

SOUTHBANK CENTRE



A sustainable
future

THE YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/24

Cover: Warpaint performing in the Royal Festival Hall at *Meltdown* © Victor Frankowski

Ballet national de Marseille x LA(HORDE) performing *Roommates* © Pete Woodhead



In 2023/24 the Southbank Centre remained London's most vibrant cultural space and one of the top five most visited attractions in the UK.

'From its origins in the Festival of Britain in 1951 to today, the Southbank Centre has a history of producing pioneering artistic programmes.'

The London Magazine

During 2023/24, we presented a diverse artistic programme across our 11-acre site, supporting artists to explore new, boundary-breaking creative ideas, and enabling audiences and communities to see their interests and experiences reflected through the lens of world-class creative practice. We are particularly proud to have been a leading voice for positive change through our sustainability-focused season, *Planet Summer*.





Misan Harriman
Chair

I've been truly inspired by the programmes we have developed and delivered for young people and early-career creatives over the past year.

Our new *Technical Academy* showed that there is real appetite in the wider sector for interventions that tackle the issue of skills development for those starting out in their creative careers, and I'm glad we have developed a collaborative and innovative approach to supporting the talent pipeline.

Reframe: The Residency and Inspire Schools, two programmes for young Black and Black mixed heritage creatives developed through our unique partnership with Apple, showed the power and potential of global technology companies partnering with creative organisations. This collaboration has helped support skills, training and diversity in the creative workforce, therefore benefiting the entire creative community.

However, while our artistic output and social impact continue to grow, the ongoing requirement to keep our venues and public realm fit for purpose is becoming increasingly urgent and a risk to our charitable objectives.

We're very grateful for the continued support of Arts Council England as we continue to create an outstanding artistic programme while maintaining an 11-acre site on behalf of the nation, but we call on the government to address the historical underfunding of the capital infrastructure of our cultural buildings and help us as we develop a new vision for the Southbank Centre ahead of the Royal Festival Hall's 75th anniversary.



Elaine Bedell OBE
Chief Executive

The Southbank Centre belongs to the nation and its very popularity attests to its continuing value.

We were very pleased that the Southbank Centre maintained its position as the UK's fifth most visited attraction this year, with more than 20 million visitors enjoying our 11-acre site, outdoor stages, bars and restaurants, as well as our venues.

Summer 2023 began with a memorable *Meltdown* festival curated by Christine and the Queens, featuring the very best in contemporary music. Soon after, we opened *Dear Earth*, the flagship Hayward Gallery exhibition that anchored our summer season *Planet Summer* and underpinned our commitment to sustainability.

At the Southbank Centre, we take very seriously our commitment to support smaller arts organisations outside London. Our renowned Hayward Gallery Touring programme once again provided

curated exhibitions for galleries across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, in locations including Bristol, Cork, Exeter and Coventry, reaching 197,572 visitors from their local communities.

Unfortunately, enormous challenges continue in terms of maintaining and improving our site without sustainable capital funding.

We all care deeply about the extraordinary buildings we look after, and we are united in wanting the very best for our heritage and arts sectors. We are planning a 75th birthday celebration in 2026, and we hope very much we will receive the support and funding we need to ensure the Southbank Centre will be fit for purpose for this important moment in its history, and indeed so that it can last another 75 wonderful years.

52%

of events were free

3.4m

venue visitors

20m+

site visitors

787,000

tickets sold

5,054

events

197,000+

regional audiences
for Hayward Gallery Touring



Mark Ball
Artistic Director

The arts entertain us, allow us to explore new possibilities of living, and in increasingly turbulent times can help us make sense of the world around us.

The Southbank Centre's two central artistic ambitions – to become an engine of creativity and the nation's most culturally democratic and expressive space for artists and audiences – have guided all of our work this year.

Our reinvigorated performance and dance programme has seen new work by younger artists curated by the pioneer of performance art Marina Abramović in a five-day takeover of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Drew McOnie and Cassie Kinoshi's wonderfully alternative *Nutcracker* thrilled audiences by playfully reimagining the classic Christmas favourite, and (LA)HORDE/Ballet national de Marseille, one of the most exciting global dance talents, played in London for the first time to sold-out houses.

We once again staged a hugely successful *Opening Weekend* to

kick off the 2023/24 classical music year with a curated programme attracting the widest possible audience to classical music, including Manchester Collective's performance of *Different Trains* followed by a classical club night featuring music from titans of minimalism.

Our ambition to become the nation's most culturally democratic and expressive space for artists and audiences has started to take shape. Our guest curator George the Poet launched the London Literature Festival with a provocative spoken word event that celebrated London's vibrant spoken word scene. We also presented our new *South Asian Sounds* festival, showcasing music from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to reach London's diaspora communities.

We developed a summer site-wide programme *Planet Summer* in response to our Hayward Gallery exhibition *Dear Earth*.



