

# SOUTHBANK CELESTRE



**We're creating  
the arts centre  
of the future**

**Impact Report 2025**

# Our year at a glance

# 11,672,984

visitors to our 11-acre site

## 738,043

tickets sold

## 8,695

artists performed  
on our stages

## 55%

of our events  
were free



We worked with

## 328

schools and

## 6,860

pupils

We delivered work in

## 24

towns and cities  
across all four nations  
of the UK

Our touring exhibitions  
were seen by

## 300,465

people  
outside of London

# Reflections from the Youth Collective

To open this year's Impact Report, we asked Anu from the Youth Collective to share her vision for what an arts centre should be.

The Youth Collective is a group of 11–25-year-olds from Lambeth and Southwark who co-design and shape the Southbank Centre's Arts & Wellbeing youth programming.



Anu, Youth Collective © Belinda Lawley

## What should an arts centre be like in the future?

My name is Anu and this year I've been involved with the Southbank Centre through becoming a member of the Youth Collective. The Southbank Centre has become a safe space for me to creatively share my ideas and meet like-minded individuals. My idea of the 'arts centre of the future' is a place where young people can take part in activities and events that will broaden their horizons. It should be a space where we can take up space and be heard – especially in places where we might be underestimated or under-represented. And it's a place where we can meet creative people from all walks of

life. It's imperative that young people are the individuals to shape the next 75 years of culture. We can help make it more diverse and show the different values and identities of our generation. We have the power to shift society, including the arts, music and politics. Young people need to be put at the front of big decisions and we need the space to grow, create and be ourselves unapologetically. That's how we create a better future for everyone.

**Anu**

Member of our Youth Collective

# A message from the Chief Executive



We've opened our Impact Report this year with the voice of Anu, a member of the Youth Collective which helps shape our Arts & Wellbeing programme.

For the Southbank Centre, 2025 was a year of deep reflection. As we build towards our 75th anniversary in 2026, we've been asking ourselves a vital question: what defines the arts centre of the future? To find the answer, we knew we had to put the next generation of creative minds at the very front of that conversation.

From the record-breaking retrospective of one of Japan's most celebrated artists, Yoshitomo

Nara, to the boundary-pushing debut of our *Multitudes* festival, we've proven that our site is a place where bold innovation thrives. Our programming continues to reflect the vibrant world around us in full technicolour, whether through the historic moment of welcoming Little Simz to our stage with Chineke! Orchestra for *Meltdown*, or the landmark site-wide takeover *We Should Have Never Walked On The Moon*.

As we look ahead to our 75th anniversary, we're channelling the founding spirit of the 1951 Festival of Britain – a moment of national renewal and optimistic, forward-looking energy. This year has served as a launchpad for that celebration. By formalising our residencies with Tomorrow's Warriors and Kinetika Bloco, and launching our new Under-30s scheme, we are ensuring that our future is built upon a thriving, inclusive talent pipeline that will shape the cultural landscape for years to come.

None of these artistic achievements would be possible without the expertise and dedication of our staff, or the strategic guidance and support provided by our Board of Governors. I'd like to share my heartfelt thanks to them, as well as to our partners, our donors and the millions of visitors who bring this site to life every day. Thank you for your continued commitment. We enter our landmark anniversary year with a great deal of positive energy and a renewed sense of purpose, ready to show the world what a truly modern, forward-looking arts centre can be.

**Elaine Bedell OBE**  
Chief Executive



# Home to the future of classical music

Classical music is thriving at the Southbank Centre. With the help of our six world-class Resident Orchestras – **Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra** – 2025 proved that the genre is not in retreat, but evolving to meet a new generation of listeners. Ticket sales have risen above pre-pandemic levels

and more people are booking for the first time. We're committed to making classical music feel modern, exciting and essential for everyone. We're embracing new technologies, such as partnering with TikTok and launching our new podcast, *So, Hear Me Out*. At the same time, we are breaking down traditional barriers by bringing classical music together with other art forms, like spoken word and physical theatre.

**In 2025 overall, 40% of our classical music tickets were sold to people booking with the Southbank Centre for the first time. Our goal is to increase this by another 5% by the end of 2026.**



Aurora Orchestra © Jake Philip Davis



Mark Ball, our Artistic Director, said: 'We've been asking ourselves how we should be thinking differently about the large-scale orchestral experience in order to reach new audiences. The

*Multitudes* festival reflects the Southbank

Centre's belief that classical music is a living art form, shaped by new exchange between artists and collaboration across artistic disciplines. It excites younger audiences and first-time attenders, bringing them into an encounter with the full force of classical music via diverse artistic touchpoints.'

