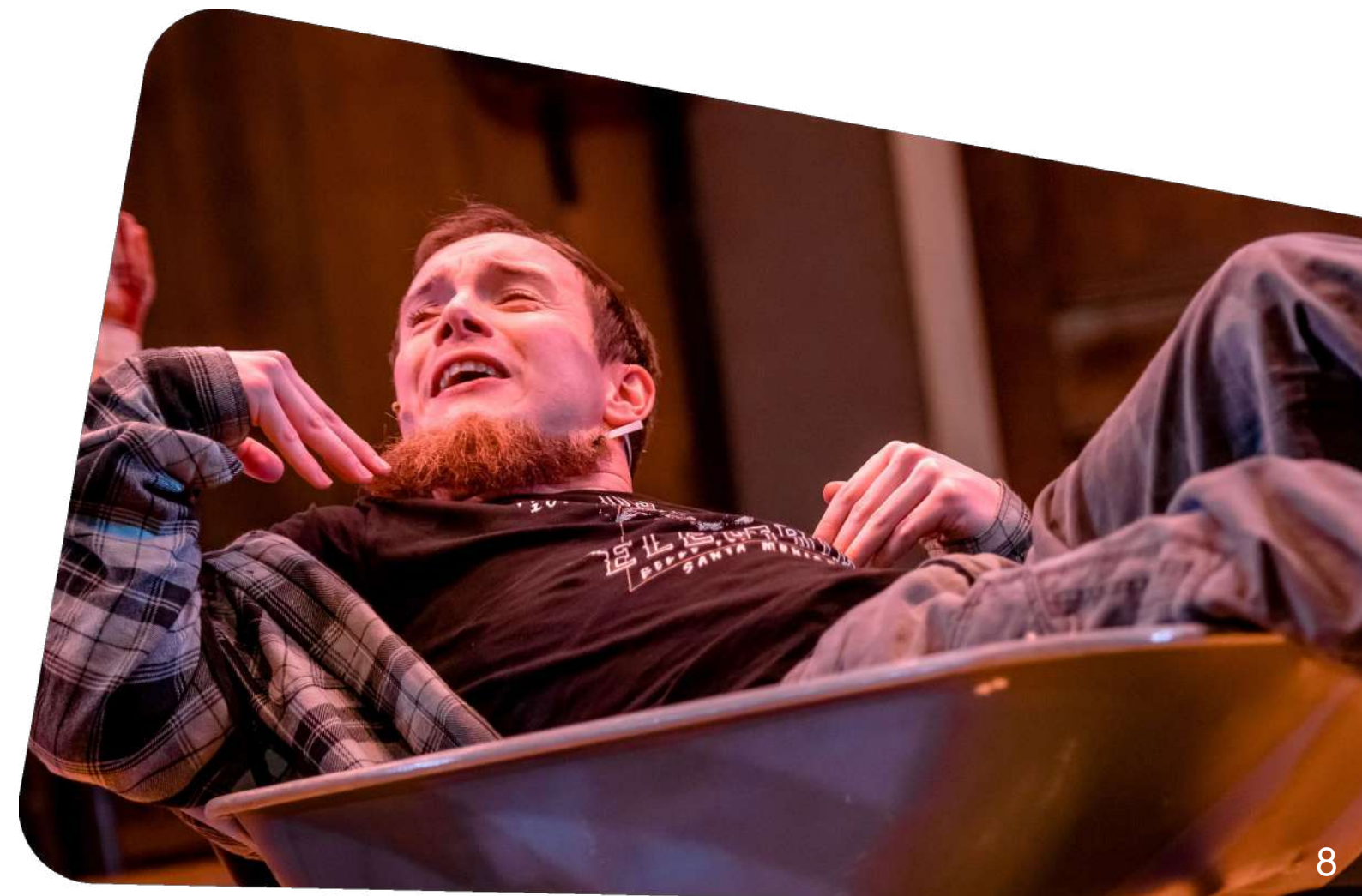
25th - 26th April at Alhambra, Dunfermline

2nd - 3rd May at Shizuoka Arts Theatre, Japan

14th - 18th May at Theatre Royal, Brighton Festival

21st - 25th May at Dundee Rep Theatre

Seen by **4,699** audience members in 2019.



