

B:Music



Annual Report

April 2024 –
March 2025

Welcome

Welcome to our annual report for the financial year 2024-2025.

It is a pleasure to report that this has been a year of growth for B:Music across every significant measure. We have hosted more performances, welcomed more audiences, employed more artists and welcomed more international visitors than ever before.

We have been able to grow our engagement and extend our impact too, in the areas that really resonate for us as a music charity. We have increased participation in our community and talent development projects and continued to offer bursaries where needed to ensure that economic means is not a barrier to music making. At a time when music struggles for inclusion in the curriculum at many schools, we see this as ever more important.

Financially this has been a strong year too, but we cannot afford to be complacent. This report shows that 87% of our income comes from trading activities, and we are therefore vulnerable to all of the market forces that feed into the costs of presenting live music. In addition to covering these costs we need to ensure that we generate adequate funds to maintain Town Hall and Symphony Hall, the iconic buildings that we are proud to operate. I'm happy to report that we remain in good shape to do this.

I am very grateful to the family of donors and funders that support us, the partners that we work with and the B:Music staff and trustees that bring so much energy and commitment to what we do. You can read some of their stories in this report and if you are inspired to support us too, please do get in touch with our Development Team.

On behalf of the B:Music team, I look forward to welcoming you soon.

Nick Reed, B:Music CEO

As the proud Chair of B:Music it is a pleasure to be presenting this snapshot of our work over the 2024-25 financial year. Symphony Hall and Town Hall are iconic buildings that sit at the heart of the region's cultural life. We welcome almost half a million visitors each year, and artists from both around the corner and across the globe.

We collaborate locally, nationally and internationally to ensure that music in the West Midlands continues to thrive, and we do so in increasingly difficult circumstances. As music and the wider arts slip off the curriculum for all but the most well-resourced schools, our work in creating musical opportunities for young people is even more important. This ranges from supporting musical encounters for primary age children to our various talent development programmes which nurture young people through playing in ensembles as their skills develop. This year saw the redevelopment of our award-winning Generation Ladywood project, with the pilot of a new model for the project helping us engage with additional primary schools in under resourced areas across the city.

In February 2025, we were extremely proud to be awarded the 'Excellence in Contribution to the Community Award' by the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

Despite our track record in generating most of our income through trading, we still rely on funds from trusts and foundations, individuals and corporate sponsors to sustain our most impactful work. I am so grateful to all the loyal donors who continue to support us and offer my thanks in anticipation of those supporting us for the first time. I hope that this report will encourage you to join us. I would like to thank our amazing staff, our donors and funders, our communities and our audiences for helping us to change lives through music

Anita Bhalla OBE, B:Music Chair

B:Music

We inspire a love of live music, through performance, participation and learning across Birmingham and beyond.

We believe that music is essential to everyone and has the power to transform and change lives, to entertain and uplift, to create shared experiences and to educate.

B:Next

We support the next generation of creative people (on and off stage); ardently overcoming any barriers to access.

B:Together

We aim to forge connections and bring diverse communities together across Birmingham, the West Midlands and beyond.

B:Custodians

We are responsible for two iconic venues, Town Hall and Symphony Hall, protecting their immense and important history for future generations to enjoy.

CONTENTS

Introduction	3	Free to Access Events	15
Our Mission.....	4	Development Programmes	16
A Year In Numbers.....	6	A Year of Firsts.....	18
Highlights from a year of music and live performance in Birmingham.....	8	Staff Training.....	21
Oli Parker - No Limits.....	10	B:Eats	23
B:Music & The Lost Notes.....	11	Financial Accounts	24
B:Music X Abbey Road Studios.....	12	With Thanks	26
		Ways to Support Us.....	27

896

total performances

478,167
total attendees

991 international
artists

100+ free to
access
events

£461,321 philanthropic
income

2,200 engagements with children
and young people

£65,550 grant income received
from local and national
trusts and foundations

2900

regular donors provided continuous
support throughout the year

3000 artists
employed

556

community project
participants

£18,045

raised through our
'Gift of Music'
Christmas Appeal

409

talent development
programme
participants

23 bursaries
offered

A Year in Numbers

Highlights from a year of music and live performance in Birmingham

ANNA LAPWOOD CHRIS DE BURGH
DAN & PHIL MARC ALMOND
JOE LYCETT JASON DONOVAN
ALFIE BOE SARAH MILLICAN
NERINA PALLOTT DAMIAN LEWIS
PALOMA FAITH LITTLE BIG TOWN
PALACE MAXIMO PARK NISH KUMAR
NEWS AGENTS MAX RICHTER
DIONNE WARWICK GLADYS KNIGHT