## CASE STUDY

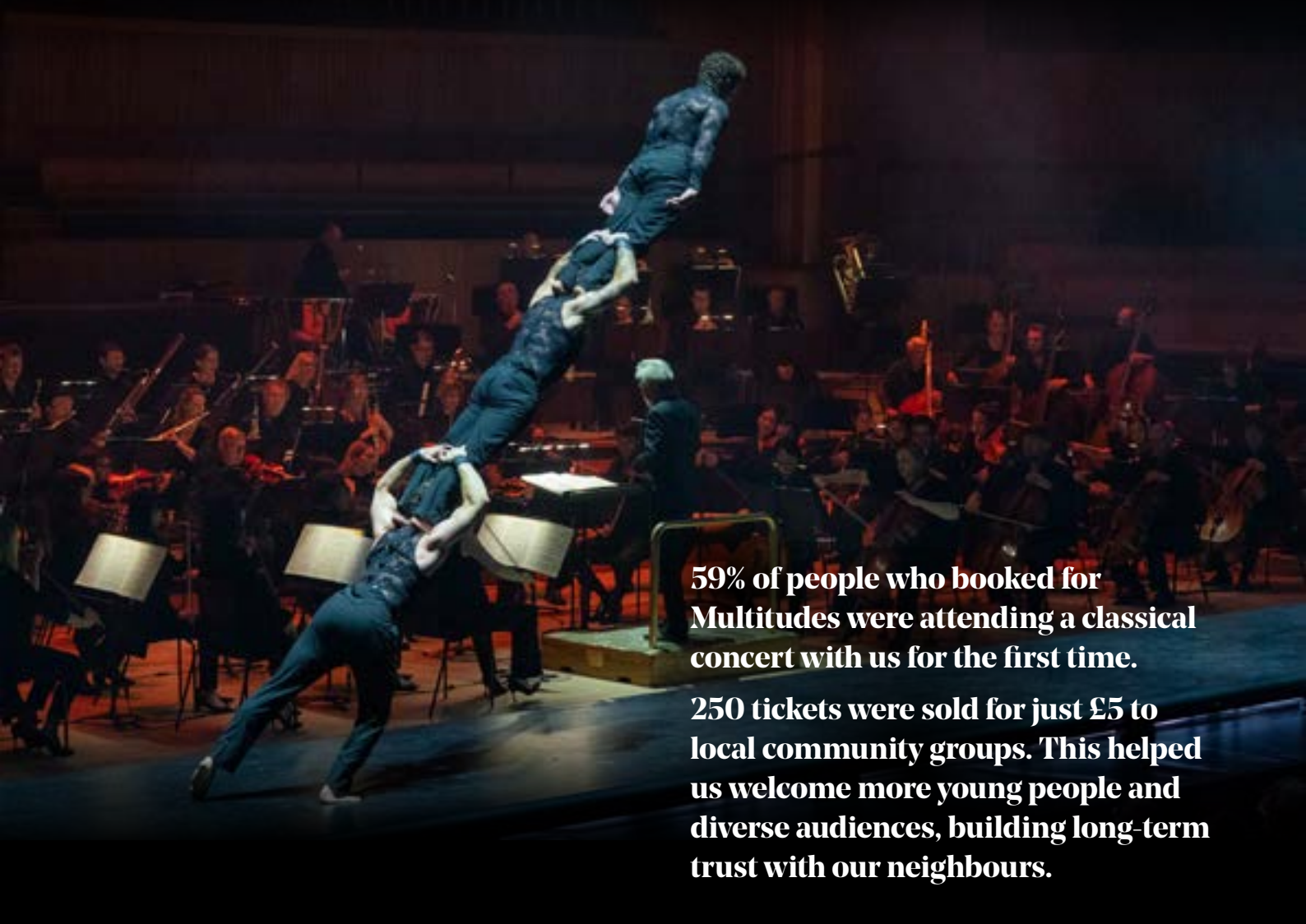
# Multitudes

In 2025, we launched *Multitudes*, a new festival that changes how people experience orchestral music. By mixing classical musicians with pioneers in art forms including grime, spoken word and contemporary dance, we're presenting classical music in a way that appeals to a much wider and more diverse audience. This festival is part of our commitment to keeping classical music fresh, exciting and open to everyone – ensuring it remains a dynamic force in the 21st century. *Multitudes* was supported thanks to National Lottery players through Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants

programme, as well as generous support from the TIOC Foundation and A4 Arts Foundation.

**'We would never have collaborated with a circus/acrobat troupe in other circumstances; both LPO and Circa performed to the highest standard, with each group's expertise enhancing the experience of the other's.'**

London Philharmonic Orchestra



**59% of people who booked for Multitudes were attending a classical concert with us for the first time.**

**250 tickets were sold for just £5 to local community groups. This helped us welcome more young people and diverse audiences, building long-term trust with our neighbours.**

# Multitudes

- **R.I.S.E.** (part of *Multitudes*): A festival highlight saw the Chineke! Orchestra team up with George the Poet for a night of music and poetry. It explored the climate emergency not just as a nature crisis, but as a matter of justice that disproportionately impacts Black communities. This event proved that by changing how we present classical music, we can reach new audiences who see their own lives and values reflected on our stage. **76% of bookers for R.I.S.E. were new to classical music at the Southbank Centre and 52% of the audience identified as being part of the Global Ethnic Majority.**
- **Carnival** (part of *Multitudes*): Aurora Orchestra and the physical theatre company Frantic Assembly brought Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival of the Animals* to life in a collaboration of music and movement. This theatrical approach was **a hit with families, who made up 20% of the audience, and there was also a dedicated schools performance in the Queen Elizabeth Hall that sold out.**
- **Vexations** (part of *Multitudes*): Pianist Igor Levit performed a 14-hour piece directed by artist Marina Abramović. This event focused on silence and endurance, bringing together the worlds of performance art and music. We saw this multi-art form approach reflected in the audience. **68% of the audience were first-time classical music bookers with us, and over half had previously visited an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery.**



## CASE STUDY

# So, Hear Me Out

In 2025, we launched *So, Hear Me Out*, a new podcast hosted by Linton Stephens and Gillian Moore. The series looks at the big questions in classical music today, challenging old ideas and unpicking controversies. By asking questions like 'can classical music make you happier?', the podcast offers an easy, jargon-free way for anyone to get into the art form. The series has already been listened to over 240,000 times.



## CASE STUDY

# Crescendo



We launched *Crescendo*, a first-of-its-kind accelerator programme in partnership with TikTok, to support classical music content creators in the UK. With the #ClassicalMusic hashtag growing by 60% on TikTok this year, this project puts the Southbank Centre at the heart of music's digital future.

A panel of experts – made up of violinist and creator Esther Abrami; cellist and politician

Baroness Thangam Debbonaire; our very own Head of Classical Music, Toks Dada; and TikTok's UK Artist Partnerships Lead, Lisa Skeppner – selected ten creators for the first group. Throughout 2026, they will spend six months with us for mentorship and behind-the-scenes access to our Resident Orchestras. This training will help them share classical music with millions of followers online.

# Creating new worlds on and off the stage

Our 11-acre site is more than just a group of buildings; it is a cultural playground. Here, we support artists to take risks and try new things, giving our audiences the chance to find something unexpected. In 2025, we focused on trying out new ways to present our work. We brought artists and audiences closer together through live, hands-on experiences

that cannot be matched by a screen. We also broke down the walls between different types of art – a move seen not only in our *Multitudes* festival, but also our new performance series *KUNSTY* and the 2025 London Literature Festival. To be the arts centre of the future, we are leaning into the experience economy and turning our entire estate into a stage.



# We Should Never Have Walked On The Moon

In September 2025, we teamed up with Rambert and the Ballet National de Marseille, under the direction of (LA)HORDE, for the UK premiere of *We Should Never Have Walked On The Moon*. This huge production featured 50 dancers, DJs and even a limousine outside the Royal Festival Hall. We invited the audience to walk around freely and find performances in unusual places, from the terraces down to the Undercroft. By using our unique architecture in this way, we created an event that could only happen here at the Southbank Centre.

Mark Ball, Artistic Director, said: 'The Southbank Centre is a place where you can stumble across something extraordinary around every corner – from the skaters in the Undercroft and the treasures of the National

Poetry Library, to the unexpected joy of our singing lift. That spirit of discovery is exactly what our programming should capture. By giving artists the freedom to take over our halls and terraces, we're creating unique, personal experiences that truly belong to the people who walk through our doors.'

