



barbican

Patrons

**A year of
your support**

**April 2023 –
March 2024**

Letter from Natasha Harris, Director of Development



Vestiaire Collective
Supporters Dinner, 2023.
Image by Rowben Lanton.

Dear Patrons,

We are delighted to share our 2023-2024 Annual Patrons Impact Report.

Thanks to you, we've been able to enrich our international artistic programme with a wide range of creative learning opportunities that bring young people and local communities into the heart of what we do. I hope this report brings to life some of what we've been able to achieve and the profound impact that your support has made.

Art uplifts, emboldens, and inspires our audiences in ways that only creative expression can. Our programming reflects this through a wide range of voices, perspectives, and stories. Among last year's highlights, we presented the Broadway hit musical, *A Strange Loop*; commissioned an exquisite sculptural installation for the Conservatory by artist, Ranjani Shettar; relished the extraordinary, 500th anniversary of the Bayerisches Staatsorchester; and experienced the joy of the Notting Hill Carnival with a night of music curated by Rampage and performed with the Jules Buckley Orchestra.

This is just a fraction of the myriad artists and artistic companies we championed across the year and I'm sure you will have your own highlights and memories. In addition to the 4,000 different events we hosted, our reach extended well beyond the Barbican's walls with our Immersive exhibition, *Our Time on Earth* touring to both the Musée de la civilisation in Québec City and the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts.

Our core mission is to champion established and emerging artists, ensuring the arts are accessible to new generations of artists and audiences. Last year was no exception as we welcomed thousands of young people and community members to participate in creative learning and outreach activities, as well as continuing our established artist development programmes such as Barbican Young Poets and the Young Film Curators group.

Looking ahead, we're excited to continue to expand our programme and create even greater impact. We remain grateful to the City of London Corporation whose support provides a bedrock upon which our success can flourish.

Thank you for being such a vital part of the Barbican's story – your belief in the work that we do is vital to its success and we feel very fortunate to have you on board.

Natasha Harris
Director of Development

Your support nurtured the next generation of creatives



41 young creatives received long-term talent development support



65,321 subsidised tickets for schools, students, families, and young people

223 events for under 5-year-olds reached **23,541** babies and parents/carers



76,724 Young Barbican members, growing by **6%**



Case Study: Young Creatives

Our Barbican Young Creatives programmes provide talent development for young people aged 14 to 29. Our three programmes last year included Young Poets, Young Film Programmers, and Young Changemakers. These free mentoring programmes target young artists who feel that a career in the arts would otherwise be beyond their reach.

This year, we worked with a total of 21 young people intensively. Each of these 8 to 12-month long programmes have included weekly or bi-weekly group sessions facilitated by teaching artists, providing a unique environment for collaboration, artistic development and peer community.

In 2023, Barbican Young Poets was recommended to the poet, feminist and community organiser Nathalia Gonzales. *"I'd been participating in a mentorship programme for Latinx British writers, and my mentor told me about it. But Barbican Young Poets is one of the most well-known in the poetry world, so I'm sure I would've applied sooner or later."* She decided to join on the lookout for a community with which she would share her work. "A big part of it was also how many amazing writers I knew had done the programme.

Whenever I went to any poetry events, it seemed the writers I liked the most had all done Young Poets!"

Nathalia recalls being nervous about the selection process: *"I remember in the 'trial' session, I thought: everyone here has such intelligent, unique things to add to the conversation! When I was selected in the end, I was thrilled, and was soon reassured by how humble and caring people were."* The programme exceeded her expectations. *"It went beyond anything I could have really asked for. The sessions really got me*

to interrogate the choices I made as the writer, and constantly challenged me to approach writing from different angles."

She was most surprised by how Barbican Young Poets creates a sense of community:

"You're not just part of a cohort but you become connected to everyone that came before you, and that will join after."

It opens up the poetry world in London more widely, so that, now, when I enter poetry spaces, I feel more comfortable knowing that I will most likely be encountering my extended BYP family."

The programme is facilitated by author Jacob Sam-La Rose who delivers workshops and serves as a mentor to young poets. Nathalia was impressed by his nurturing approach: *"Jacob is someone who really sees you. I loved his generative writing exercises, where we were asked to reflect on our day through different prompts. It made me realise how many things had gone unnoticed. I think doing that regularly made me a lot better at observing."*

Another BYP alumni, interdisciplinary artist and writer Nomakhwezi Becker agrees with Nathalia: *"Jacob is truly a devoted mentor and an ally all at once. He has gone over and above for each one of us, pushing us to be our best selves whilst fully recognising our humanity and reminding us that our best selves are not the same person every day and that is*



invaluable. I always felt like I could do and try more but never was made to feel like I had not done enough."