Photo © Paul Dixon



Oli Parker - No Limits

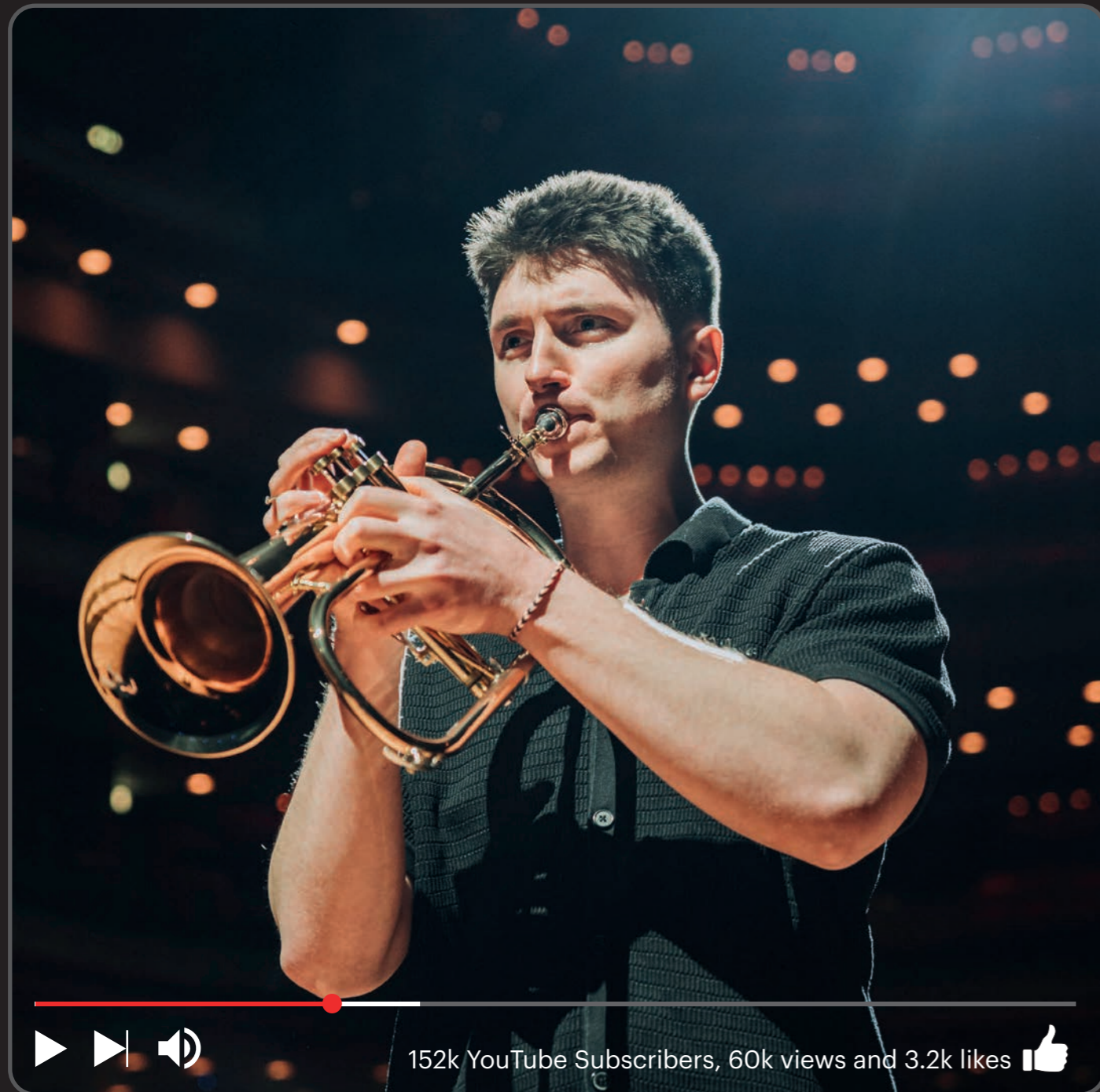


Photo © Ibi Keita

In early 2025 we welcomed **Oli Parker** to film his upcoming music video in Symphony Hall.