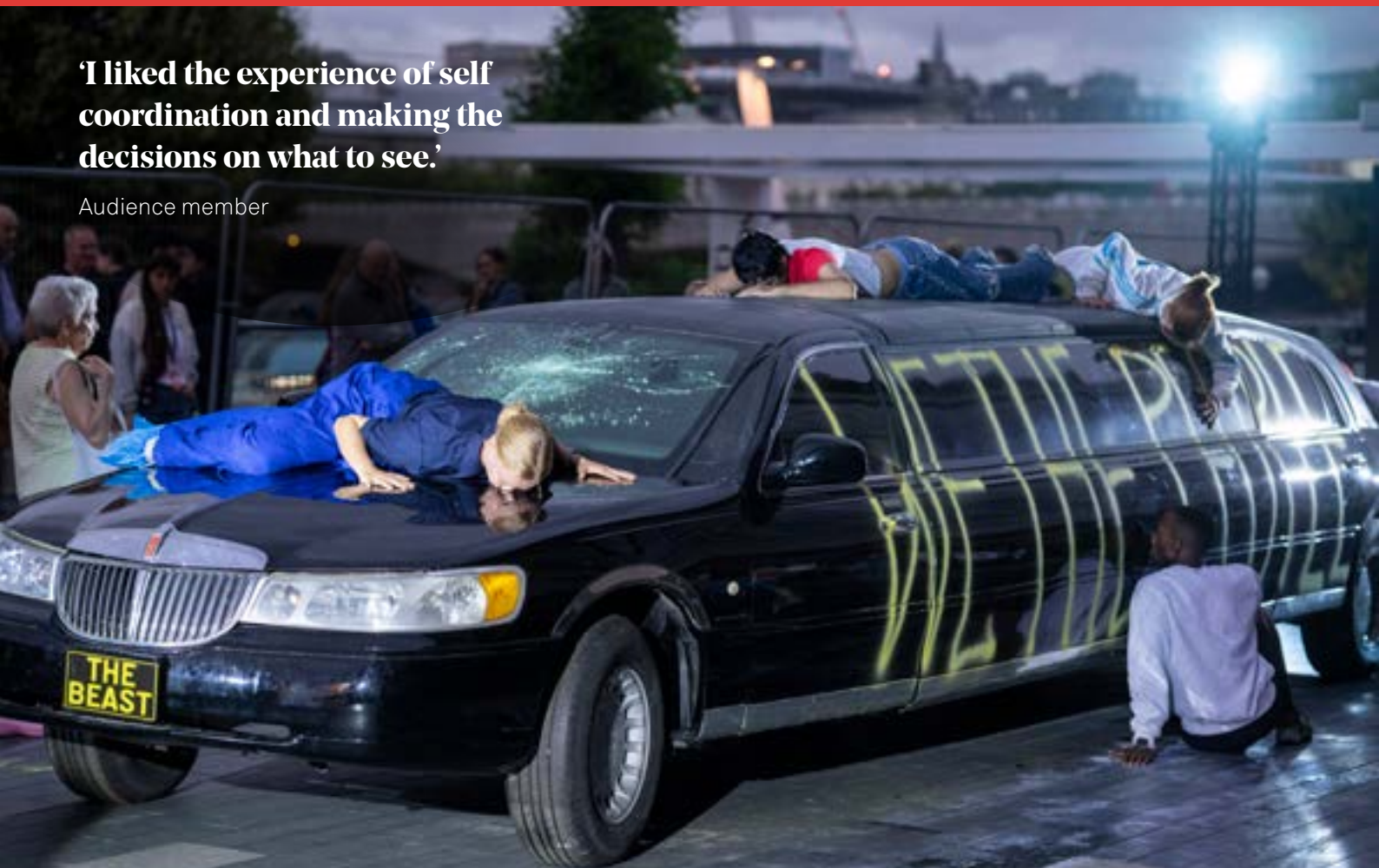
This presentation of *We Should Have Never Walked On The Moon* was made possible with the support of Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels. Rambert's collaboration with (LA)HORDE is supported by Cockayne – Grants for the Arts.

**'Extraordinary and unique event. I loved the free-flowing nature and beauty of the performances, and was inspired, provoked and moved.'**

Audience member

**'I liked the experience of self coordination and making the decisions on what to see.'**

Audience member



CASE STUDY

# KUNSTY



KUNSTY Cabrolé! © Pete Woodhead

In November, we launched *KUNSTY* – a new series that showcases independent British artists working across dance, live art and cabaret. This programme provides a space for experimental work that is often bold and hard to label. Over four days, *KUNSTY* held special late-night shows in a ‘cabaret lounge’ created inside the Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer.

**‘This distinctive new programme speaks to the future of how performance is being made, melding together dance, music and live art to offer a place for audiences to discover the radical and the uncategorisable.’**

Mark Ball, Artistic Director, Southbank Centre

## CASE STUDY

# London Literature Festival 2025

As the city's longest-running celebration of the written and spoken word, the London Literature Festival brings readers of all ages together for talks and performances. In 2025, the festival hosted global icons including Zadie Smith, Malala Yousafzai and former US Vice President Kamala Harris. We also hosted a UK-exclusive book launch with Reese Witherspoon and Harlan Coben.

We invited the musician Self Esteem (Rebecca Lucy Taylor) to curate a day of events. Her work and curation, which mixed songwriting, poetry

and stories, helped bring a new audience to the festival. This included Self Esteem's launch of her debut book, in conversation with Dolly Alderton. **45% of the audience for this event were booking for the first time at the Southbank Centre.** The festival was supported by Bukhman Philanthropies.

**In total, 24,000 tickets were sold for 52 events featuring 116 artists.**



Self Esteem: A Complicated Woman. Credit Pete Woodhead

# Telling the stories that matter and resonate

We believe the Southbank Centre must be a global stage for cultural icons and a home for the stories that shape our world. From political leaders to underground art-world pioneers, our 2025 programme captured the spirit of the times. We brought the most important voices of today into conversation with our audiences.

**8,695 artists performed on our stages in 2025**

**17 world premieres on our stages**

## CASE STUDY

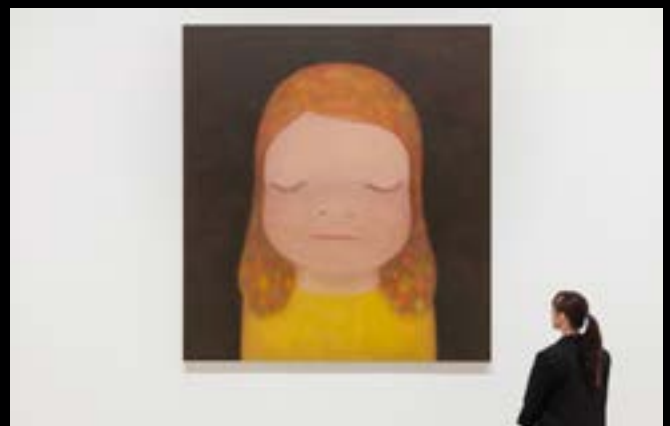
# Yoshitomo Nara at the Hayward Gallery

In summer 2025, the Hayward Gallery hosted the largest-ever European retrospective of Yoshitomo Nara, one of Japan's most celebrated artists. Featuring over 150 works – from his famous, wide-eyed portraits to large-scale sculptures – the exhibition was a phenomenal success. It reached a broad, diverse audience by bridging the gap between visual art and popular culture, drawing on Nara's love of punk music and spirituality. The exhibition's popularity was clear at every level; our shop required multiple restocks to keep up with the demand for Nara's unique, rebellious merchandise.

