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The Barbican Centre Annual Report 2022/2023 written summary



Welcome from Tom Sleight, Chair of the Barbican Board

Looking back on a remarkable year, I am amazed by how the Barbican has brought together audiences, artists and communities through its innovative programme, educational offer, and iconic spaces.

It has been incredible to see our venues packed with people from all over the world, and those closer to home. The Barbican is more than just an iconic architectural landmark; it's a place for discovery, a refuge for personal reflection, and a rich resource for our local community.

The Barbican is a creative catalyst that sparks possibilities and transformation for artists, audiences, and communities. We have an important role to play in creating and supporting a thriving cultural economy, here in the City, in London, and beyond. We have helped to drive the nation's cultural recovery, post-pandemic.

We are supporting the City of London's Destination City programme, positioning the City as a world-leading destination for UK and global visitors, workers, and residents to enjoy. The Barbican, as we have now passed our 40th birthday, is the jewel in the crown of that programme. I would like to extend my thanks to our CEO Claire Spencer and to the Barbican team for their tireless efforts in making this year so extremely successful. Their talent and commitment is second to none.

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The Barbican is a unique place with an unrivalled artistic programme. None of this would be possible without the passion, dedication and talent of the Barbican team and the many artistic, community and funding partners.

I would also like take a moment to thank the City of London Corporation, members of the Barbican Board and Trust, patrons, donors, supporters and members for their ongoing and vital support.

Welcome from Claire Spencer AM, CEO of the Barbican Centre

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2022/23. The year was filled with many incredible moments and our short film features five members of the Barbican team who reflect on an extraordinary year of inspiring and joyful programming.

This film is just a snapshot of the thousands of events we presented and the hundreds of artists, performers and directors we welcomed to the Barbican. During 2022/23, we had the privilege to work on projects with local community groups and showcase some of the most exciting and varied artists from around the world and on our doorstep in London.

Over the past year, we have also been reflecting on our purpose and values – about what it means to be a creative catalyst in London, and how this and our values influence both what we do and how we do it. We aspire to always be inclusive, sustainable, connected, daring and joyful. We have progressed with our important work on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to make the Barbican a place where everyone belongs and an organisation that reflects the diversity of the community we serve. In February 2023, we launched our new EDI Strategy and Action Plan, which is the next chapter of our ongoing work to create sustainable, systemic change – within the Barbican and beyond.

I'm thrilled that we have also made important strides with our ambitious Barbican Renewal Programme. We are working with a brilliant design team to deliver a sustainable development that will upgrade and revitalise our building, all without adding even an additional square metre to our footprint. We are grateful to the City of London Corporation for the £25 million in funding to start the first phase of Barbican Renewal, which will allow us to both develop our plans and commence early works that will boost both our operational and environmental performance.

As a not-for-profit, we need to raise 60 per cent of our income through ticket sales, venue hire, fundraising, and our commercial activities. We have hosted hundreds of industry events including many graduation ceremonies, the Greater London Authority's Climate Action Week Launch Event, the BBC's Women Event, London Fashion Week shows and very excitingly you'll recognise our Conservatory in Daniel Kaluuya's new Netflix's film, *The Kitchen*, starring British rapper and actor Kano. The success of these events directly supports our arts and learning programmes, enabling more people to experience the transformative power of creativity.

We are incredibly grateful to our founder and principal funder the City of London Corporation, and our donors, patrons and members for their generosity to the Barbican, and to our Board Members and Trustees for their time and commitment. Our sincere thanks goes to our Resident Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and all our other brilliant artistic and community partners.

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My final thanks are reserved for the incredible Barbican team whose passion and hard work make all of this possible. Their dedication and commitment to our purpose and values, while supporting our audiences and communities, is inspirational and I am truly grateful to all of them. I look forward to welcoming you to the Barbican soon.

Introduction

Welcome to the Barbican's Annual Report for 2022/2023. This document follows on from our [annual report video](#) which featured five members of the Barbican team who reflected on a successful year and explained in their words what the Barbican means to them.