Outside of his incredible music and viral content [and his 430k+ social followers], Oli is a steward right here at B:Music.

His music video filmed live in the venue can be found here.



B:Music & The Lost Notes

A Continuing Creative Partnership

B:Music's relationship with Moseley-based Americana/folk band The Lost Notes has grown steadily over several years beginning in 2021 at Moseley Folk Festival and moving through to pre-show performances, Live at B:Eats, Nashville Sounds in the Round and in January 2025, Lerah Barcenilla from the B:Music Marketing Team, sat down with The Lost Notes to talk about their upcoming album and first headline performance with B:Music in the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space.

"That we would ever have the opportunity to play in the region's premier venue at all was just a hope and a dream when we first started The Lost Notes."

The members are no strangers to the venue. "What I think we all particularly love is the diversity of the programme," says Ben. "I've sensed a real attempt over the last few years to make the music programme more accessible, diverse and to make full use of all the performance spaces. To make the B:Music venues somewhere where music lovers of all tastes and backgrounds are naturally drawn."

"It's hard to express quite what it means when representatives of somewhere like B:Music come up after a gig and say, "we love what you're doing and we'd like to support you and offer you some performances!" That, in itself, is so encouraging.

It makes all the effort you put into trying to make your music a success, worth it. It's genuinely a 'pinch yourself' moment," they add. "I also absolutely love the use that is made of the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, B:Eats and the other smaller rooms. Looking from the outside in, those spaces seem to be used to give opportunities to artists across the age range and musical spectrum to perform and, equally, to showcase what our city has to offer.

"From the Free Jazz Fridays, to the free BIMM at B:EATS, to Celebrating Sanctuary, I love seeing people being given the same opportunity we have had, to perform in such iconic spaces. That's why we keep coming back as regular punters!"



Photo © Commonwealth Games

B:Music X Abbey Road Studios

Between May and July 2024, B:Music partnered with the iconic Abbey Road Studios to present the first-ever exhibition of the Abbey Road Music Photography Awards (MPAs) outside London. Hosted in B:Eats, the exhibition showcased the finalists from the 2023 MPAs. This milestone collaboration not only marked a significant moment for the MPAs but also set an exciting benchmark for future activity beyond the capital.

The project was inspired by local music photographer Jason Sheldon (Junction 10 Photography), who had previously submitted his striking 2021 image of a socially distanced Symphony Hall to the MPAs. This inspiration evolved into a major strand of work that animated all B:Music performance spaces throughout May and June 2024.

Total number of Local and emerging artists who performed in B:Music spaces during the duration of the exhibition: **115**

Footfall at Symphony Hall events throughout the Abbey Road Photography Music Awards Exhibition: **20,861**

Total number of Photographers who attended the Masterclass in Symphony Hall: **30 + 5 Panellists**

Total number of people estimated to have seen the exhibition: **21,861**

62% increase in spend at the B:Eats Café during the exhibition

Abbey Road Studios



Photo © Ibi Keita



Photo © Ibi Keita

At the heart of the programme was a Talent Development exchange between young creatives in Birmingham and London. Eight emerging music photographers from the Abbey Road Skills Hub travelled to Symphony Hall for a masterclass with established local photographers. These industry professionals later supported the group as they captured the our Free Jazz Friday Talent Development Takeover. In return, on Friday 31 May, twelve young musicians from B:Music's B:and Together ensembles were given an unforgettable opportunity to visit two of the world's most legendary venues: Abbey Road Studios and the Royal Albert Hall.

Whilst looking round the building, the group was shown items of old recording equipment that was hugely pioneering in its day and is all kept in working order so that artists can still use it if they choose to. Significant instruments were pointed out to them, like pianos that had been used for recordings such as Hey Jude and the famous Hedwig's Theme from the Harry Potter film series.