The exhibition received generous support from Hiroyuki Maki, the Huo Family Foundation, the Bukhman Foundation and many other contributors.

- **114,409** visitors attended in total. This included a single day with **2,365** visitors – our highest daily number for the Hayward Gallery since the pandemic.
- **36,271** people were booking for the first time at the Southbank Centre.
- **31%** of visitors were aged 30 and under.

- **33%** of visitors identified as being part of the Global Ethnic Majority, driven by a significant **21%** who identified as Asian and British Asian.
- **98%** of visitors rated the quality of the exhibition as good, very good, or excellent.
- **248** people from local Lambeth and Southwark community organisations visited the exhibition free of charge through our Community Connect ticket scheme.
- **343** children visited during our dedicated School Morning events, where they could take inspiration and respond creatively to Nara's artwork.



Installation view of Yoshitomo Nara. Miss Moonlight, 2020.  
Photo Mark Blower. Courtesy the artist and the Hayward Gallery.

## CASE STUDY

# Little Simz' Meltdown

In 2025, we celebrated the 30th edition of *Meltdown*, the world's longest-running artist-curated festival. Little Simz, one of the UK's most visionary artists, took the lead for the 11-day event. Her line-up blended local grassroots talent with global stars like James Blake, Nubya Garcia, Jon Batiste and The Streets. To ensure the festival was shaped by the people it serves, a group of Young Producers from across London was appointed to help curate events across the site.

- Tickets for Little Simz's closing night performance with the Chineke! Orchestra sold out in just **30 minutes**.

- **33%** of the audience for this closing performance identified as being part of the Global Ethnic Majority.
- Two weekends of free activities ensured the festival was a democratic, open celebration. This included our outdoor stages, where **59%** of the audience identified as Global Ethnic Majority and **22%** were aged under 30.
- *Meltdown* continues to act as a launchpad for the most vital voices in music. Just months after her performance on our stage, Lola Young won her first Grammy Award for the hit 'Messy'.



# Supporting the creative talent pipeline

The arts centre of the future must help the next generation of creative professionals – from artists and performers to technicians and organisers – get their start. By making it easier to enter the industry and providing

direct access to experts, we're building a stronger and more inclusive future for the arts. We provide the tools, training and networks that new talent needs to succeed in every corner of the creative industries.



# Technical Academy

In 2025, we welcomed our second cohort to the Technical Academy. This hands-on programme is for people with little or no experience of technician training and is taught by the professional technicians who help put on the world-class shows at our venues every day. It is a response to the skills gap in the industry and encourages new talent – especially from under-represented backgrounds – to learn about technical production. Training covers everything from building stages and setting up lights to sound design.

- 25 people took part in the Technical Academy in 2025.
- 68% of these participants identified as being part of the Global Ethnic Majority.

- 83% of our 2025 graduates have already found paid work, professional experience or further study in technical production in settings including the Royal Court Theatre, Rambert and the West End.
- Justine Simons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries, said: ‘The Southbank Centre’s Technical Academy addresses the industry-wide backstage skills gap and lack of diversity by unlocking opportunities for a new wave of diverse creative talent. Designed and led by top-tier professionals from theatre and live events, the Academy aims to equip the next generation with the skills, confidence and access they need to thrive backstage – and drive a more inclusive and innovative creative workforce.’



**‘Technical Academy helped me massively – it opened the door to the whole industry, which I always wanted to work in, but had no clue how to make a first step in.’**

Misha Blahodir, part of the 2025 cohort

CASE STUDY

# Southbank Centre Presents



Southbank Presents Cohort © Pete Woodhead

We're investing in future cultural leaders through *Southbank Centre Presents*. This programme gives emerging cultural programmers and curators real-world industry experience. Following a competitive process with 484 applications, we invited nine participants aged 21–32 to develop their skills and help shape our artistic future.

This group is learning from experts and partners like SXSW London and Factory

International. They will play a major role in our 75th anniversary in 2026, helping to plan events across literature, performance and technology. Two participants, Rhiarna Dhaliwal and Rohina Cameron-Perera, have already taken the lead by hosting our official 75th anniversary launch night in September 2025.

Generous contributions from Southbank Centre's Governors towards Technical Academy and Southbank Centre Presents made these programmes possible.

# Joining forces with the country's boldest, most innovative artists

From David Bowie to Nina Simone, the Southbank Centre has always been a home to and hosted the world's most creative minds. Through our new Associate Artists programme, we establish long-term partnerships to present

major new artistic projects. Each year, we team up with three new artists for a three-year period. We give them the creative freedom and the resources they need to debut ambitious new work in our iconic venues.

In 2025, we welcomed three new artists to our cohort:



**Julia Cheng**, a creative director and choreographer who has created work for dance, theatre, opera, musical theatre and grassroots projects



**Cassie Kinoshi**, a composer, arranger and alto-saxophonist who creates multi-disciplinary performance work



**Max Porter**, an award-winning author who has collaborated with musicians, songwriters, artists and theatre-makers

They join our existing Associate Artists cohort:



**Ivan Michael Blackstock**, a South London-born multidisciplinary creative, working as a choreographer, mentor and cultural innovator



**Love Ssega**, a musician, producer and performing artist, creating work that blurs civic engagement, understanding, activism and hope



**Conor Mitchell**, an opera and music-theatre composer, librettist and stage director renowned for blending stage design with contemporary visual arts

CASE STUDY

# Conor Mitchell's The Belfast Ensemble

In autumn 2025, Conor Mitchell used the Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall for the UK debut of his new queer opera, *Dublin Jack*. Performed by The Belfast Ensemble, this work-in-progress show gave the audience a rare, behind-the-scenes look at a major new piece exploring identity and personal power. Hosting this event shows our commitment to giving artists the space and the platform they need to test and grow big, experimental ideas.

**‘The Southbank Centre is a rare space that allows you to think as big as your imagination. Being an Associate Artist has given me the creative home and the resource to push the boundaries of what opera can be, allowing me to take the risks necessary to tell these complex, urgent stories on a world-class stage.’**

Conor Mitchell, Associate Artist



Image credit © Belfast Ensemble

# A democratic space without barriers

The arts centre of the future belongs to everyone. We believe that art and creativity should be a right, not a privilege. We're committed to breaking down the barriers – whether financial, physical or social – that stop people from taking part. By bringing people together and opening our doors to those who have felt excluded in the past, we make sure our site is a welcoming hub for all. To do this, we offer a joyful and inclusive environment,

ensure lots of our activities are free, and provide Relaxed Performances so everyone can feel at home in our spaces.