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity and each year we present hundreds of different performances, events and exhibitions that entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

Our 2022/2023 was filled with many incredible moments where we welcomed around 1.7 million visitors to the Centre and held over 4,000 events, exhibitions and performances. Our eclectic programme featured 1,400 of the world's most exciting, relevant and varied artists.

We're rooted firmly in our neighbourhood and our exceptional arts programme and sector-leading educational opportunities will continue to play a vital role in creating and supporting a thriving cultural economy through the [City of London Corporation's Destination City Programme](#), which aims to make Square Mile a world-leading leisure destination for UK and global visitors, workers, and residents to enjoy.

It has been an exciting period of change at the Barbican, and we have made significant progress in our Barbican Renewal project which will upgrade and revitalise our building. We have also made important strides in our work around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work, as we continue to make the Barbican a place where everyone belongs.

Report highlights

Programme highlights:

We're passionate about showcasing the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries and helping us understand our lives in new and unexpected ways. Over the past year we programmed and worked with 1,400 artists who came from 80 different nationalities.

Highlights from our programme include:

Visual Art

In October 2022, we opened [Rebel Rebel](#), the first major UK commission by Iranian artist Soheila Sokhanvari, which celebrated and commemorated feminist icons from pre-revolutionary Iran. The exhibition unintentionally coincided with the death of Zhina (Mahsa) Amini, which sparked mass uprising in Iran. Due to its relevance the show welcomed around 70,210 visitors – 249% over its predicted target. It received extensive media coverage including three 4-star reviews in the Guardian, The Times and Time Out.

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In May 2022, we opened [Our Time on Earth](#), a groundbreaking exhibition featuring the work of 95 artists which encouraged positive conversations on climate change. The show explored radical ideas around the climate crises and used technology to create an immersive experience which brought us closer to nature and our roots. The exhibition opened during a period where museums and galleries were required to operate at 70 per cent capacity as of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this, Our Time on Earth received just under 60,000 visitors and 282 press mentions – including coverage in BBC Click, Al-Jazeera and New Scientist while achieving five-star reviews in Londonist and Culture Whisper.

Theatre and Dance

In November 2022, we opened [A Perfect Show for Rachel](#), an extraordinary experimental show in our Pit Theatre, as a learning-disabled artist had the power to lead the creation of her 'Perfect Show'. Produced by Zoo Co Theatre, the show set out to devise a show specifically to please Rachel O'Mahony, the 31-year-old sister of the company's artistic director, Flo O' Mahony. The show sold 782 tickets – 44 percent of those purchases were first time bookers to the Barbican. The show received 5-stars from The Guardian and two 4-star reviews in The Times and The Stage. Due to its resounding success, A Perfect Show has been brought back to the Barbican for May 2024.

In October 2022, we got lost in the magical world of [My Neighbour Totoro](#). Adapted from the Studio Ghibli anime film, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company and Joe Hisaishi, with a world premiere at the Barbican, My Neighbour Totoro has been one of the most successful shows ever presented on our stage. When first announced, the show broke our box office record for most tickets sold in a single day and brought in the highest amount of money taken and tickets ever sold before an opening performance and achieved our highest ever number of first-time bookers. My Neighbour Totoro went on to win six Olivier Awards – where it was the most successful production on the night and five WhatsOnStage Awards. It received five-star reviews in The Guardian, Financial Times, The Metro and The Stage. The show was such a success that it has now returned to the Barbican for a limited season until March 2024.

Music

In March 2023, contemporary and classical music collided in an awe-inspiring collaboration between GRAMMY-nominated songwriter and producer, [Devonté Hynes](#) (Blood Orange) and our Resident Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra. The two sold out nights in our Hall, brought new audiences to the Barbican and to orchestral music.

In November 2022 the [Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra](#) made a long-awaited return to the Barbican Hall with a two-night residency alongside conductor Daniel Harding. The show sold just under 3,500 tickets over both nights and received five-star reviews in the Daily Telegraph, The Times and The Guardian, who both rated the orchestra's performances of Mahler's 9th symphony as amongst the finest they had ever heard. These international connections are vital to the Barbican as we believe art has the power to transcend borders and we welcome contemporary artists, experimental collaborations and visits from the world's best orchestras and soloists.

