

THE GAIETY

AYR GAIETY PARTNERSHIP REVIEW



2022 - 2023

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CHAIR'S REPORT

Emerging from the pandemic, our accomplishments in 2022 and 2023 highlight the resilience and dedication of our staff, volunteers, partners, and community.

Together, we navigated a post-pandemic world, reaffirming our mission to enhance well-being through the performing arts. In the two years since reopening the main theatre, we re-established our main stage programme, expanded our rural touring to more venues, and relaunched a diverse studio programme. Collaborations with artists and other theatres enriched our cultural offerings. And our engagement with excluded communities highlighted the transformative power of the arts. The growth of our youth theatre activity was so strong we have had to find new premises. While continuing to face financial challenges, the role of the organisation as integral to the fabric of Ayr and Ayrshire is clear.

Our 2024-2028 plan is ambitious. We will enhance our artistic offerings, delivering the mixed programme for all tastes we are known for, while increasing elements including drama and original music. Our new Creative Engagement base will deepen connections between

artists and communities and lead to a significant expansion of opportunities to participate in the performing arts. We aim to provide 200,000 experiences for audiences and participants annually by 2028, with a particular focus on engaging people who are often excluded. At the same time we will increase our focus on playing our part in responding to the climate crisis and on playing a role as part of Ayr Town Centre.

We are poised to continue making a significant impact. Our vision is clear, and our commitment to excellence and inclusivity is unwavering. I want to thank our staff, volunteers, partners, funders, audiences, participants and communities for the hard work that makes all this possible. Together, we will build on our successes and ensure the Gaiety remains a cultural beacon for years to come.

**Prof. Ian Welsh OBE |
Chairperson, Ayr Gaiety
Partnership**

REVIEW OF AGP ACHIEVEMENTS

2022 - 2024

We have made significant progress since the pandemic, enhancing our offerings and expanding our impact in the community. This review highlights six key achievements that demonstrate the organisation's resilience, innovation, and commitment to fostering individual and community wellbeing through the performing arts.

**AN EVEN BETTER MAIN STAGE PROGRAMME -
AND RECORD AUDIENCES**

**RENEWED ENERGY IN OUR STUDIO
PROGRAMME AND SELL-OUT AUDIENCES**

**A RELAUNCHED RURAL TOURING
PROGRAMME WITH EVEN GREATER REACH**

**A NEW MAJOR PROGRAMME OF THEATRE
GROUPS FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND
CAPABILITIES**

**ENGAGING WITH SOME OF OUR MOST
EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES**

BECOMING A PRODUCING THEATRE

AN EVEN BETTER MAIN STAGE PROGRAMME - AND RECORD AUDIENCES

Once it was possible to present a full programme again, from Spring 2022, the main stage hosted a rich programme of music, dance, drama, opera, and comedy.

Welcoming back professional and amateur shows was a real pleasure after a two-year hiatus. Particular highlights included: Giovanni Pernice (from Strictly), several sell out shows from The Ayrshire Lads; the return of the National Festival of Youth Theatre; Crown Ballet's Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake; visits in both years from a Ukrainian Opera company and in 2023 from Scottish Opera. A steady increase in drama on the stage included National Theatre of Scotland's Dear Billy and Sleeping Warrior's Battery Park. Each of the local amateur companies returned after the pandemic with renewed energy and several performances in both years.

Returning and new audiences responded enthusiastically to our affordable ticket prices and diverse programming. Feedback highlighted the friendly and welcoming atmosphere created by staff and volunteers.



70,000

**TICKETS SOLD
IN 2023**

"It's great being back and it really doesn't seem like over two years since I was here last. I'm still a bit apprehensive about getting it again, but we've just got to get on with things haven't we?"

RENEWED ENERGY IN OUR STUDIO PROGRAMME AND SELL-OUT AUDIENCES

The studio theatre allows smaller presentations, with a focus on innovative and intimate performances. Co-productions with A Play, A Pie, and A Pint, brought a series of short plays to The Gaiety, with sell-out audiences for most productions confirming audience interest. A new venture with Short Attention Span Theatre went further – bringing half a dozen or so ten-minute pieces of new writing to suit all tastes in a single sitting. And the studio continued to host innovative events including a book launch, development weeks for new plays and a live recording of a brand new audio play.



Particular highlights included The Monday Men, a professional performance created with a group of men with dementia:

“We just wanted to put down in writing how phenomenal Saturday was, just incredible. In honesty, it was the natural culmination of weeks and weeks of a real connection between you and us old boys, the words and the sentiment of the piece perfectly capturing each of us and all of us.”