## A site of free discovery

In 2025, we continued our promise to keep a large part of our programme free for everyone. We also worked hard to keep our ticketed programme affordable for as many people as possible.

# 55%

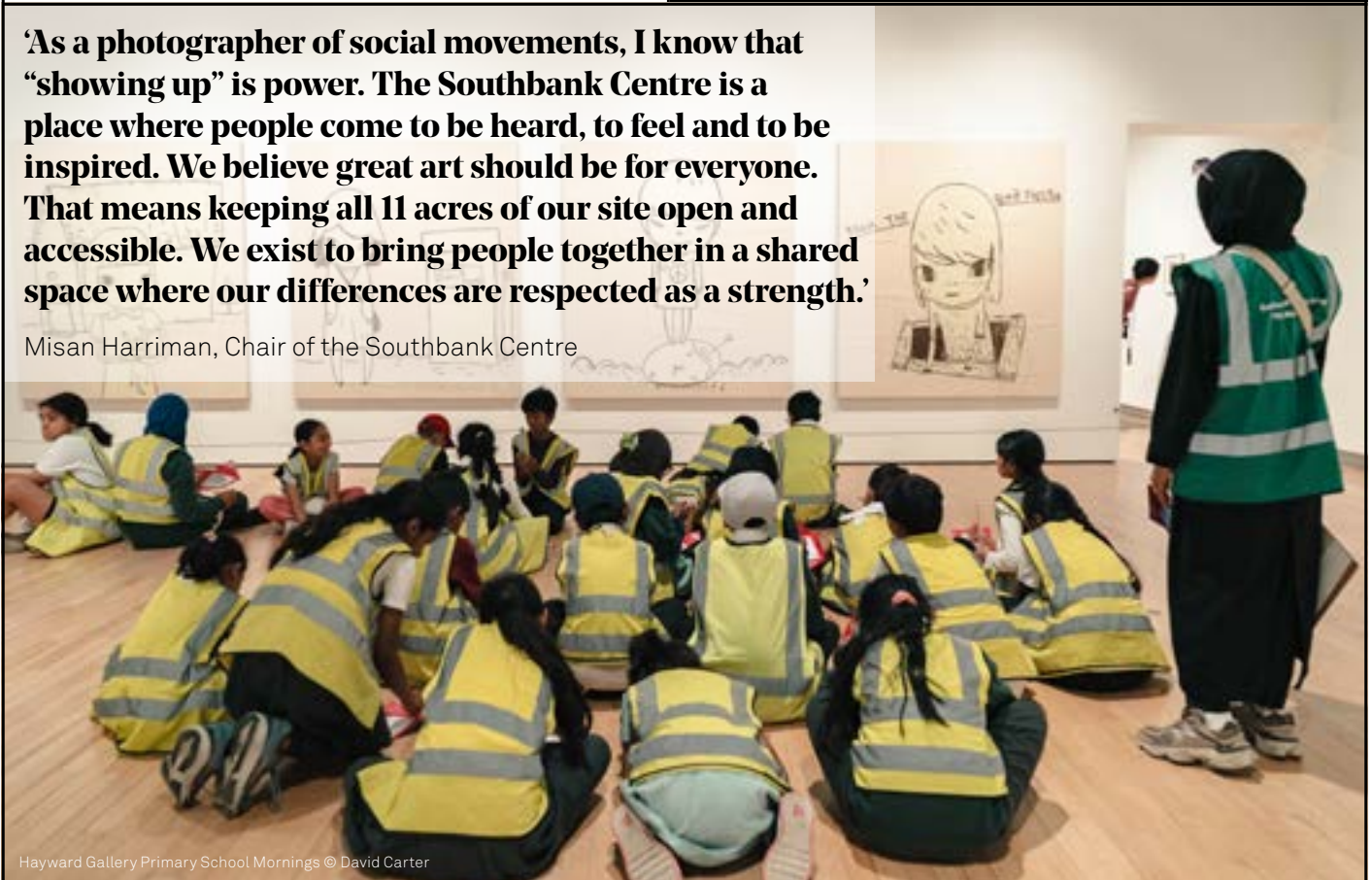
of our events were free in 2025

# 374,701

tickets were sold for £25 and under

**'As a photographer of social movements, I know that "showing up" is power. The Southbank Centre is a place where people come to be heard, to feel and to be inspired. We believe great art should be for everyone. That means keeping all 11 acres of our site open and accessible. We exist to bring people together in a shared space where our differences are respected as a strength.'**

Misan Harriman, Chair of the Southbank Centre



Hayward Gallery Primary School Mornings © David Carter



## CASE STUDY

# Open Doors 2025

*Open Doors* is a year-round programme that invites people to get creative and meet others. Held in The Clore Ballroom, Royal Festival Hall, it offers free workshops, social events and family fun. It's designed to help support people from all backgrounds, those at risk of loneliness and isolation, and the local communities of Lambeth and Southwark.

Highlights include *Creative Encounters*, hands-on workshops held every two weeks, and *WordPlay*, a fortnightly session of song, dance and games for children aged 0–5 and their parents or carers.

In 2025, over 11,200 people took part.



Creative Encounters: Collage in Motion 2025. Image Credit Genevieve Reeves

## CASE STUDY

# futuretense



futuretense © Pete Woodhead

We continue to support the UK's best new musical talent through our free gig series, *futuretense*. These gigs provide a professional stage for artists of all genres, while allowing music fans to find new sounds for free.

We hosted 37 *futuretense* gigs in 2025, and 4,295 people attended these performances.

## CASE STUDY

# Imagine

Supported by The Roger and Ingrid Pilkington Charitable Trust, *Imagine* festival turned our site into a giant playground for children during the February half-term. We welcomed an average of 13,425 visitors to the Royal Festival Hall each day of *Imagine*, with even more joining in the fun across our site.

To make sure every family could join in, *Imagine* is a Relaxed festival. This means we take a flexible approach to noise and movement during shows. We also provide BSL-interpreted, captioned and audio-described events.

A popular free highlight was the return of *REPLAY: A Limitless Recycled Playground*. Part art installation and part adventure playground,

*REPLAY* is a space built entirely out of recycled materials for children and their grown-ups to play with creatively.



## CASE STUDY

# Relaxed Hours at the Hayward Gallery

**'I enjoyed the supportive environment  
and felt safe to be myself'**

Visitor quote



While everyone is welcome in our spaces at any time, we know some visitors prefer a more relaxed environment with less noise and more support. Our Relaxed Hours at the Hayward Gallery are specially designed for visitors with sensory processing differences, neurodivergent visitors, those living with neurological conditions, as well as early-year visitors, parents and carers. To create a relaxed environment, our offer includes reduced capacity, chill-out spaces, noise-cancelling headphones, space to play, create and reflect on exhibition themes, and more. **458 tickets were booked specifically for our Relaxed Hours in 2025.**

# Strengthening our local ties

The Southbank Centre was one of the first major examples of using the arts to transform a local area in London. We believe our site belongs to those who live nearby, and so we're constantly working to strengthen our local ties. It should be an everyday resource where anyone can feel at home, whether they are visiting the National

Poetry Library, attending a festival or just passing through. By removing the costs and social barriers that can make large arts centres feel out of reach, we make sure our venues are a place for local voices and real connection. This includes supporting local groups that make life better in Lambeth and Southwark.