Installation view of Jenny Kendler at the Hayward Gallery © Mark Blower

Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood, a Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition, was launched at Arnolfini Bristol in March 2024 before commencing a national tour.



Installation view of *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood* at Arnolfini, Bristol © Lisa Whiting, Courtesy Arnolfini and Hayward Gallery Touring.

Artistic

highlights



John Gerrard's *Surrender (Flag)* 2023 © Edmund Sumner

In addition to *Dear Earth*, the Hayward Gallery presented two five-star exhibitions *Hiroshi Sugimoto* and *When Forms Come Alive*, as well as a spectacular outdoor programme including John Gerrard's *Surrender (Flag)* 2023, Asim Waqif's वेणु [Venu] and our permanent *Natura Nostra Forest*.



© Gareth Gardner

We collaborated with architecture firm Squire and Partners and Year 6 children from Oasis Academy Johanna in Waterloo to create *Winter Windows*, an installation that illuminated the windows of the Queen Elizabeth Hall as part of our *Winter Light* exhibition.

George the Poet guest-curated the opening night of the London Literature Festival, a celebration of the strength and vitality of London's spoken word scene.



© Feruza Afewerki

The Marina Abramović Institute Takeover saw 11 artists taking over the Queen Elizabeth Hall with durational performance artworks. Audiences were free to wander on stage, backstage and even into dressing rooms to find performances that ranged from the fierce to the contemplative.



© Linda Nylind



© Victor Frankowski

Christine and the Queens' *Meltdown* was nominated for *Music Week's* Festival of the Year and attracted more than 27,000 people.



© Pete Woodhead

As part of our stellar classical music programme, Vikingur Ólafsson performed a transcendent *Goldberg* Variations in a sold-out Royal Festival Hall.

This year, we again hosted the BAFTA Film, Television and Video Games Awards, as well as the BFI Film Festival and multiple world premieres.



BFI London Film Festival 2023 in the Royal Festival Hall
© Millie Turner

Pioneering DJ and producer Honey Dijon took over our venues for two exceptional evenings of live music and club nights.



© Pete Woodhead



McOnie Company's *Nutcracker*
© Mark Senior

We collaborated with Underbelly to co-produce Drew McOnie's *Nutcracker* in the former Spiritland restaurant space. The space was transformed into an intimate jazz club for the occasion.



Poets Roger McGough and Brian Patten
at our 70 Celebration event © Pete Woodhead

To celebrate its 70th anniversary, the National Poetry Library launched the *70-Poet Challenge*, a project encouraging people to discover new poets performing and writing in the past 70 years.

We strive to provide accessible and inspiring cultural experiences for everyone through our free artistic programme and art installations.

Democratic access for all is one of the founding principles of the Southbank Centre, and we are committed to maintaining a large free-to-access arts programme. In 2023/24, more than half of our events were free.

One of our highlights last year was the launch of *Simmer Down*, a free monthly reggae and revival meet-up in partnership with Tomorrow's Warriors, created to reach older people of Caribbean heritage who live locally. The sessions bring together musicians and local people for a moment of joy, dance and soulful beats. This initiative reflects our commitment to uniting communities by sparking joy and connection through live music.

52%

of events were free in 2023/24

27%

of the audience at the *Opening Weekend* of our new classical season were first-time attendees