Cinema

Our [Emerging Film Curators Programme](#) invites individuals or collectives, with limited film programming experience, who're interested in developing socially engaged, inclusive films,

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to work with our experienced film curators and potentially have their projects screened at the Barbican. Our most recent cohort featured eight people from five different film collectives. The scheme will run again in 2024.

Our popular [Outdoor Cinema Programme](#) provided an exciting experience of fantasy, action and adventure films in the spectacular setting of our Sculpture Court. During 2022/2023 our Outdoor Cinema Programme took inspiration from the Our Time on Earth Exhibition, where each film presented profound meanings to the environment of their settings. The Outdoor Cinema programme returned this year and will be back in 2024.

Our Change Programmes

New purpose and values

Over the past year we have been reflecting on what London and the wider world needs from an art centre like the Barbican and we have now launched our new [purpose and values](#) to help us achieve this.

One key takeaway from this period is that the Barbican is more than a famous architectural landmark. It is a public space for discovery and a catalyst for creativity that sparks possibilities for audiences, artists and communities. By underpinning everything we do with this new purpose and our organisational values, by being inclusive, connected, and daring, by operating sustainably, and by creating moments of joy, we hope that being part of the Barbican community will become a positive, life-changing experience for everyone.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In February 2023, after a period of engagement through workshops and consultations with over half of the Barbican team, external consultants and our diversity networks, we launched our new [EDI strategy and Action Plan](#). This work outlines our activities over the next three years as we aim to become a place where everyone feels they belong, a place where fairness and equal opportunity exist and a place that reflects the diversity of our community.

As part of our EDI work, we launched our [Zero Tolerance](#) statement and accompanying training for all of our staff in November 2022. This is an important piece of work that will help us ensure the Barbican is a place of safety and respect for everyone who works here, uses our venue, or visits to enjoy our programme. To date, 800 colleagues have completed the training, which provides everyone working at the Barbican with guidance on how to create and maintain a safe, respectful working environment. We will continue to proactively engage with creating safe, welcoming spaces for everyone and hold ourselves to high standards.

During this period, we established four Diversity Networks including the Global Majority Network, Barbican Women, the Disability Network and the Pride Network. These networks provide a culture of representation, inclusion and a sense of community by increasing awareness, educating and encouraging advocacy.

We have expanded our EDI team, and their work has played a central role in the development of our new Audience Strategy, which aims to increase and diversify our audiences. Alongside this work we also developed and later launched our Anti-Racism Action Plan, which focuses on providing resources and counselling sessions to support racial wellness for colleagues from the Global Majority.

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We have embarked on a big organisational transformation programme that touches on every aspect of the Barbican. We recognise that culture change is a long journey, but we are confident of the foundational steps we have made so far. We publish updates on our EDI work via our [website](#) 6 months.

Barbican Renewal Programme

The Barbican is a major contributor to the economic, social and cultural life of the City, London and the UK, making an annual £40 million contribution to London's economy and supporting over 800 jobs. It is the City's leading cultural destination, third most visited attraction and has worked with 330 schools, 16,400 school children and 35,000 young people over the past four years.

Much of the Barbican building infrastructure has been in place since the Centre opened and has reached the end of its usable life. It's therefore clear that continuing a programme of remedial works to the building will not be enough, and that a larger scale programme to replace building infrastructure systems is required.

The [Barbican Renewal Programme](#) will ensure the Centre remains operational and can continue to deliver these major benefits, as well as expanding its offer and impact through bringing currently underutilised spaces into creative, civic and entrepreneurial use. There is also a responsibility to care for and maintain the Barbican building, which is a Grade II listed heritage landmark and one of the most iconic and significant post war buildings in the UK.