On the day, the group of young musicians and B:Music staff arrived at Abbey Road Studios for an early morning tour, which took place before the recording sessions began for the day. The group weren't allowed to know which artists or secret projects were being worked on that day. The tour included the iconic Studios One and Two, which remain largely unchanged since the days of legendary recordings by The Beatles and have produced many of the world's most famous film soundtracks including The Lord of The Rings trilogy, all eight of the Harry Potter films, and a number of Marvel films including Black Panther and Avengers: Endgame.

After signing the iconic wall outside Abbey Road Studios and capturing a photograph on the famous zebra crossing, the group travelled to the Royal Albert Hall for a backstage tour of the venue. The team at the Royal Albert Hall showed the participants around all areas of the building including the Royal Box. The group asked lots of questions and were given some fascinating insights into the history of the 5,200-seat concert hall and the variety of events that the hall play host to.

2024's collaboration between B:Music and Abbey Road marked the beginning of an exciting and ongoing relationship. Together, B:Music and Abbey Road are building a vibrant cultural bridge between the two cities - one that champions music, nurtures artistic talent and empowers the next generation of photographers, musicians, and audiences to thrive.



James B Partridge brings an evening of joyful nostalgia to Town Hall with The Big Christmas Assembly

24/25 November
December
January



The Lion Inside finds his roar at Town Hall this May

2024 May
June
July

Free to Access Events

Partners and Collaborators for the free to access events across all spaces include:

- Celebrating Sanctuary
- Sampad
- Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
- Midland Mencap
- We Don't Settle
- Birmingham Music Archive
- The Notebenders Big Band
- Sax in the City
- Birmingham Contemporary Music Group
- National Open Youth Orchestra
- Music for Youth
- Services for Education
- Birmingham Forward Carers
- BIMM Music Institute Birmingham
- National Youth Orchestra
- National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain
- European Jazz Network
- i-Jazz Italy
- Tomorrow's Warriors
- Abbey Road Studios
- Women In Jazz
- Birmingham Black History Month
- National Youth Jazz Orchestra

B:Music The Birmingham music charity responsible for Town Hall and Symphony Hall

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Tickets now on sale for Grammy Award winning singer Samara Joy

2024 February
March
April



B:Dazzled by Strictly stars Amy Dowden & Carlos Gu at Symphony Hall

2025 February
March
April

B:Music The Birmingham music charity responsible for Town Hall and Symphony Hall

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Photo © Johnathan Williams

Development Programmes

B:and Together

7-19 Creative Ensembles

- Education outreach ensembles
- Saturday Jazz Ensembles
- Saturday Gospel Ensemble
- Summer School

B:Aspirational

16-25 Career Development and Training

- Youth Board
- Aspiring Music Leaders
- College Connections

B:Next

18+ Emerging Artists

- Free Jazz Fridays
- Live at B:Eats
- She:Music

B:Community

Adults: Music for Health and Wellbeing

- Community Spirit
- An End To Be Proud Of
- Tea and Jam

"I am eternally grateful to everyone at B:Music. I have only been involved for a year but the opportunities I have been able to experience through ensemble playing and performance, have been truly unforgettable"

B:and Together participant

"My daughter was lucky enough to be one of the participants and I can safely say it's been one of the most incredible musical experiences of her life. She's learnt so much, not just musical skills but also confidence, independence, resilience and self-belief. She's met so many inspirational people, it really was a special week!"

Parent - Summer School 2024



A year of firsts for our Impact programme...

This was the year that our Development and Impact team took over the performance space at Symphony Hall. Our nationally renowned impact programme offers life-changing opportunities and experiences from early years to industry professionals. Annually, through our individual talent development and education projects we engage with hundreds of young people aged 7 to 25 years, for many their first and formative experience of live music. As part of the Birmingham Music Education Hub, we play a vital role in the musical education of children and young people across the city. Our B:Aspirational strand of support provides practical training and work experience opportunities, that offer a bridge into successful and sustainable careers in the sector.

The positive impact of arts and in particular music activities on the academic and emotional development of young people is undeniable. Participation in projects like those offered by B:Music, can allow children to express their emotions, engage with their peers, grow in confidence and achieve their potential.