Nomakhwezi herself joined Barbican Young Poets after leaving her MA course at Goldsmiths, at the time when she needed to find her ground among new people in a new city and country. *"I am much more committed to poetry after the programme,"* she added. *"Finding a space of like-minded people made me realise that I am unequivocally a poet, and that this is something that will continue to nourish me for the rest of my life."*

The Barbican Young Film Programmers had a similar grounding effect on its participants. Latina, a second-year undergraduate student of sociology – and self-described cinephile – graduated from the Barbican Young Film Programmers and co-curated the Chronic Youth Film Festival. *"I enjoy watching films more than film production. I have been to some film festivals, and I think organising one is a meaningful event. Selecting films that you enjoy, you think represent a group of people or a type of life or the generation, and letting more people feel the same resonance is amazing,"* she says when asked about the reason for joining the programme.

She recounts her expectations before joining: *"I don't have any experience in film*

festival programming or distribution, so I wanted to gain practical knowledge such as outreaching, contacting filmmakers or companies and events planning such as Q&As."

At the end of the programme her group has prepared a final project, the Chronic Youth Film Festival, which will be a permanent part of their portfolios. *"The whole festival from film selection to outreaching to the actual festival are all planned and executed by us. [...]"*

"I learned a lot from this programme, and Isra [Al Kassi, course leader] was amazing for giving us an actual view to how the industry is like and how the system works, along with a lot of practical advice from other professionals."

I did gain lots of new connections with people from the industry and met a lot of passionate cinephiles just like me." – says Latina.

↑ Nathalia Samhil
Gonzalez Gutierrez.
Photography by Ray Roberts.

Your support brought communities together to forge better futures



2,000 pupils
from **36** schools
engaged across
our free learning
activities



103 Community
focused events and
programmes



761 public
programme events,
reaching **71,336**
people

1,300+ artists
and companies
platformed from
more than **100**
countries



Case Study: Headway East Curve Takeover

For five years, we have been lucky to partner with Headway East London (HEL), a brain injury charity that promotes understanding of all aspects of brain injury and provides information, support and services to survivors, their families and carers. In this partnership, we've trialed a new model which aims to exchange learning and experiences between both organisations. The collaboration has been hugely successful. Since 2019, we have been involved in more than 30 activities across multiple art forms jointly– from poetry writing and dance, to theatre performances and exhibitions.

One crowning moment of the partnership was the critically-acclaimed exhibition *differently various* in the Barbican's free Curve gallery. Over ten days in the summer of 2023, the exhibition attracted a whopping 5,500 visitors and showcased a dynamic selection of works by 71 artists living with brain injuries. We believe that *differently various* was the largest institutional exhibition by artists with brain injury in the UK to date.

Leading up to the showcase, eleven Headway East members developed their skills and confidence as members of the Steering Group, helping to shape the exhibition and accompanying public programme. "I think that at the beginning, to some extent, the Barbican wanted to get more diverse people involved in the Barbican as a whole. It was like the Barbican thinking 'We know what art is. How can we get people involved in what we think art is?' Through the process though, through the collaboration, we've challenged this... so it's been not just us learning from them, it's the Barbican learning from us too," reflected one of the steering group members.

The group made key decisions, from the name of the show to building the brief for architects and graphic designers. Barbican Community Partnerships Manager Jess Hodge who co-led the project with the steering group explained the importance of this approach:

"We intentionally made the hierarchy as flat as possible. The steering group led the majority of the project. It's been a very democratic decision-making process with the steering group at the centre."

She sagely added, "My role was to help everyone work toward the same mission and balance the partnership between two completely different organisations, this huge institution and this tiny local charity. I don't have a brain injury, so I shouldn't be making decisions about what a brain injury charity's exhibition should look like. That's kind of how I saw it."

During the exhibition, Barbican presented 124 artworks made by 71 artists living with brain injuries. The project nearly doubled our original artist engagement targets and helped to sell 15 artworks, directly supporting HEL's fundraising efforts. To accompany the exhibition, we delivered a programme of 20 public events, with over 750 people attending workshops, dance sessions, guided tours and performances.

For Alex, the Projects and Events Officer at Headway East the impact of the show was

unmatched: "It raised our profile and helped us to connect to a new audience. We've also gained quite a few volunteers from among the visitors who saw and loved the show. Because I have been personally affected by brain injury, I kept thinking that there might be someone who saw the exhibition and who hasn't yet been affected by brain injury but might be one day. If I had seen an exhibition like this ten years ago, it would certainly have changed my experience, in terms of my awareness and understanding of brain injury."

differently various met with incredible response from audiences and press:

"Simply through the privilege of existing in a mainstream space with a ramp, this exhibition feels like a small step forward on a long road towards equity for disabled artists and fans"

wrote Guardian journalist Cathy Reay in her 5-star review.

"I have suffered with my own disability in life. I remember my own years in a wheelchair and how hard it was to get back to a happy place.