Purposeless Movements

Produced by Birds of Paradise as part of Edinburgh International Festival. Part of British Council Edinburgh Showcase 2019.

Written and directed by **Robert Softley Gale**. Movement & Associate Director - **Rachel Drazek**, with an original score from **Scott Twyneholm**.

Purposeless Movements is a visually stunning dance theatre piece that riffs on the stories of four guys with cerebral palsy, how it affects their lives, their gender, their masculinity and their movement.

When they were born the doctors called it **Purposeless Movements** - for them it's just how they get around.

First performed in 2016, BOP's critically acclaimed dance/theatre performance piece exploring masculinity and cerebral palsy was remounted for a limited run at Edinburgh International Festival, garnering an array of five and four star reviews.

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

“A challenging look at Cerebral Palsy, masculinity and movement.

Laugh-out-loud funny. And what are “purposeless movements” anyway?”

- Audience Member on Twitter

“... compelling deliberations on the ways in which men with disabilities negotiate their gender identity and sexuality.”

★★★★ The Times

Nothing is without purpose -
it all comes from intention
attempts to express
A body that struggles,
again self



Purposeless Movements (2019) - image by Mihaela Bodlovic



“...the shifts in tone are perfectly placed, and as soon as we think we have a grip on the piece, Softley Gale rips the rug out from under us.”

★★★★★ - The List

Seen by a total of **928** audience members.

16 - 17 August at Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock

19 - 24 August at The Studio, Festival Theatre - part of Edinburgh International Festival

- Built on MLRF's run at the Fringe in 2018 by bringing BOP's work to wider array of national / international of producers and festival programmers - especially through the British Council Showcase.
- Challenged audiences to confront the idea of disabled people as sexual beings.
- Brought BOP to the attention of national and international programmers of venues and festivals.
- Built on MLRF's run at the Fringe in 2018 by continuing to demonstrate BOP's use of embedding Creative Access to national and international producers and programmers.



“_____ is where the heart is”

Produced by Birds of Paradise and Creative Electric, in association with Argyll Arts Collective and The Touring Network, commissioned as part of the BRAW initiative.

Written and directed by **Heather Marshall**.

I saw it on tv. Amish teenagers, when they turn 18, go on a right of passage to the city. They go for a year and try all the things they don't have at home - clubs, going to the cinema, shopping centres, trains... And if they like it they stay and if they don't then they go back to their families and are baptised into the Amish faith.

This new performance work was created from a two year process of spending time in rural communities and exploring ideas of identity and place, and their intersection. Heather's play explored how marginalised identities experience life differently in city and rural locations, opened in Glasgow before touring to Shetland, Edinburgh and Lochgoilhead.

Get more information on the website [here](#).

- Asked questions about the ways in which where you live can impact your identity.
- Development of Creative Access suitable for rural touring.
- Development of creative partnerships with Creative Electric, Argyll Arts Collective and The Touring Network.
- Development of relationships with rural venues.