May 2024: Talent Development Showcase

Our first Talent Development Showcase, which took over a regular Free Jazz Friday slot in May, was a very special evening. 60 participants performed alongside our lead and support tutors, to a jam-packed audience. They showcased the entirety of our programme for the first time and highlighted the progression that young people can make in their journey with B:Music. The projects featured were our schools outreach groups, all levels of B:and Together Jazz and Gospel Ensembles, the College Connections project and our Aspiring Music Leaders. One highlight was a performance from our first ever B:Music scholarship recipient.



Photo © Kate Green Photography

June 2024: A World of Song

Following the success of our award-winning Generation Birmingham project, which had been running for a decade, we wanted to explore how we could build on the activity and develop an exciting new model to ensure an even greater impact.

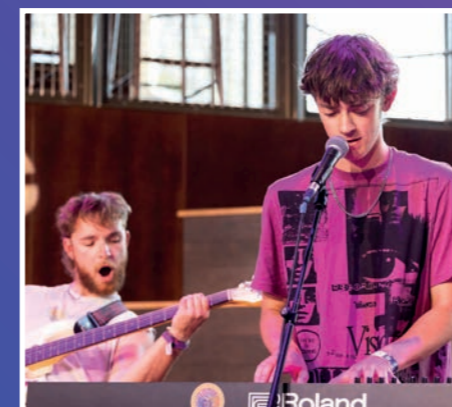
Working in partnership with Celebrating Sanctuary and Services for Education, we devised a new pilot programme called 'Generation Birmingham – A World of Song' that would trial an innovative new approach. The central objective was to broaden the musical horizons of the school pupils involved and celebrate and reflect the huge diversity of genres and traditions in Birmingham's communities.

The result was our 'A World of Song' Day in the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space during Refugee Week in June 2024. On the day, children performed pieces from traditions including Zimbabwe, Guinea Bissau and Kurdistan. Each piece was led by a visiting refugee artist from these countries, who also introduced and played an authentic national instrument. The children responded brilliantly and thoroughly enjoyed the day, many opting to take solo parts and attempt improvisation for the first time. One member of music service staff commented:

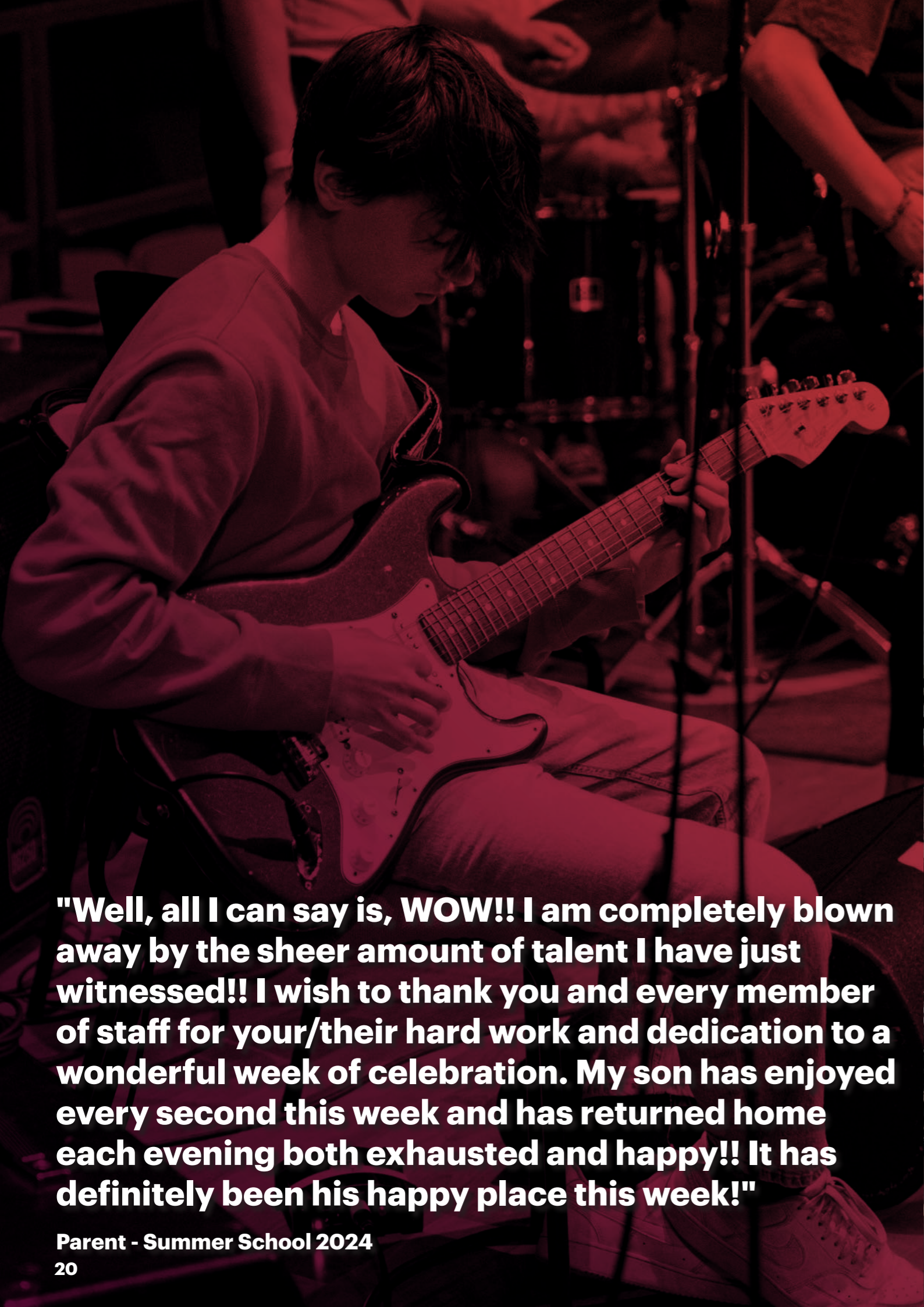
"What we witnessed today was truly remarkable. Not only was it culturally, educationally and musically excellent, but every person in the space learnt something today, and came away somehow changed, for the better".