## CASE STUDY

# Community Space offer

In September 2025, we launched our Community Space offer to work more closely with community groups in our local area. We now offer local groups free use of a room (the Level 3 pavilions) in the Royal Festival Hall. These spaces are available once a month for community events, making it easier for local groups to work together without worrying about the cost of a venue. We have welcomed local

groups like Partnership for Young London, Lambeth Autism Advisory Service and Involve 2 Evolve for initiatives spanning mental health support, education and youth social action.

**'It gave us the space to run a workshop – the first step in our new group project.'**

Local community group member



Waves of Tory with Heart of the Glens Community Festival. Credit Pete Woodhead



CASE STUDY

# Supporting local music services

Lambeth Music Service and Southwark Music Service aim to provide high-quality music education to every young person in our local boroughs. In 2025, we hosted eight events for

these services, involving 2,900 students and 160 teachers from 62 schools. These events give local young people the chance to perform in a world-class professional setting.



# Building a home for the next generation

The arts centre of the future is defined by the people who use it. In 2025, we took big steps to make sure every young person feels they have a place here. By breaking down the barriers that usually keep people away, we aren't just inviting

the next generation to visit – we are giving them the tools and skills to lead. From working with schools to launching our Youth Collective, which includes Anu, the author of our foreword, we are putting young voices at the heart of what we do.

## Our work with schools

We run activities for primary and secondary schools all year round to inspire a love of the arts and support learning across the curriculum.

In 2025, we worked with 328 schools and 6,860 pupils.

### CASE STUDY

## Reframe: Inspire Schools



For our project *Reframe: Inspire Schools*, we worked with Key Stage 3 pupils in Birmingham, London and Manchester. Thanks to Apple's generous support, students had the chance to

work with professional artists to create a digital zine, using Apple technology. It gives students a chance to try new creative skills and show their work in exhibitions. The project continues in 2026.

- **14 schools** participated across Birmingham, London and Manchester.
- **382 young people** aged 11–14 years took part.
- **Nearly half** of the students were eligible for free school meals.
- **27 teachers** benefited from free Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions to teach digital and creative skills in the classroom.

## CASE STUDY

# Imagine a Story

We continued our Key Stage 2 literacy and creative writing programme, *Imagine a Story*. This project turns children into published co-authors of a professional book. Using an author's framework as a starting point, different schools write different chapters of an adventure story – without knowing the details of the other sections. We prioritise diversity in our guest authors and illustrators, ensuring children see themselves reflected in the stories they create.

- **96%** of teachers said it had a positive impact on their pupils' interest in writing.
- **85%** of teachers saw a boost in their pupils' creative confidence.



Imagine A Story © Pete Woodhead

## CASE STUDY

# Launching the Youth Collective



Youth Collective © Belinda Lawley

In summer 2025, we started the Youth Collective, delivered in partnership with Lambeth organisation Black Thrive. This is a group of 11–25-year-olds from our local

area who are helping to co-design our Arts & Wellbeing youth programmes. To establish the group, we hosted creative workshops and taster sessions in youth clubs, schools and community spaces in Lambeth and Southwark. The group meets regularly to learn new skills and help decide what our future projects for young people should look like.

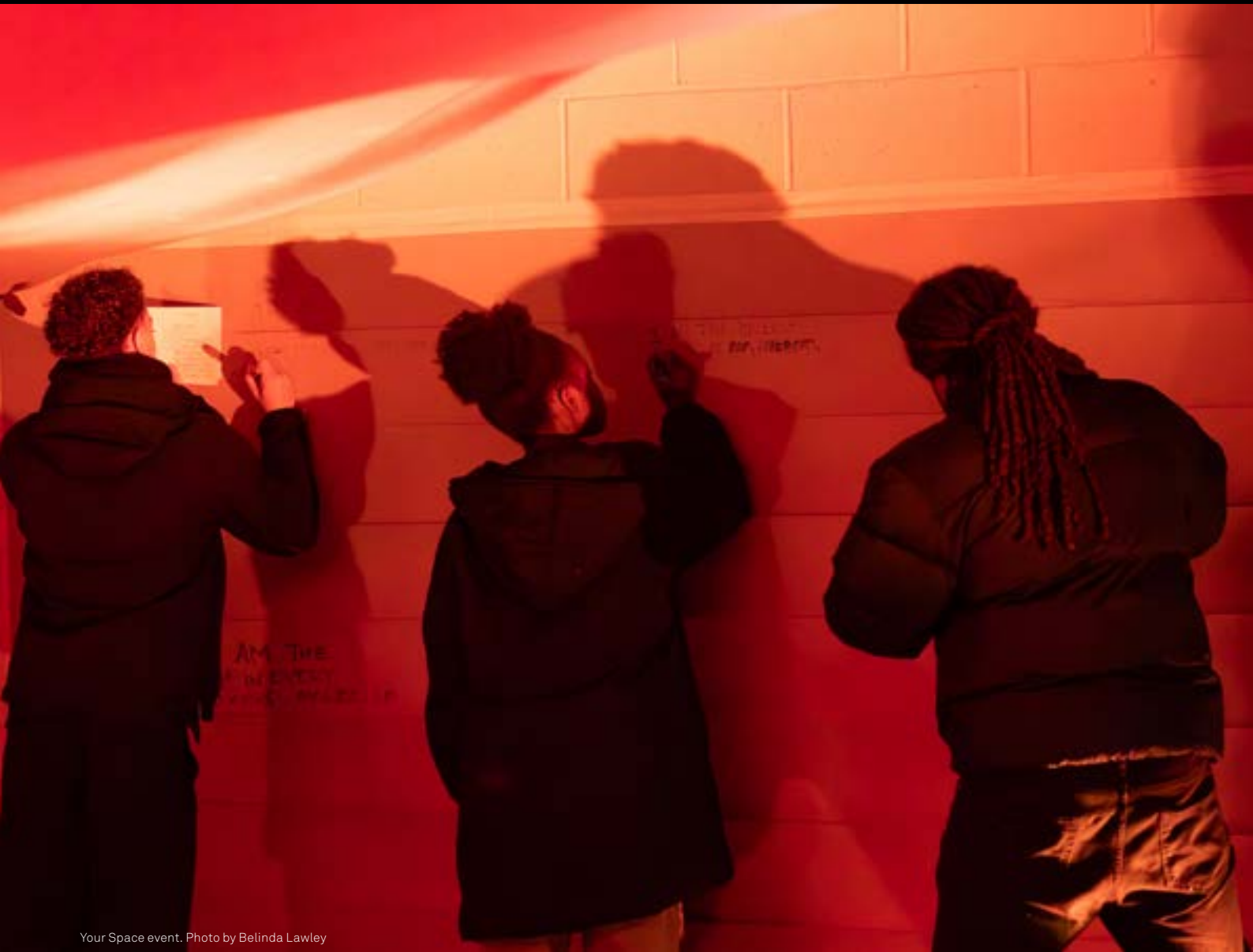
- **'Youth Collective feels like a warm living room'**