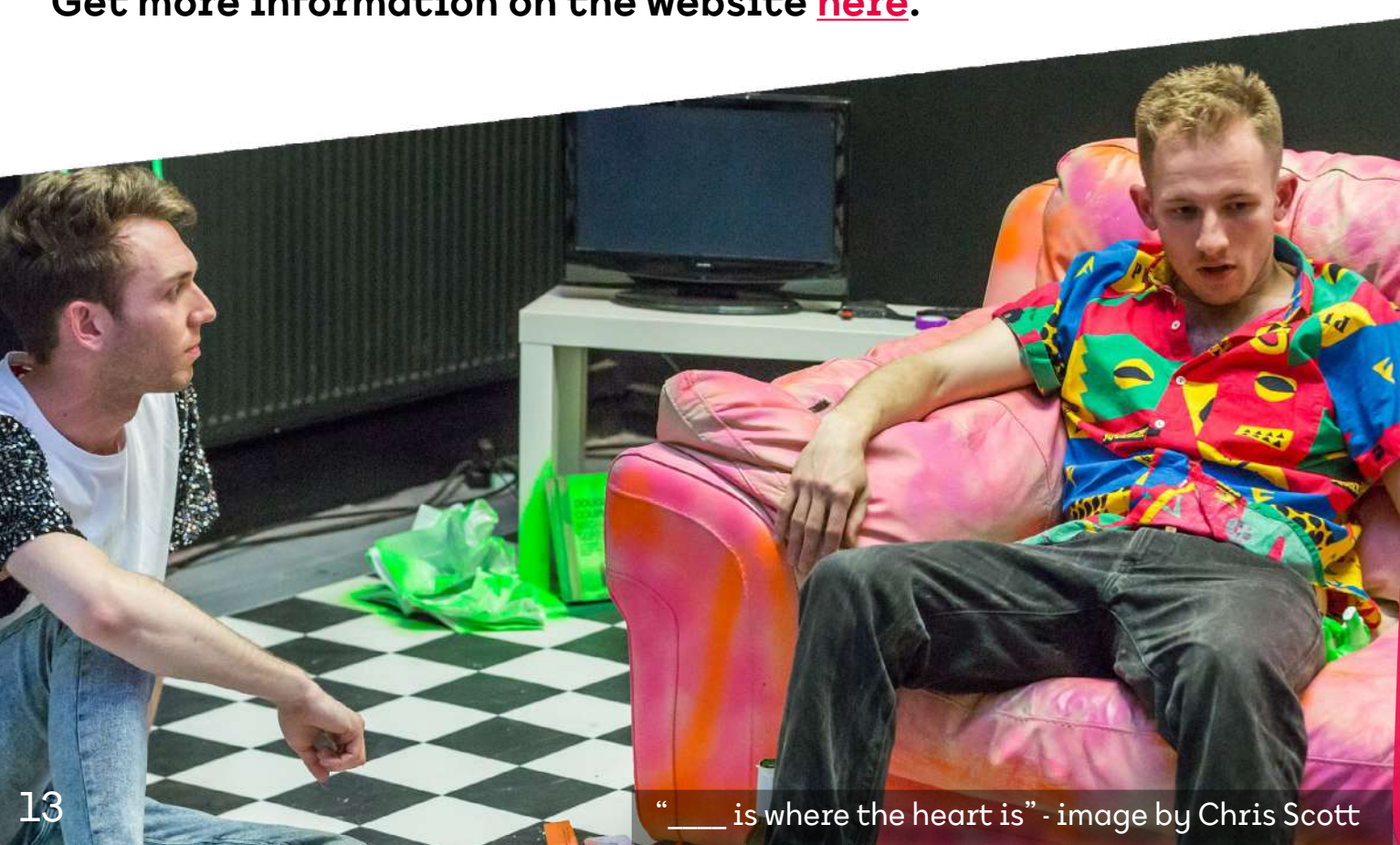
27th - 28th June at Creative Electric Hub, Glasgow

3rd July at Shetland Arts

10th July at North Edinburgh Arts

20th July at Lochgoilhead Village Hall

Seen by **117** audience members.



“As a pointer to a more progressively inclusive world where people are free to explore different identities without prejudice, Marshall's play opens up a space where the personal meets the political in non-binary times.”

★ ★ ★ - The Herald

BOP DEVELOPMENT

BOP Young Artists

In March 2019 we brought Morna McGeoch into the BOP family to oversee our newly initiated BOP Young Artists initiative. BOPYA works with disabled artists at the beginning of their careers, providing training and development opportunities bespoke to their interests. These artists would not otherwise be able to engage in career development opportunities due to barriers. This initiative not only works in physically accessible spaces but also promotes one-to-one time to support those experience barriers in group learning environments. We also support the group with subsidised trips to the theatre (including travel) as attending events is an important part of working in the industry but finances can often be a barrier that prevents your disabled people from going to the theatre.