July 2024: Youth B:and Fest

In 2024, we launched our Youth Board, to gain crucial insights to enhance our programmes and give members the opportunity to develop new skills. The Youth Board were tasked with organising an event that would draw more young people into our spaces and show them what we do as both a music venue and a music charity. They decided to put on a band showcase in the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, to give a platform to young, local talent. The resulting Youth B:and Fest took place on 16th July 2024. All aged between 16 – 23 years old; bands including Secret Love Orchestra, Strangeways, St Cecilia and Two Pounds Down shared the stage in the JBPS to a captivated audience. The youth board organised and executed the event with confidence and professionalism and we hope it will pave the way for future events devised and performed by young people. Our Youth Board 2024 was supported by the HSBC Supporting Communities Fund.



Photos © Trevor Bailey



"Well, all I can say is, WOW!! I am completely blown away by the sheer amount of talent I have just witnessed!! I wish to thank you and every member of staff for your/their hard work and dedication to a wonderful week of celebration. My son has enjoyed every second this week and has returned home each evening both exhausted and happy!! It has definitely been his happy place this week!"

Parent - Summer School 2024

Staff Training

The whole team came together for a half-day, "in-house away day" combining learning with social connection. The session included an introduction to AI and its practical applications in our work, together with team-building activities such as Laser Quest.

While much of our workplace development necessarily focuses on mandatory training—ensuring our operations remain safe and compliant both inside and outside the Hall (for example, first aid, canopy training, and IT security)—it was valuable to create space for broader learning and strengthening team cohesion.

B:Music operates several forums, providing employees and workers with a structured route to raise specific concerns with the CEO and the management team. As a result of this process, there have been changes to policies, benefits, and working practices. The employee forum meets regularly with the CEO and produces a quarterly pulse survey to gather feedback and monitor organisational wellbeing.



Photo © Ibi Keita



B:Eats

B:Music continues to be a fantastic addition to Symphony Hall – enabling the organisation to continue its mission to inspire a love of live music through our programme of free performances in the eatery. We've continued to grow the amount of free music available at lunch times with regular slots for some of Birmingham and the West Midlands emerging musical talent. These free to attend sessions give paid opportunities to performers some of whom are just starting their career in the music industry and allows our visitors to enjoy free, live music in the heart of the City.