A RELAUNCHED RURAL TOURING PROGRAMME WITH EVEN GREATER REACH

Before the pandemic our rural touring programme had brought a variety of music, drama, dance and children's shows to several venues round Ayrshire. From Christmas 2021 we were able to relaunch the programme with support from Creative Scotland and the Ayrshire Rural & Islands Ambition (ARIA) Fund. Reaching out to even more venues involved performances in 20 venues in all corners of Ayrshire. Christmas shows for younger children are now an established part of our offer. International performers, local artists and highly regarded Scottish touring companies have all been seen in community centres and town halls that are at the heart of their communities.



549: SCOTS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR - WONDER FOOLS



ELFFY'S CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE - THE GAIETY CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Reaching around 2,000 people a year, the period provided a firm foundation to embed rural touring as a long-term part of The Gaiety offer. The response of local audiences indicates the impact the programme delivers:



“It was as if the West End had arrived in Fairlie – I don’t think anyone could quite believe what a fantastic thing we were seeing”

- 549: Scots of the Spanish Civil War

“Fantastic show for the kids and adults...Great interaction with the audience”

- Elffy’s Christmas Adventure (Maybole)



MUSICAL THEATRE JUNIORS



HAPPYSHOCK THEATRE GROUP



GAITY YOUNG COMPANY



HAPPYSHOCK THEATRE GROUP



GAITY YOUTH THEATRE

A NEW MAJOR PROGRAMME OF THEATRE GROUPS FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND CAPABILITIES

A major achievement over 2022-23 was the launch of a revamped programme of theatre groups catering to people of all ages and capabilities. This included youth theatre, adult theatre groups, and specialised groups for individuals with disabilities. In the community we were able to deliver projects including the Wallacetown Youth Theatre for children aged 8-12 and the Happy Shock Theatre Company for adults with learning difficulties. In our studio and nearby bases in central Ayr, The Gaiety theatre groups and musical theatre groups have grown steadily following on from sold-out week-long summer and easter schools.

The community programme has outgrown The Gaiety however and the team have been unable to keep up with demand. So at the end of 2023, after a lengthy search a deal was agreed for a new base just round the corner from the theatre in Arthur St. The new creative engagement base, combined with the momentum built up in the existing groups, will see a major expansion of this side of the organisation in 2024 and beyond.

ENGAGING WITH SOME OF OUR MOST EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES

Following the pandemic, funding for The Gaiety from Creative Scotland continued to support artists to engage in rural communities and in North Ayr. Catch a Drift in Girvan and Maybole involved displays of photography, dance and sculpture developed by young people. The Riverside Writing Group engaged recovering addicts and led to a new play performed on The Gaiety main stage, Junkie Miracles. And a visual art group running alongside led to a sharing event in the studio. Continued support for the Champions Board of care-experienced young people saw over 50 young people develop skills and confidence, and the start of a new play based on Great Expectations. Most recently a new project 1,000 voices is beginning to gather momentum, exploring the experience of community in Wallacetown. As the independent evaluation of this work indicated:

Over 1000 people from across South Ayrshire, aged from 3 years to 80+ years, were active participants in the Culture Collective project over 2021-23.

AGP successfully extended its reach across South Ayrshire, delivering new creative engagement opportunities in Girvan and Maybole, as well as in Ayr itself.

All of projects directed opportunities towards communities facing challenges associated with social deprivation and/or geographic isolation.

Crucially, AGP assisted with post-Covid recovery by working with and supporting partners already embedded in their communities.



BECOMING A PRODUCING THEATRE

When AGP reopened The Gaiety in 2012, it was as a 'receiving house', meaning that the theatre received shows produced and toured by others. Early moves to develop our own shows were co-productions with Borderline Theatre Company, now resident at The Gaiety. Two four-star productions touring all of Scotland (A Slow Air and The Straw Chair) were an early declaration of intent, as was co-producing a Summer Panto at The Edinburgh Fringe with A Play, A Pie and A Pint (The Pie Eyed-Piper of Hamilton). In the same year our new children's play developed and delivered for Edinburgh Science Festival (Uncanny Valley), won the Critics Award for Theatre in Scotland (CATS) award for a children's production. In 2019 these efforts culminated with the first Gaiety pantomime to be produced in house for a couple of decades – and the first to garner four star reviews in the national press in that time.