Participant quote

- **'I feel supported and I know there's a space I can come to and be myself, take a break from life and meet new people, it's great'**

Participant quote

# Our commitment to young people's mental health



Your Space event. Photo by Belinda Lawley

The arts centre of the future must be a place of care. In a year where even more research has proven that culture and creativity is good for our wellbeing, we have continued to offer projects that provide comfort and connection, with a focus on young people in south-east London.

We are also proud to be the home of the **National Academy for Social Prescribing**. Our work in 2025 serves as a foundation for our ultimate ambition: with the help of our valued partners, including the NHS South East London Integrated Care Board, we want to establish a permanent, dedicated space for creative health on our site.

## CASE STUDY

# Creative Community Wellbeing Scale

One of the biggest challenges in the arts is proving exactly how much creativity improves health. In 2025, we teamed up with Kinetika Bloco and Brunel University London to develop and pilot the Creative Community Wellbeing Scale. It is funded by UK Research and Innovation.

Crucially, this tool was co-designed by young people, ensuring it captures what creativity truly means to them. By using language and metrics defined by the participants themselves, the scale evaluates impact in a way that is empowering and in language that young people understand.

In summer 2025, we tested the scale with over 240 young people during our summer schools.

This successful trial means the tool can be rolled out across creative community settings in 2026, providing a youth-led, proven way to show how creativity transforms health and wellbeing.



Illustration by Chloe Watts

## CASE STUDY

# Creative Waiting

In 2025, we developed Creative Waiting, a transformative programme designed to support young people aged 15–18 who are waiting for ADHD assessments. With funding for this research and development phase from the Baring Foundation, we worked directly with young people who have faced mental health

challenges to design a new 12-week programme of creative activities, led by both an artist and a therapist. We hope this programme could be a solution to the national crisis in youth mental health waiting lists and that it could be used all over the country by the NHS.

In October, we visited the Houses of Parliament with three of these young people to talk to politicians about why this work matters.

**‘Creativity can make waiting less lonely. It gives young people skills and coping mechanisms to use for the future.’**

Evie, co-design participant

We are now working to secure partnership funding to deliver the first phase of this project in south-east London in 2026.



# A new Under-30s scheme



In November, we announced our Under-30s scheme – a free community offering discounted tickets and connection opportunities for young

people aged 18–30. From half-price Hayward Gallery tickets to discounts on innovative experiences, the scheme is designed to make our world-class programme accessible to a younger demographic.

- The scheme had over **1,300 sign-ups** by the end of 2025.
- **29% of subscribers** are Under-25s and 7.5% live in Lambeth or Southwark.
- Engagement is already high – with **26%** of the community already booking a ticket since joining.

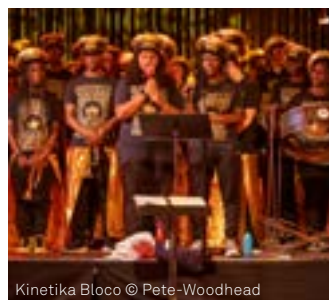
## Announcing two Resident Organisations

As part of our mission to give greater opportunities to young creatives, we officially recognised Tomorrow's Warriors and Kinetika Bloco as Resident Organisations, reflecting the long history we've had with both. Both deliver activity on our site on a weekly basis.



Jazz talent development organisation, creative producer and charity **Tomorrow's Warriors** has been running its acclaimed Young Artist Development

Programme at the Southbank Centre since 2009, nurturing and championing the next generation of jazz musicians.



Youth arts performance and leadership charity **Kinetika Bloco** has run an annual Summer School, creative and leadership

programmes at the Southbank Centre since 2006, empowering young people to develop creatively and take the lead within Kinetika Bloco and the wider sector. They celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2025.

# Our national impact

Building on our role as a nationally significant organisation, in 2025 we extended our reach far beyond the banks of the Thames. We believe that everyone in the UK should have access to world-class art, no matter where they live.

Through our Hayward Gallery Touring programme, we share major exhibitions with museums and galleries across the country, supporting local economies and cultural life.



**Barnsley • Bideford • Birmingham • Cardiff • Carlow • Cheltenham • Dittisham •  
Dundee • Edinburgh • Greenham • Leeds • Limavady • London • Maidstone • Manchester  
• Milton Keynes • Norwich • Nottingham • Nuneaton • Sheffield • Swansea • Worcester**

# Hayward Gallery Touring

As the UK's largest contemporary art organisation producing touring exhibitions, Hayward Gallery Touring works with museums and galleries to develop ambitious projects that are often beyond the scope of a single institution. We presented a dynamic and pioneering range of exhibitions in 2025 including:

- **To Improvise A Mountain: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye Curates** – This show highlighted the creative vision of British artist Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. After opening at Leeds Art Gallery, it travelled to MK Gallery in Milton Keynes.
- **Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood** – Curated by Hettie Judah, this exhibition

explored the experience of motherhood through 100 artworks. In 2025, it travelled from Sheffield to Dundee.

- **After the End of History: British Working Class Photography 1989–2024** – Curated by Johny Pitts, this landmark show explored working-class life, touring to venues including Stills in Edinburgh and Ffotogallery in Cardiff.
- We also continued the tours of **Paula Rego: Visions of English Literature** and **Material Worlds: Contemporary Artists and Textiles**, ensuring these major shows reach the widest possible audience.

**In 2025, our touring exhibitions were seen by 300,465 people in 23 cities and towns across all four nations of the UK.**



Marguerite Nugent, Cultural Director at Culture Coventry Trust (Previously Arts and Culture Manager Wolverhampton City Council), said: 'The project enabled us to demonstrate not just economic impact in terms of increased visitor numbers and secondary spend, but also social impact. The partnership with Hayward Gallery Touring made arts and culture visible in the city in a way it never had been before.'