"This exhibition brought me so much joy. Seeing and hearing other people's journeys and being reminded just how important community, love and support really is,"

shared an audience member after visiting the exhibition.

Learnings from the exhibition and the Steering Group's recommendations were used to produce a new set of Access Recommendations for the Barbican, informing day-to-day practices and strategy and making accessibility a higher priority across the Centre.

Over the next few years, Headway East London will be touring elements of the



Headway East London's exhibition *differently various* in The Curve. Photography by Leon Foggitt.

exhibition to different venues around all the London boroughs they serve. The Steering Group will continue to act as expert advisors for this tour. The first confirmed venue for the tour is the University College London Hospital's Street Gallery.

"This is the biggest project I've ever produced and led on. It was co-produced in the most depth as well, which I'm very proud of, and I don't think it would have been anywhere near as exciting or special without that process. I'm really proud of what we achieved. We did something really special and different that exceeded our own expectations. We showed how The Curve could be used in a different, community-focused way that was artistically vibrant. I don't think I've ever seen a gallery as full of life," summarised the exhibition project manager leading work on behalf of HEL.

Supported by the Peter Sowerby Foundation, the Rix-Thompson-Rothenberg Foundation, National Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England.

Your support connected people through a vibrant multi-arts programme



1,108,219 ticket
bookers – **26%**
increase



28% first-time
bookers



8 art and design
exhibitions,
including **4**
site-specific
commissions

24 productions
and **367** theatre
& dance
performances



288 music
performances

3189 screenings
of **549** films



5 Barbican
Immersive
exhibitions travelled
to **4** countries

Case Study:

Why Not Theatre: Mahabharata



Mahabharata, 2023.
Image by David Cooper.

In October 2023, we presented an ambitious new production with a groundbreaking theatre company Why Not Theatre. Co-commissioned and co-produced by the Barbican, the production of the same name was based on the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata.

This production nearly doubled our anticipated audience numbers, selling out to more than 8,400 ticket bookers – nearly half of whom were first-time audience members. Several performances filled so quickly that our Box Office decided to release additional seats to allow more people to experience the magic of the show.

Mahabharata featured an international cast of 14 performers and a live band of 6. The production consisted of two distinctive theatrical presentations, *Karma* and *Dharma*. Although designed to work together, the two parts could be seen on different nights, or the audience could choose to just see one part.

The schedule also included 'marathon days' with both parts performed and a community meal taking place in our Pit Theatre between the shows. This immersive storytelling experience invited audiences to share a traditional Indian meal while learning more about Mahabharata's stories and how they are told and retold around dinner tables across the world.

The Barbican was especially happy to work with *Why Not Theatre* again as the company platforms artists from marginalised communities often overlooked in traditional performing arts settings. We first worked with *Why Not* during a one-week residency in our studio theatre in 2019 as part of our TheatreLab programme which

supports mid-career artists to experiment with new ideas. During TheatreLab, the company developed the idea for their play *CODE* which takes inspiration from the biblical Tower of Babel addressing the moral questions around artificial intelligence.

Our Head of Theatre and Dance Toni Racklin said:

"We programme international work for our Theatres that reflects diverse perspectives, ushers in bold ideas, and excites audiences from different generations and backgrounds."

"The South-Asian-led company Why Not Theatre caught our attention several years ago, with their collaborative and ambitious spirit. In 2019 we invited this Canada-based company for a residency, to develop a new piece of work in The Pit. After that first collaboration, we kept working together to find a way to bring their larger-scale project, Mahabharata, to our main stage. As the Barbican's Head of Theatre & Dance, I am immensely proud to have been able to share this company's talent for visionary and

compelling storytelling more widely, platforming unique voices that have often been overlooked."

We felt strongly that the technically complex production should not have to compromise on *Why Not's* artistic vision, and the project also supported the professional development of our own staff. Large-scale projects that take place in different spaces and require such a quick turnaround are rare, so every opportunity to work this way is hugely valuable.

Mahabharata was one of our most successful theatre productions of 2023. Our press reports show that the project received glowing reviews and significant visibility across traditional and new media. We were particularly pleased to have seen an exceptionally high level of first-time ticket bookers (42%). We were thrilled with some of the audience comments:

"This was incredible. Unforgettable storytelling from the heart to the heart"

"These shows were both beyond belief and far above the power of theatre. Outstanding!"

"Phenomenal"

"Loved it and was blown away & crying last night. Come back soon!"

"I could say brilliant, powerful, and magnificent. Yet those words don't do it justice. My family and I thank you for bringing such an epic tale to life."

Building on the success of *Mahabharata*, we're always considering our approach to programming to better reflect the needs of our audiences, engage and excite them and platform new voices.