This was the foundation that allowed us over the pandemic to move into producing films, livestreamed plays and outdoor performances, and an online pantomime (The Scunner that stole Christmas). As we emerged from the pandemic the challenge was to build on these achievements. This ambition was achieved firstly with our own productions of Sleeping Beauty (2022) and Cinderella (2023), which were recognised as among the best pantomimes in Scotland:

★★★★★

"In Agr, writers Fraser Boyle, who also plays the dame, and Ken Alexander, who also directs, deliver a Sleeping Beauty that chimes beautifully with the present, while harking back to the Gaiety's past as a centre for variety."

- The Stage

★★★★★

"Cinderella – excellent updating. From the moment Hannah Howie's Fairy Godmother responds to the audience's first attempt at an interactive shout out ... by casting a magic spell that gives them permission to be as loud as they like, you know that this panto is in very safe hands. With big sparkling sets ... brash costumes ...and a pleasing on-stage transformation, all cleverly lit ... this medium-scale show could compete with any big city-centre production."

- The Stage



Just before the year ended we were also delighted to bring a production of Anne Marie Di Mambro's Tally's Blood to the stage. After seven years of working to deliver this Scottish classic, we were able to link up with Perth Theatre and Cumbernauld Theatre to co-produce what proved to be the most popular drama touring mid-scale Scottish theatres since the pandemic, with sell outs across Scotland, including at The Gaiety.

By the end of the year we also had other productions and co-productions in the pipeline, confirming that Ayr once again is on the Scottish Theatre map as a base for originating quality theatre.

★★★★★

The very essence of a rattling good yarn, full of fine mid-20th century music, laughter, tears, romance, and even some dance; and Ken Alexander's new production – co-produced by Perth Theatre with Ayr Gaiety and Cumbernauld Theatre – is continuously gripping even in its most sentimental moments."

- The Scotsman



OVERALL IMPACT

Ayr Gaiety Partnership, running not only The Gaiety Theatre, but also an increasing range of activity right across Ayrshire, clearly makes a big difference to access to the arts and culture.

The theatre is a key destination for a good night out, for artistic excellence, for amateurs, for schools and as a tourist attraction. Reaching out to communities that otherwise have limited access to the arts, means many more Ayrshire residents can experience and participate in the performing arts.

A belief in the right to culture and its contribution to wellbeing and quality of life is what drives the organisation. But in addition the organisation makes a significant contribution to the local economy.

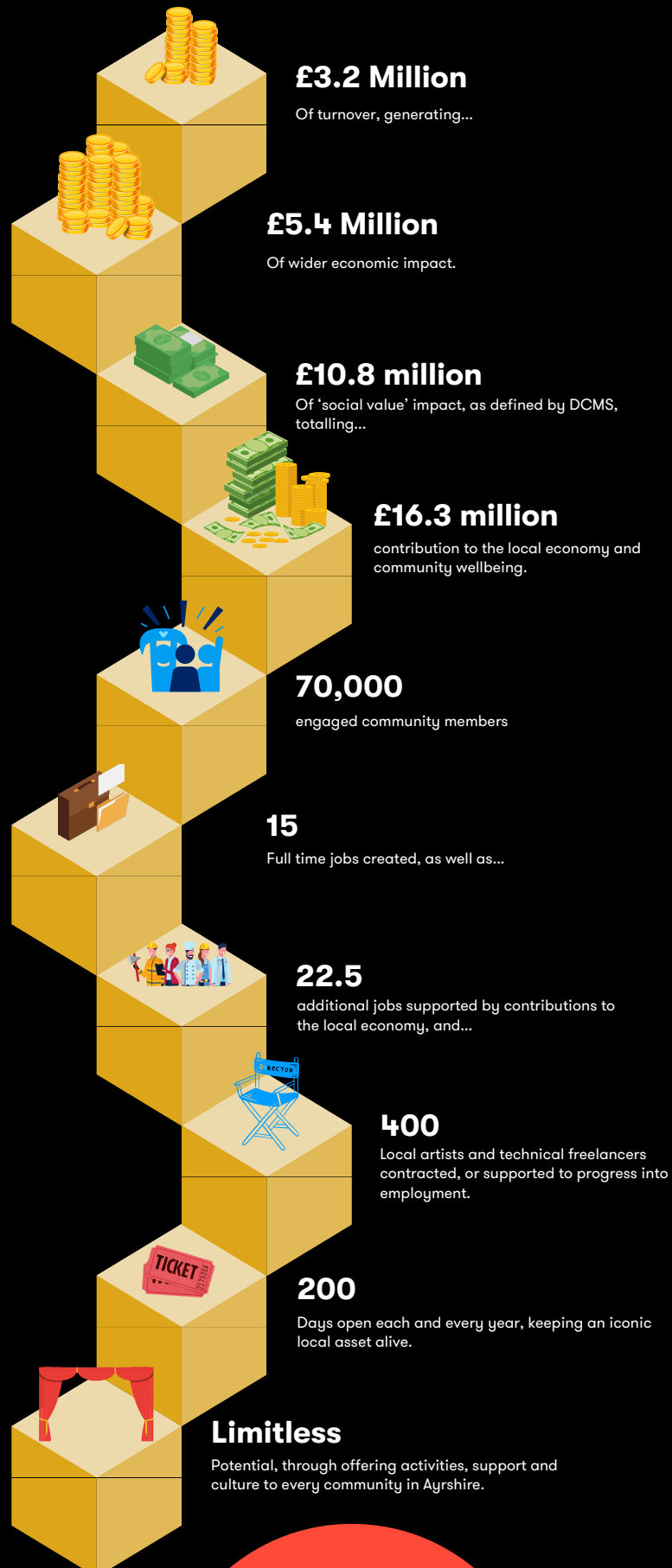
In terms of employment, The Gaiety employed 20 people each year (with a combination of full and part time posts equalling 15 full-time jobs.) Based on sector norms, every full-time position in the theatre industry typically supports an additional 1.5 jobs in related sectors such as hospitality, retail, and transportation. So The Gaiety supported around 22.5 additional jobs, contributing to a total of approximately 37.5 jobs in the local economy. In addition the organisation provided employment for over 400 freelancers during each year