We've also continued to develop our menu to compliment our ethos of providing hero-dishes on our menu that celebrate Birmingham and the West Midlands. In addition to our famous Brummie Bacon Cake and Birmingham Soup – a new item appeared, Brummie Butter Chicken Thali. This dish celebrates the Birmingham Balti – a dish that was created in the mid-70s in Birmingham by a local Pakistani restaurateur to appeal to westerners with a fast-cooked, mildly spiced dish. Our kitchen porter, Baljit, worked with our Chefs to create the perfect blend of spices to compliment the dish.



Financial Accounts

B:Music raises the majority of income from concerts and events in the form of either ticket income or rental fees from our varied programme of events. This year reached over £13m, with 65% from those events.

Our combined trading income from bars, our B:Eats cafe and all our commercial hires generated £2.9m and all profits are gift aided back to the charity.

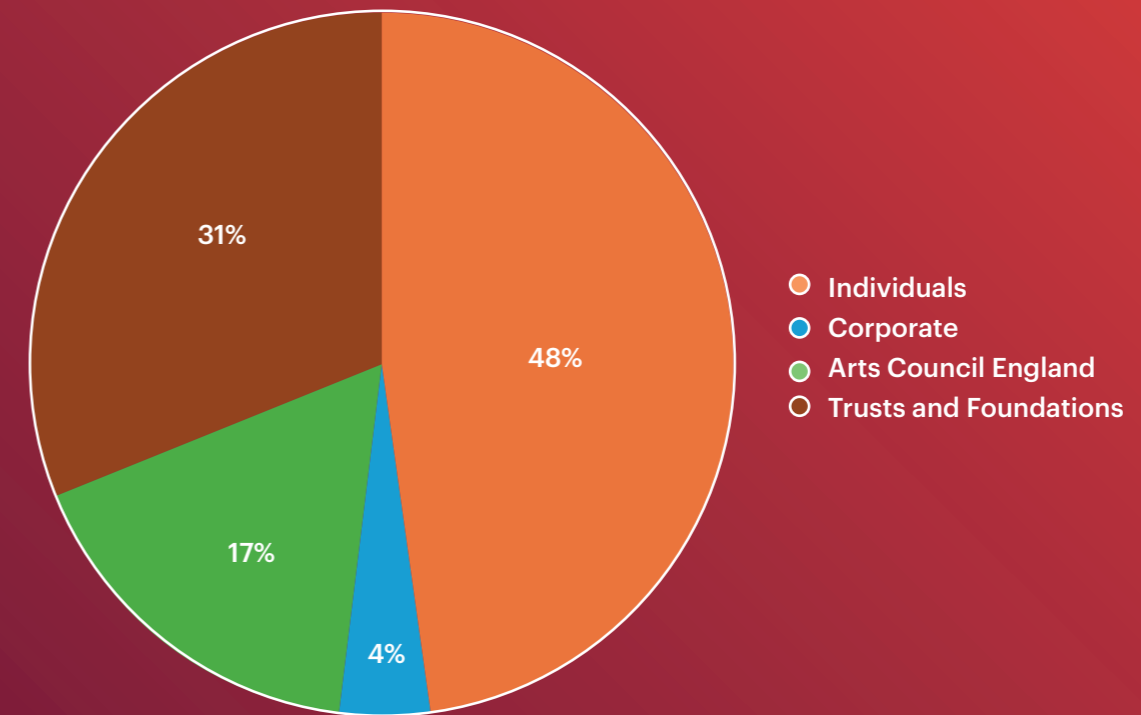
Our impact programme is entirely reliant on philanthropic income secured via fundraising. Vital sources of income are our sponsors, trusts and foundations, and individual donors. Our individual donors give generously and demonstrate a personal connection to our venues whether as a donation with a ticket, a membership, a regular giver or a legacy.

We are proud to continue to receive grants from Birmingham City Council and Arts Council England to deliver our portfolio of objectives.