The legacy of the project lives on. After the sold-out Barbican run, the company announced that this production will be presented in Toronto in April and the Ottawa in May 2025. Our Theatre team is also in talks to bring *Why Not* back to our stage to present their new production in 2026. Toni said:

"As part of our new Audience Strategy, the Barbican will focus more on placing the stories and experiences of our communities centre stage. Presenting a new interpretation of a complex text, which is of enormous cultural importance, full of philosophical ideas and cherished by so many, was a huge responsibility. The team behind this tremendous undertaking excelled in honouring the text, while making it accessible for new audiences as well as creating a joyous experience to watch over a full day." Our Head of Theatre and Dance added:

"We recognise a real appetite for ambitious, epic, international work like Mahabharata, but at this time of decreasing public funding we know we can only deliver amazing international projects with the support of those who truly understand the importance of the work we do."

The Barbican presentation was generously supported by the Bagri Foundation, with additional support from the High Commission of Canada in The United Kingdom.

Your support makes tangible differences in the lives of many

£1,500

subsidies 100 tickets to our Art Gallery for young people and community group members.



£3,000

covers the cost of a screening and a talk with a European filmmaker during one of our curated seasons.



£4,500

enables a rising musical talent to perform in one of our venues.



£6,000

covers the travel and transport costs of a UK-based theatre company performing on our main stage.



£8,500

covers the cost for 8 young people to take part in our Young Creatives programmes.



£10,000

helps us run 8 Conservatory Mondays with play and learning activities for c. 3000 students, teachers and local community members.



Image credits from left to right: 1. KNMA Conservatory Day, 2023. Image by Anthony Comber-Badu. 2. Barbican Cinema Campaign 2024. Image by Rachel Shnapp. 3. Sofia Grant during Free Stage at EFG London Jazz Festival 2023, Barbican Foyer. Image by Tricia Yourkevic. 4. Julene Robinson in The Night Woman. The Pit, Barbican, 2023. Image credit Chadley Larnelle. 5. Barbican Young Poets Showcase 2024. Image by Aiden Harmitt-Williams. 6. School Workshop in the Conservatory, 2023. Image by Williamz Omope.

Patron events programme highlights

17 May 2023:

Lord Mayor's Breakfast **DC**

21 June 2023:

Carrie Mae Weems Supporters' Hour + Exhibition Opening

29 June 2023:

Met Opera Reception

8 September 2023:

Ranjani Shettar Conservatory Commission Opening

13 September 2023:

Julianknxx Private View

19 September 2023:

Bavarian State Orchestra Reception for the Launch of our Classical Season

13 September 2023:

Mary Said What She Said

4 October 2023:

RE/SISTERS Supporters' Hour + Exhibition Opening

16 October 2023:

Vestiaire Collective Panel Discussion and RE/SISTERS Private View **DC**

25 October 2023:

An Evening with Beatrice Rana

25 November 2023:

Patrons Family Day: My Neighbour Totoro

30 November 2023:

My Neighbour Totoro Press Night **DC**

24 January 2024:

Maestro ScreenTalk with Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan **DC**

2 February 2024:

Dido and Aeneas Backstage Toast with Joyce DiDonato

7 February 2024:

Barbican Annual Dinner **DC**

12 February 2024:

Unravel Supporters' Hour + Exhibition Opening

Key

DC Directors Circle Events



Top: Ranjani Shettar: Cloud songs on the horizon opening dinner, 2023. Image by Hannah Burton. Middle: Vestiaire Collective Supporters Dinner, 2023. Image by Rowben Lantion. Bottom: Vestiaire Collective Supporters Dinner, 2023. Image by Rowben Lantion.

In your own words

'Being a small part of helping the Barbican bring extraordinary experiences to audiences new and old is hugely rewarding — and the team work really hard to bring Patrons in and give us a unique perspective on their work'

Oliver Pauley

'I wanted to thank you so much for the backstage reception. This is what classical music is all about, and I can't wait for the next event. I'm so happy that my contribution helps with your outreach programmes and giving a platform for new artists to shine'

Marina Gratsos

'We were happy to give some modest support to the Young Poets. This is the kind of activity that the Barbican has been so keen and so right to encourage. It was a pleasure to witness the pleasure it gave to so many young people and the positive reactions of the young creatives themselves, so brimming with ideas and evidently benefitting from the encouragement of the people who were guiding them so expertly.'

Helen Likierman and Julian Hale

Background Image: Ranjani Shettar: Cloud songs on the horizon - supporter's dinner, 2023.
Image by Hannah Burton.



Backstage Music Tours, Barbican Hall 2023. Image by Mark Senior.

Thank you

From all of us at the Barbican, thank you for your generosity. We have

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Robert Willicombe
Sarah Wood
Irem Yerdelen
Sonya Zuckerman

and to all those who wish to remain anonymous

Our Patron Community as of December 2024