In December 2019, the BOP Young Artists teamed up with The Bold Collective - another group of young artists from Glasgow Connected Arts Network - to present A Festive Scratch; an evening where each of the artists could test out early stage ideas in front of an audience but structured in a manner that allowed for the audience to share constructive feedback with the artists.

BOP Young Artists is supported by The Robertson Trust.

Find out more about BOP Young Artists [here](#).

Make Do & Mend

This is a regular artist development opportunity from Stellar Quines Theatre Company for women identifying artists. For this incarnation they partnered with us to run a version focussed on projects from disabled women (or groups in which over 50% of the team identify as women). All of the projects had to connect to the theme of motherhood and there were five successful artists whom each received funding and in kind support to develop their early stage idea.

Get more information on the [website here](#).



Imagine at BOP Artists

In September 2019 we worked with Imagine to support drag artist Jordy, who has Cystic Fibrosis, to begin the development of a new drag show for children exploring the inclusion (or lack of) of LGBTQI+ relationships in the primary sex education syllabus.

Jordy was given one weeks development time, including a studio space and a costume/props budget, to try out early stage ideas for his show. At the end of the week, there was a sharing event attended by staff from BOP and Imagine, and additional industry professionals including people working in children's theatre and drag performance. The sharing was followed by a Q&A where the industry professionals were able to explore Jordy's process and share their thoughts on how it could continue to develop.

BOP and Imagine are continuing to offer Jordy support in the development of this production on an ad hoc basis.

Have a look at our work with Imagine on [our website](#).

BOP STRATEGIC

BOP in Brazil

In November, we took part in the 6th International Congress on Accessibility and Education in Museums and Heritage in São Paulo. Our hosts - the Tomie Ohtake Institute - invited us to deliver a workshop to congress participants from across South America and Europe.

This work was supported by British Council.

Get more information on the website [here](#).



Group image from workshop led by Grao, Brazilian theatre company. Image courtesy of Tomie Ohtake Institute



YACs deliver a workshop for architecture students. Image courtesy of Glasgow School of Art

Youth Arts Consultants

The Youth Arts Consultants are a group of young disabled people interested in the arts and disability equality who are trained, supported and paid by BOP to deliver accessibility consultancy to organisations. Clients in 19/20 include Magnetic North, Edinburgh Performing Arts Development, Youth Theatre Ireland, The Glasgow School of Art, National Theatre of Scotland, Paragon Ensemble and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

In October, the YACs contributed to a series of workshops for first year architecture students at The Glasgow School of Art - providing consultancy on a project in which they had to design a space for someone with a non-specified impairment.

You can find out more about the [Youth Arts Consultants here](#).

Access Scottish Theatre

Our partnership with the Federation of Scottish Theatre producing the Access Scottish Theatre guide continues. This September marked AST's 10 year anniversary and we were very happy to celebrate producing a print and online publication which has grown to include a greater variety of venues, companies and accessible performance options in its ten year.

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

2 x print runs of **2800** guides.
(Jan - Jul & Sep - Dec)

20 venues,
2 festivals,
3 national companies.

Performances listed:
AD - **181**
BSL - **247**
Captioned - **296**
Rel - **354**

451 subscribers to ebulletin.

26,691 website users,
63,079 page views.