Early design work has identified major opportunities to invest in the building to deliver on the City Corporation's ambitions including:

- Supercharging the Barbican's position as a major visitor attraction, including through works to the Conservatory, Lakeside and Beech Street. This will increase footfall and generate new income to support Destination City and make the Centre more financially self-sufficient
- Making major improvements to the Barbican's sustainability and energy efficiency, to reduce costs and deliver on the City's net zero commitment
- Transforming the empty Exhibition Halls into a new, income-generating centre for creative enterprise to grow new businesses in the Square Mile
- Future proofing the Barbican's venues and spaces so they meet the expectations of audiences and artists for decades to come

Over the past year, we have held a number of briefings and meetings with representatives from the Barbican Association, as well as the design and project team attending several resident-led tours of the Barbican Estate. The online public consultation survey we ran attracted 750 responses, many of which were from Estate residents, and this group were also well represented at the two collaborative workshops we delivered. Feedback from residents on early proposals has been very positive.

Barbican Young Changemakers

Our creative vision aims to inspire people and identify what they love about art and culture. We aim to attract new audiences and provide innovative, educational and diverse experiences that cannot be replicated anywhere else. Over the past year, we have worked closely with young people to develop better access to the arts, increase representation and



ensure the Barbican uses its unique position and assets for the widest possible artistic and social benefit.

Part of this work has included the [Barbican Young Changemakers pilot Programme](#), which was initiated to put young people from backgrounds or with identities which are often underrepresented within the audiences and workforces of large cultural institutions, at the heart of decision-making processes at the Barbican.

Between November 2022 - August 2023, our seven Barbican Young Changemakers, worked closely with our CEO, Claire Spencer AM and her leadership team to scrutinise our creative vision and provide a series of recommendations for how the Barbican can better engage and work with young people. Their work culminated in the [Barbican Young Changemakers Lift Off Exhibition](#), where they presented their findings and outlined their important work in shaping the future of the Barbican. The Changemakers will continue to support us during the upcoming year and the scheme will re-recruit in September 2024.

Supporting our communities:

Our Creative Collaboration team aims to extend the Barbican's traditional arts boundaries and contribute towards a diverse artistic programme. Across the 2022/2023, our team delivered in-depth development programmes for emerging poets, film programmers, visual artists, and 'changemakers' (young people interested in leadership in the arts sector). Our aims for these programmes included: developing the participants' artistic practice; connecting them with peers and mentors; providing the support of an artist collective of like-minded young people; and developing the participants' collaborative working practice.

We work with neighbours on our doorstep here in the City of London, and other surrounding boroughs, nearer and further afield in London. Our work in these areas helps local communities decide what kind of cultural offer is programmed and supported through our network building and local participatory grant making schemes.

Over the past year, our Communities and Neighbourhoods team has worked extensively with trusts and grant makers to support local people and unincorporated associations in the City of London to create projects that will bring people together, kickstart a new idea or have a go at something they've always wanted to try.

During 2022/2023, the team awarded a total of £45,000 to support community related projects. The [Imagine Fund](#), a scheme funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund which supports local people to kickstart their ideas and creative enterprises, issued £15,000 to support 10 new local projects in and around the City of London and the [Leytonstone Loves Film Community Fund](#) issued £30,000 to support nine new projects which use film to bring people together.

Educational programmes

We're committed to nurturing the talent pipeline, supporting young people and helping to develop the next generation of creatives. In 2022/2023, we ran over 250 learning activities and events to over 49,000 participants, providing the resources needed for more young people to develop their artistic practice and access jobs in the creative industry.

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Through our many programmes, we've been able to discount over 82,000 tickets for schools, students, families and young people. This has included 62 schools, 513 teachers and 3,204 pupils engaged across our free learning activities and resources.

Commercial activities

During this period our Business Events Team confirmed just under £4 million from venue hires, filming and conferences. This figure was £1 million more than our taking from pre-Covid levels.

We work with a wide variety of clients and our venue hires last year included many graduation ceremonies, the Greater London Authority's Climate Action Week Launch Event, the BBC's Women Event, London Fashion Week shows and more. Our Conservatory also featured in Daniel Kaluuya's new Netflix's film, The Kitchen, starring British rapper and actor Kano. Additionally, we offer a discounted hire package for all NHS and charitable organisations.

The success of these events directly supports our arts and learning programmes, enabling more people to experience the transformative power of creativity.

Finances:

To see our full 2022/2023 financial report see [here](#).

Ends:

For more information on our annual report 2022/2023, see our website here: <https://www.barbican.org.uk/annual-report-202223>