Looking at it in another way, according to Creative Scotland for every £1 spent in the arts and culture sector, an additional £1.70 is generated in the wider economy. Given the organisation's total turnover of around £3,200,000 over two years, the theatre's economic impact can be estimated at £5,440,000. This includes direct spending, indirect benefits through local suppliers, and induced spending in the community.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) has developed methodologies to value the social benefits of cultural participation. Using this approach, a very conservative estimate of this 'social value' over two years, amounts £10,840,000.

Combining the economic impact (£5,440,000) and the social impact (£10,840,000), The Gaiety's total contribution to the local economy and community wellbeing for 2022 and 2023 can be estimated at £16,280,000. This comprehensive valuation underscores the critical role of The Gaiety in enhancing both economic resilience and social cohesion in Ayrshire.

AYR GAIETY PARTNERSHIP 2022-2023 IMPACT



THE GAIETY

LOOKING FORWARD: VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our long-term vision is to enhance individual and community well-being through the performing arts. We believe that cultural participation is a fundamental element of human existence, fostering connections, enriching lives, and nurturing the creative spirit.

As we reflect on our past achievements and the resilience demonstrated through challenging times, we are excited to chart a course for the future that builds on our strong foundation. The Ayr Gaiety Partnership is committed to expanding our impact, deepening our community engagements, and exploring new opportunities for growth and innovation. Our business plan for 2025-2028 outlines several strategic initiatives that will guide our efforts in the coming years.



1 - MORE DRAMA, DANCE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE

We plan to collaborate with other theatres to create touring routes for quality drama and co-produce new works that resonate with our audiences. Success will be measured by year-on-year growth in performances and audience engagement.

2 - MORE CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

We will continue to develop long-term co-creation projects, expand our work with rural communities, and increase participatory theatre groups. Success will be reflected in the number of community members and artists engaged in meaningful cultural projects.



3 - REACHING MORE PEOPLE THROUGH AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

We will implement targeted audience development initiatives, enhance our digital presence, and increase accessibility. Our goal is to reach 80,000 audience members annually by 2028.

4 - GREATER ACCESS, INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

We will focus on reducing barriers, increasing diversity among performers and audiences, and extending our outreach programs. Success will be measured by increased participation from underserved demographics.



5 - MORE SOCIALLY ENGAGED ARTISTS

We will offer year-long placements for emerging artists, partner with educational institutions, and host seminars on socially engaged practice. Success will be the development of more artists capable of co-creating with communities.

6 - BROADER RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

We will seek further capital investment for sustainable infrastructure, include climate themes in our programming, and engage our community in green initiatives. Success will be significant reductions in our carbon emissions and increased community action on sustainability.