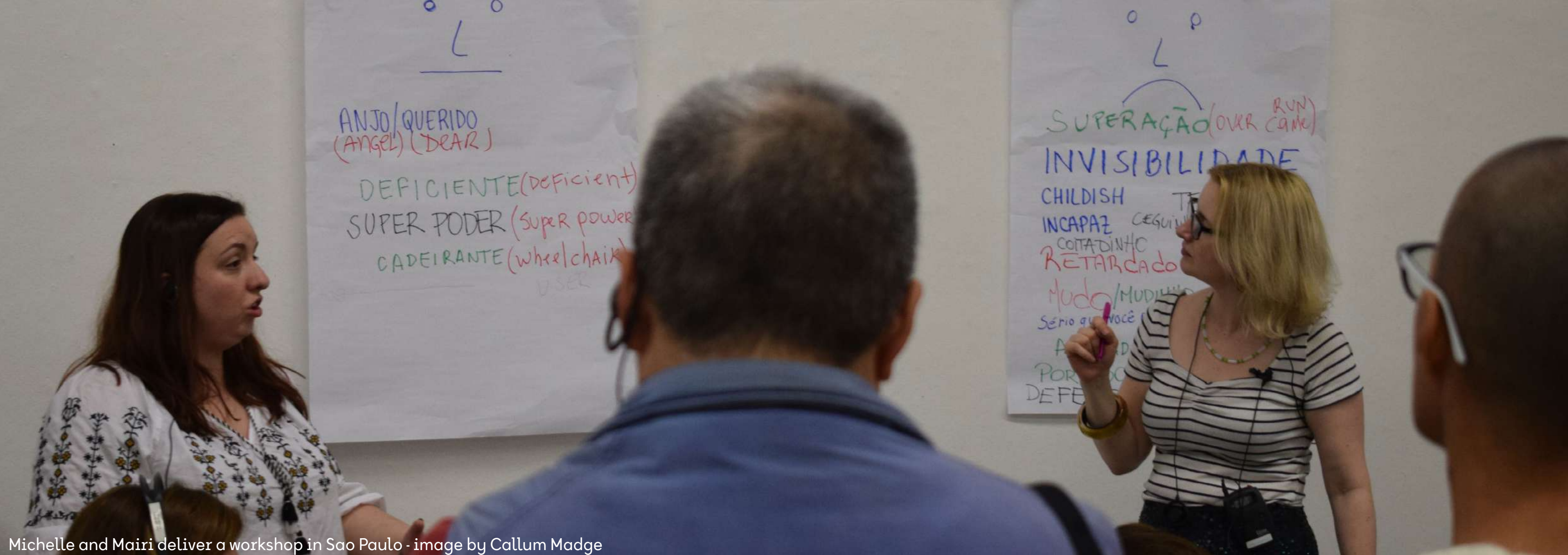
Access Scottish Theatre

Listings and access guide
160 performances across 17 venues
- BSL, Captioning, Audio Description & Relaxed
SEP - DEC 2019

Edinburgh
Glasgow
Stirling
Dundee
Perth
Pitlochry
Inverness
St Andrews
Musselburgh



Front cover of the Access Scottish Theatre printed guide Sep - Dec 2019



Michelle and Mairi deliver a workshop in Sao Paulo - image by Callum Madge

Training and Consultation

BOP continues its track record of delivering Disability Equality Training sessions for organisations across Scotland, the UK and beyond - including continuing its role as the Disability Equality Trainers for Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This year we have worked with: V&A Dundee; Venice + Scotland; Edinburgh International Book Festival; Summerhall; Dance Base; Big Lottery Community Fund; Magnetic North; Edinburgh University Drama Society.

In total we trained **494** people across **8** different organisations, plus an additional 20+ people from various organisations who attended our workshop in Sao Paulo.