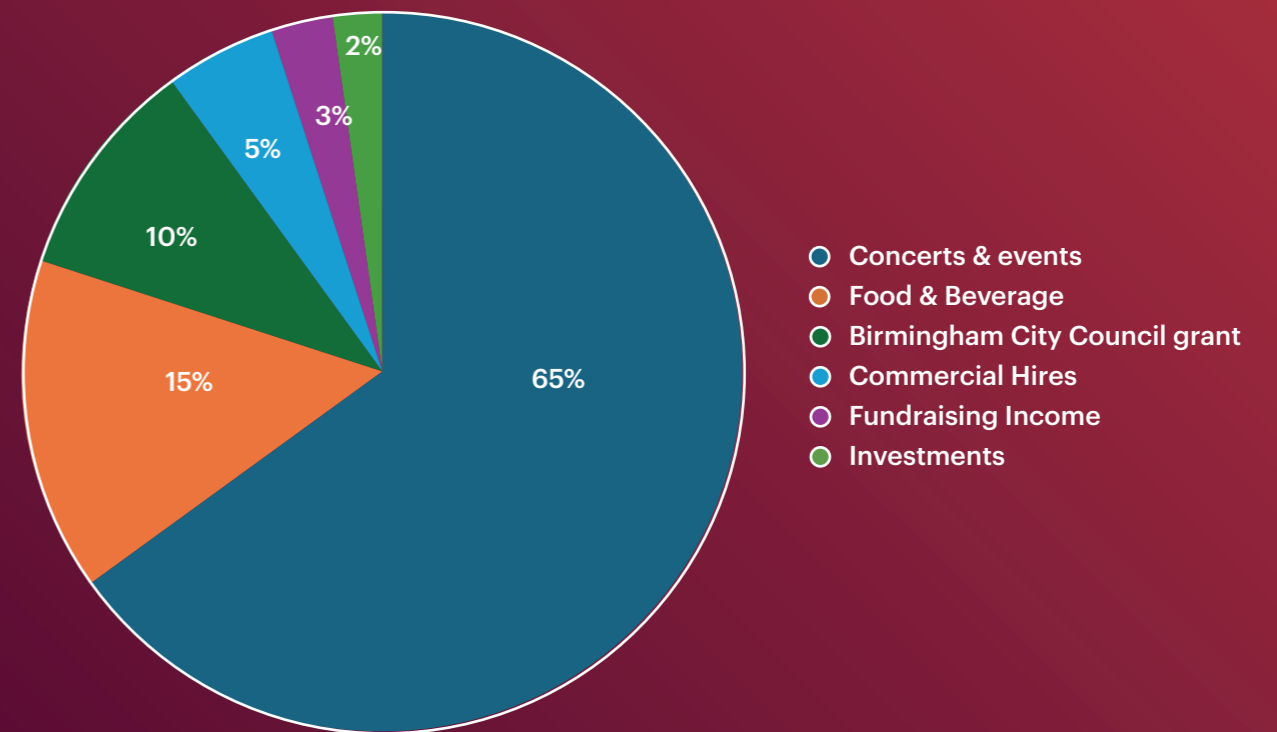
Each year we aim to hold sufficient free reserves to maintain Symphony Hall and Town Hall for future audiences and this year is no exception.

	2025 Restricted Fund	2025 Unrestricted Fund	2025 Total Fund	2024 Restricted Fund	2024 Unrestricted Fund	2024 Total Fund
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Income from:						
Donations and legacies	41	95	136	32	146	178
Charitable activities:						
Rental & admissions	-	6,517	6,517	-	6,097	6,097
Grants receivable	233	1,305	1,538	188	1,390	1,578
Other charitable activities	-	2,279	2,279	-	1,936	1,936
Other trading activities	-	2,892	2,892	-	2,445	2,445
Investments	-	250	250	-	137	137
Total	274	13,338	13,612	220	12,151	12,371
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds:						
Commercial trading operations	-	(1,737)	(1,737)	-	(1,458)	(1,458)
Fundraising	-	(153)	(153)	-	(115)	(115)
Charitable activities	(718)	(10,824)	(11,542)	(862)	(10,473)	(11,335)
Total	(718)	(12,714)	(13,432)	(862)	(12,046)	(12,908)
Net (loss)/income for the year	(444)	624	180	(642)	105	(537)
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	(444)	624	180	(642)	105	(537)
Fund balances brought forward at 1 April 2024						
	11,593	2,364	13,957	12,235	2,259	14,494
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2025						
	11,149	2,988	14,137	11,593	2,364	13,957

Sources of Fundraising Income



How we are Funded



B:Music