Kirstie Hamilton, Director of Programmes, Sheffield Museums, said: 'The number one

benefit is the opportunity to work on, and present, exhibitions of such quality and depth. There's no way we could have afforded to develop *Acts of Creation* on our own given the range of artists in the show. We aim to originate a major show every five years or so, but even so, we can't emulate the depth of Hayward Gallery Touring projects. Working with Hayward Gallery Touring inspires my team and helps it to develop its knowledge – Hayward Gallery Touring's model encourages professional development and curatorial development. It empowers us to think bigger.'

## Our national reach is set to grow

We will use our 75th anniversary in 2026 to expand our work across the UK even further. We are planning new collaborative projects in

even more towns and cities to celebrate this milestone with the whole country.

# Our international impact

The Southbank Centre is a global stage – a place where the world’s most exciting artists choose to debut their work. By collaborating with international partners, we ensure that London remains at the heart of the global creative conversation. We share our own creative ideas with the world while bringing the best international experiments home to our audiences.

## 2025 artistic highlights include:

We’re proud to be a co-commissioner of the hit dance-musical *Illinoise*, based on Sufjan Stevens’ landmark album. The production was successfully staged at the Fisher Center at Bard and Park Avenue Armory, before transferring to Broadway, carrying our name to the heart of the New York theatre district.

Our major festival *South Asian Sounds* returned in 2025 to celebrate the rich musical traditions of South Asia. In partnership with global collectives, we hosted legends such as Baluji Shrivastav OBE and Osman Mir alongside rising stars, attracting a massive international audience both in person and through online broadcasts.

We hosted the highly anticipated London debut of the *Nature Theater of Oklahoma’s*

*No President*. This bold, political production brought the best of US off-Broadway experimentation to the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

## Reaching the world online:

Our digital platforms allow the Southbank Centre to reach people far beyond London. In 2025, our YouTube channel became a main gateway for international fans.

We received 2 million views on YouTube this year. While 12.5% of our viewers were based in the UK, a massive 87.5% joined us from overseas.

The USA is our largest digital territory, making up 19.1% of our total YouTube audience.

Digital streams for high-profile events like The Booker Prize showed even more global reach, with one in four viewers tuning in from the USA.



# Making our site and work greener

The arts centre of the future can only thrive if our planet does too, and 2025 was a major year for our environmental work. We reached important milestones, tried out new technology and took an honest look at our progress. As we face the climate emergency, we're committed to a plan that is both ambitious and realistic.

During 2025, we updated our targets to make sure every step we take is a meaningful move toward a net-zero future.

- **63% reduction in carbon emissions** from our buildings since 2014. This was achieved by upgrading our heating and cooling systems to be more energy efficient.
- **48% reduction in water use** compared to our baseline year of 2022/23. We surpassed our original 20% target by installing Propelair toilets, which use compressed air to save water.
- **60% recycling rate.** Thanks to our new mobile sorting unit, our recycling rate jumped from just 29% in previous years.
- **0% waste sent to landfill.** All our general waste is now sent to facilities that turn it into energy.

- **35 bird species found on site.** Our Natura Nostra Forest (a pocket forest) is a thriving natural space growing right in the middle of our concrete architecture.

While we've made great progress in saving energy and water, we've also faced some real-world challenges. Because of rising costs and other issues beyond our control, some of our original goals for 2025 – such as holding our first net-zero exhibition – have had to be redesigned.

Our updated plan for 2030 now includes a new Artistic Sustainability Policy and measurable targets for staff travel. This will make sure that all future performances and exhibitions are planned with the environment in mind. Our main goals haven't changed: we're on track for our buildings to be net zero by 2035, and for our entire operation to be net zero by 2040.



# Our economic impact and entrepreneurship

In 2025, there were

## 38.1m

visits to our local area on the South Bank

We employ

## 573

members of staff

## 8,695

artists performed on our stages

According to a 2025 survey of people visiting the local area on the South Bank,

## 50%

came primarily for a cultural event or performance.

We paid

## 560

freelancers in 2025

**‘The Southbank Centre is one of the cultural anchors that helps give the South Bank its distinctive character. As a valued member of South Bank Employers’ Group, it plays an important role not only in delivering world-class arts and culture, but in supporting the wider economic and social ecosystem of businesses and residential communities, and that make this neighbourhood thrive. Culture has always been central to the South Bank’s identity and authenticity, drawing millions of people here each year and sustaining our vibrant mix of commercial operators, visitors and those that work, live and study here.’**

Nic Durston, CEO of South Bank Employers' Group

As funding for the arts becomes harder to secure, the arts centre of the future must be commercially innovative.

In 2025, we made the most of our site's commercial potential. We also received over £3m in support from donors, private funders and companies in support of our charitable activities. This income is vital – it allows us to keep the Southbank Centre open to everyone and ensures that a large part of our programme remains free.

**We used our unique architecture and buildings to host moments that captured the world's attention:**

- **The 78th BAFTAs:** For the third year in a row, the Royal Festival Hall was the home of British film. Hosted by David Tennant, the ceremony put the Southbank Centre on the global stage to celebrate the best in film.
- **The King's Trust:** New to the Royal Festival Hall, we hosted this annual event for the first time, which celebrates the accomplishments of young people who have received support from The King's Trust.
- **Ocean with David Attenborough:** We welcomed Sir David Attenborough for this world premiere, which was attended by King Charles III and the Prince of Wales.

- **BFI London Film Festival:** As the festival's main venue, we hosted the high-profile Gala screenings, welcoming stars like Julia Roberts and Sean Bean to our red carpet.

We also welcomed over 300,000 graduates and their families from universities like London South Bank University and King's College London. By hosting these ceremonies, we introduce thousands of new visitors to our site and help create life-changing memories.

Our shops also saw record-breaking results. In 2025, the Hayward Gallery's Yoshitomo Nara retrospective proved that visitors didn't just want to see the art, but they wanted to take the artist's captivating, creative world home. Our retail team drove record-breaking results, selling:

- 60,000 postcards
- 47,000 badges
- 30,000 stickers
- 16,000 magnets
- 12,000 tote bags
- 8,000 catalogues
- 7,500 T-shirts



# A site fit for the next 75 years

11,672,984  
people visited  
our site



To be an arts centre of the future, we must have a strong, accessible and comfortable home with stages that are ready for world-class performances. To serve the millions of people who visit us today and in the years to come, we need ongoing and significant investment in our buildings.

In 2025, we continued our major project to improve the public spaces in the Royal Festival

Hall. This included refreshing the Level 6 Members' Lounge and kitchen to make them more sustainable and useful for our supporters. This work was a team effort between our building, technical and artistic departments. Together, they ensured that every improvement supports both our high-quality performances and the way people use our spaces every day.

## Looking to the future

In 2026, we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Southbank Centre. We've planned a landmark year of events, including massive site-wide projects like *You Are Here*, the return of our *Multitudes* festival and major exhibitions from icons like Anish Kapoor.

Our goal is to grow the number of people visiting our site by 10% by the end of 2026.

**We look forward to welcoming you.**

# Thank you

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