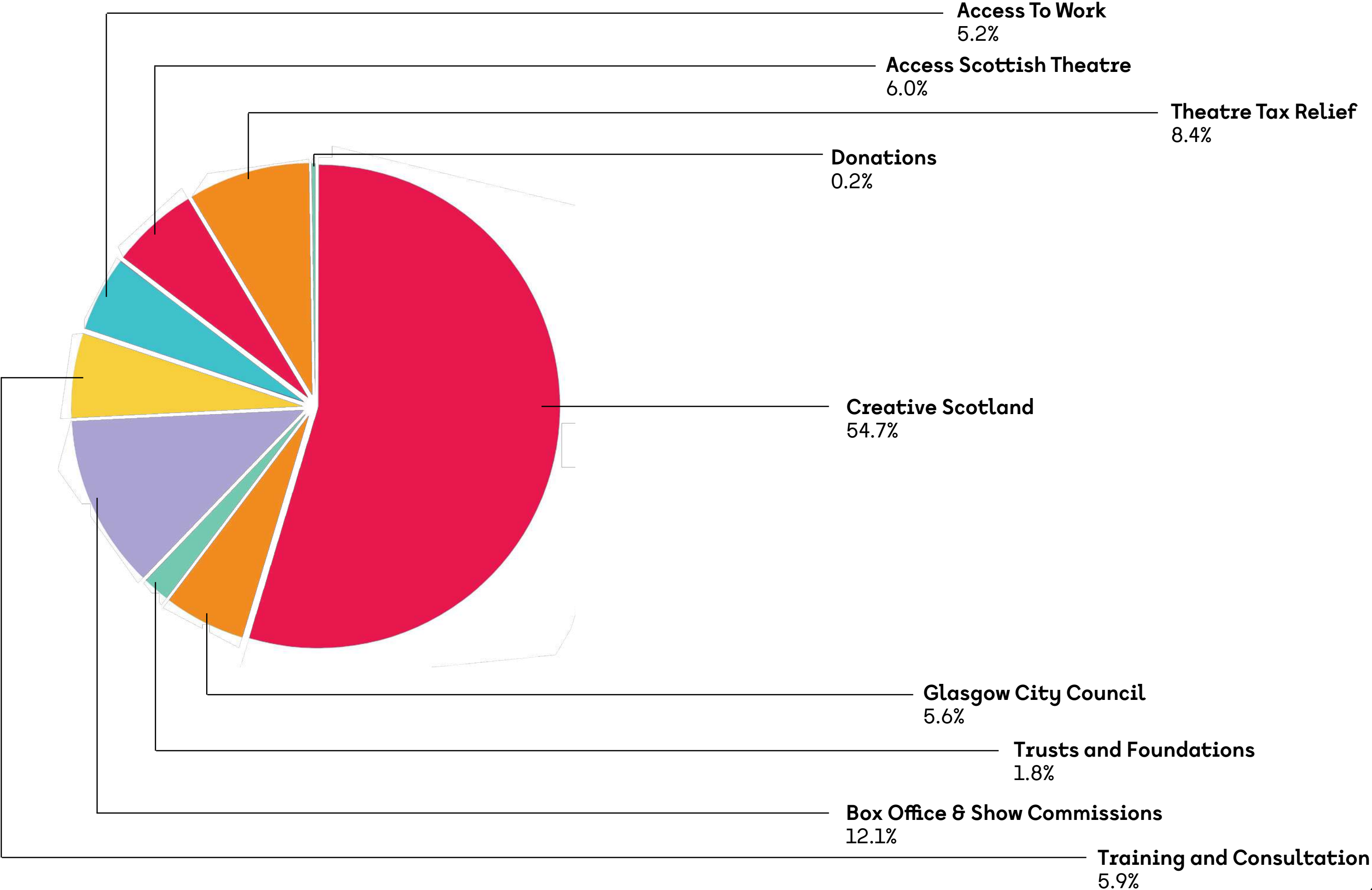
Creative Licht

In November BOP launched the Creative Licht website, the culmination of a two year project bringing together BSL/English Inter- preters working in Scotland with others in the creative industries to develop new approaches to interpreted performances and to spread knowledge of the possibilities that exist. For more information check out the Creative Licht website.