RESOURCING AND FUNDING

To achieve these aims, we will need robust financial support.

Our mixed funding model, which includes ticket sales, grants, and donations, has proven effective, but we require additional investment to sustain and expand our operations. We are seeking core public investment of £250,000 per year, rising by 5% annually, to support our ambitious plans.

In the meantime, donations and funding from charitable trusts are an essential part of The Gaiety operation. Without the support of local donors, the theatre simply would not be open. In fact it's only because of the generosity of donors that our delivery of drama has increased, and that we were able to make such a step change in our pantomimes.

For 2024 donors will be particularly important to keeping the theatre open. So we are asking everyone who values the theatre to join the many people who have already donated – and our volunteers who donate their time every week. A one-off or regular donation today will help ensure The Gaiety can continue to deliver during this year and beyond.

Ways to donate are easy to find on The Gaiety website <https://thegaiety.co.uk/> - or speak to a member of the team.



OUR PEOPLE

STAFF

Amanda Nicol - Volunteer Engagement Manager
David McWilliams - Duty Front of House Manager
Ewan Boyd - Stage Crew
Fraser Emslie - Technical Manager
George Cameron - Stage Crew
Iain Campbell - Theatre Technician
Jacquii Gavigan - Head of Creative Engagement
Jade McEwan - Creative Engagement Facilitator
Janice Gilmour - Executive Director
Jeanette Rooney - Cleaning Operative
Jeremy Wyatt - Advisor
Joshua Macfarlane - Assistant Technical Manager
Laura Scott - Customer Experience Supervisor
Lauren Jeffrey - Administrative Assistant
Mat Page - Producer
Michael Docherty - Stage Crew
Michael Rooney - Buildings Maintenance Manager
Michael Stewart - Stage Crew
Nathanael Wood - Cleaning Operative
Niamh McGill - Finance & Production Administration Officer
Nicola Thorne - Marketing & Development Assistant
Rachel Dalziel - Duty Front of House Manager
Rachel McIndoe - Head of Communications & Development
Rhianna Crompton - Stage Crew
Vince Hope - Artistic Director

OUR PEOPLE

BOARD

Prof. Ian Welsh OBE | Chairperson

Dr. Graham Peterkin | Secretary

David Quayle | Treasurer

Councillor Brian Connolly | SAC

David Scott | UWS

Liam Murray

Rishaad Ait El Moudden

Kate MacDonald

David Watson

Linda Paterson

Janice Gilmour | Executive Director

PATRON

Maureen Beattie OBE

AND ALMOST 100 VOLUNTEERS...

who are the heart of The Gaiety. We simply could not continue to run shows without them.

THE GAIETY

THANK YOU!

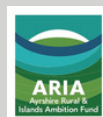
The Gaiety is grateful for support from;



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ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



HERITAGE
FUND

LOTTERY FUNDED

GAIETY CHAMPIONS

Sophia Allison
Allison Armour
James & Helen Bremner
Cecilia Conroy
Catherine Costello
Colin Cree
James Duncan
Janet Elder
Odette Frazer
Fred Fuller
Margaret Gibson
Elizabeth Green
Margaret Lamb
Anne Ledgerwood
Iain & Margaret Mackie
Sarah McCallum
Stephen & Ingrid McCormick
Caroline & Iain McDonald
David McDonald

Andrew McLean
John Morrison
Rishaad Moudden
Ken O'Hara
Keith Peck
Susan Porteous
Alan Richmond
Douglas Sanderson
Emma Scott
Robert Scott
Teresa Scott
Diana Storrie
Michael Turberville
Bill & Elise Walker
Roy Wallace-Bull
Jennifer West
Valerie Wilson
William Yuille

TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS

The John D Scott Trust
South Ayrshire Community
Health and Wellbeing Fund
(through VASA)
The Hugh Fraser Foundation
William Syson Foundation
The Rotary Club of Ayr

All of the community organisations we work with across Ayrshire

The hundreds of performers, artists, creatives and freelance technical experts we work with - the people who make the magic!

All of our customers and supporters - the people who keep the magic alive.

Tommy Ga-Ken Wan for production photography (Cinderella, A Play,
A Pie & A Pint, Riverside Open Mic Night)

Ruari Barber-Fleming for community engagement photography

Mihaela Bodlovic for production photography (Tally's Blood)

AMD Studios for production photography (Aida & The Ayrshire Lads)

Guy Hinks for The Gaiety interior photography.