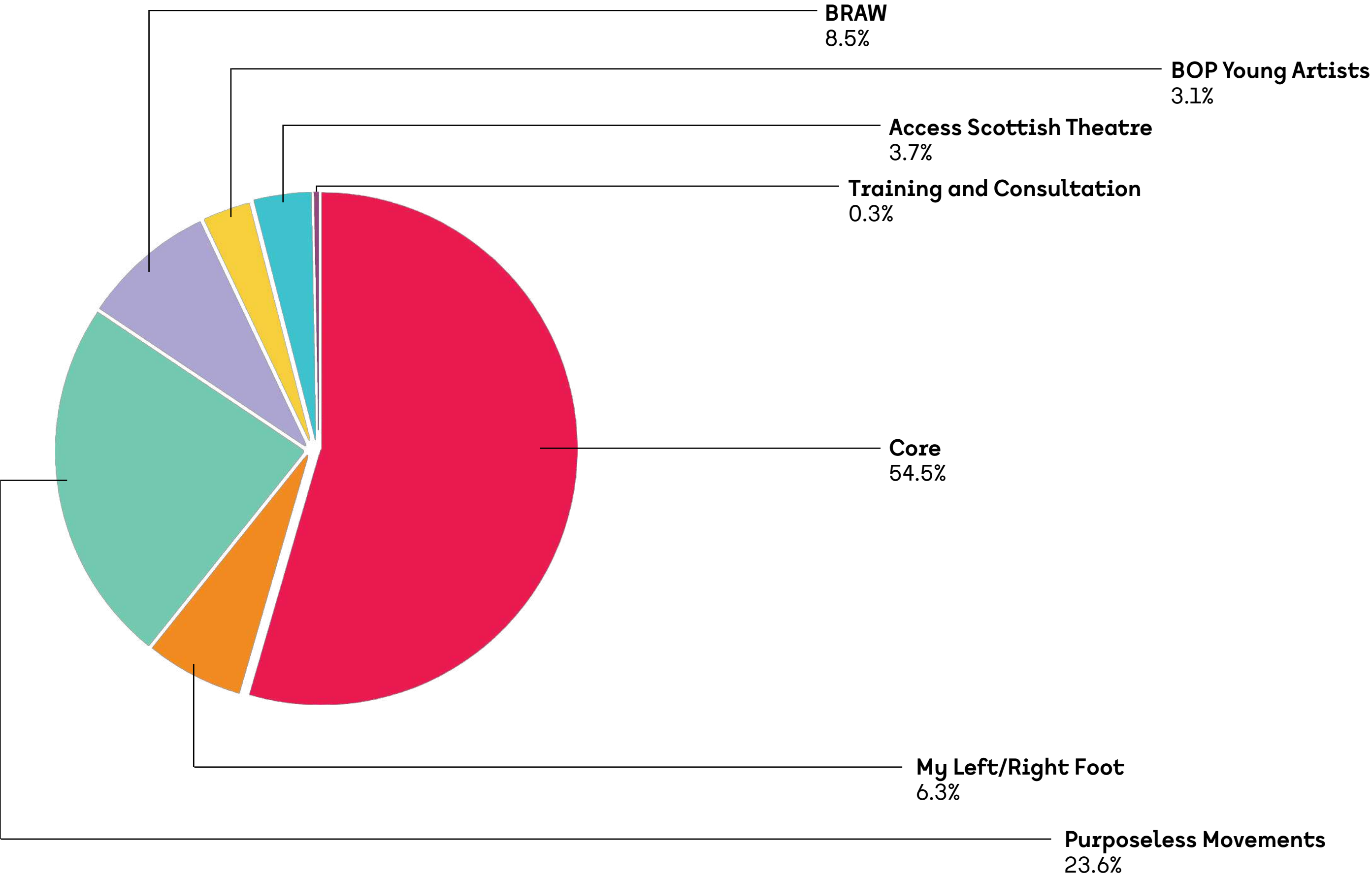
A joint initiative with Solar Bear, National Theatre of Scotland, and SignArts, funded by Creative Scotland.

Get more information the [website](#).

FINANCE
Income



Expenditure



Who we are

Staff 19/20

Robert Gale: CEO & Artistic Director

Mairi Taylor: Executive Producer

Michelle Rolfe: Producer

Callum Madge: Engagement Manager

Morna McGeoch: Development Officer

Board 19/20

Miles Harrison: Chair

Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambaksh: Vice Chair

Simon Hodgson: Treasurer

Amy Conachan

Jai Hutchison

Joy Parkinson (incoming)

Dr Ksenija Horvat (incoming)

Jack Hunter (Youth Member)



Robert at the Cerebral Palsy Scotland Conference. Image by Cerebral Palsy Scotland

Supported by:



LOTTERY FUNDED



With thanks to:

Imagine

EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL

Stellar
Quines
THEATRE COMPANY

Sign
Arts



Access Scottish Theatre



federation of
scottish theatre



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Registered in Scotland No: SCI43878

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