900

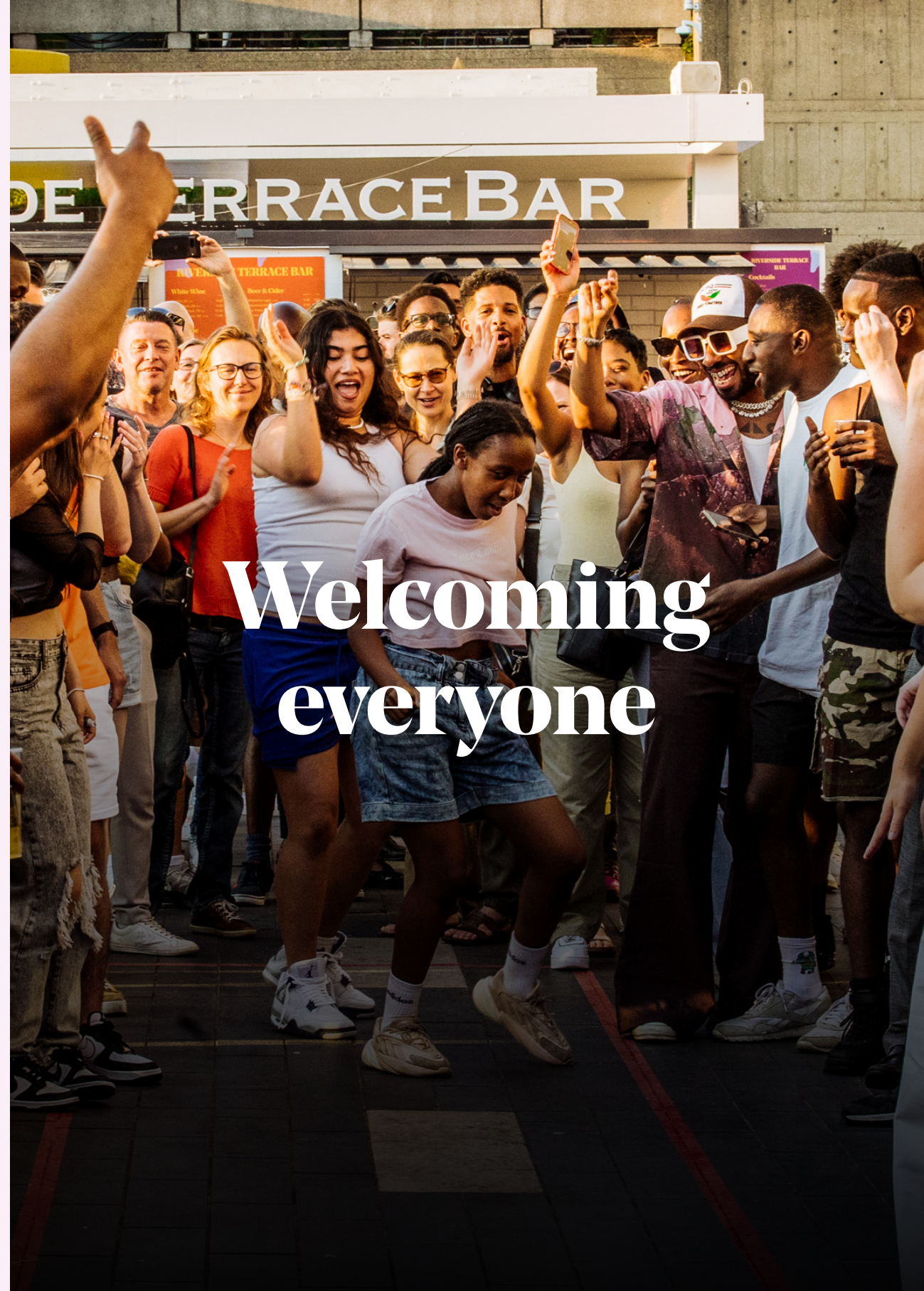
members of our community came to the Hayward Gallery as part of our *Relaxed Hours*

1,500+

people attended our free *Simmer Down* meet-ups

Opposite: *Faggamuffin Bloc Party* on our Riverside Terrace © Victor Frankowski

Below: Celebratory event for *Art by Post: Poems for our Planet* © Pete Woodhead





Growing creative talent

At the Southbank Centre, we are committed to helping grow the creative talent of the future through learning and training opportunities.

As an engine of creativity, we support artists to forge new innovative artistic ideas. *Reframe: The Residency*, our groundbreaking partnership with Apple, supported 77 young Black and Black mixed heritage creatives in London, Birmingham and Manchester to develop their artistic and production skills and present their work across the three cities. Last year, we also initiated 12 *Southbank Centre Studios* creative residencies to develop new artistic work with diverse individuals and collectives.

In March 2024, we launched our *Technical Academy*, a new innovative scheme to address a sector-wide skills shortage and diversify the pipeline into the technical industries. Twenty-five Londoners with no previous experience in technical production took part in this fully funded programme and built skills in a range of work that happens backstage in creative venues. We are developing the scheme to run several times a year and reach even more participants.

700+
applications received for 25 spaces at our *Technical Academy*

77
young Black and Black mixed heritage creatives took part in *Reframe: The Residency*

400+
individuals supported through our Talent & Artist Development programme



Opposite: *Reframe: The Residency* exhibition © Pete Woodhead

Left: Participants in our first *Technical Academy* © Pete Woodhead

Below: *Reframe: The Residency* cohort © Linda Ny Lind



We want to put children and young people at the heart of the Southbank Centre.

We believe children and young people should be able to explore their creativity and access cultural opportunities regardless of where they live or go to school.

At the Southbank Centre, we offer an exciting year-round programme of activities for primary and secondary schools across the country. As part of *Reframe: Inspire Schools*, 21 secondary schools across London, Manchester and Birmingham worked with artists, illustrators and climate experts to design their own class zines, voicing their responses to the climate emergency. Additionally, more than 2,500 Key Stage 2 schoolchildren from Newcastle, Norwich, Kendal, Sunderland and London participated in our creative writing project *Imagine a Story*.

In February 2024, we programmed an ambitious *Imagine Children's Festival* with more than 130 events and 40% of the festival completely free. Overall, our stellar family programme included 454 performances in 2023/24.

11,063

children and young people as well as 1,134 teachers engaged with us in person

117

teachers from 103 schools engaged with us through digital events

15,000+

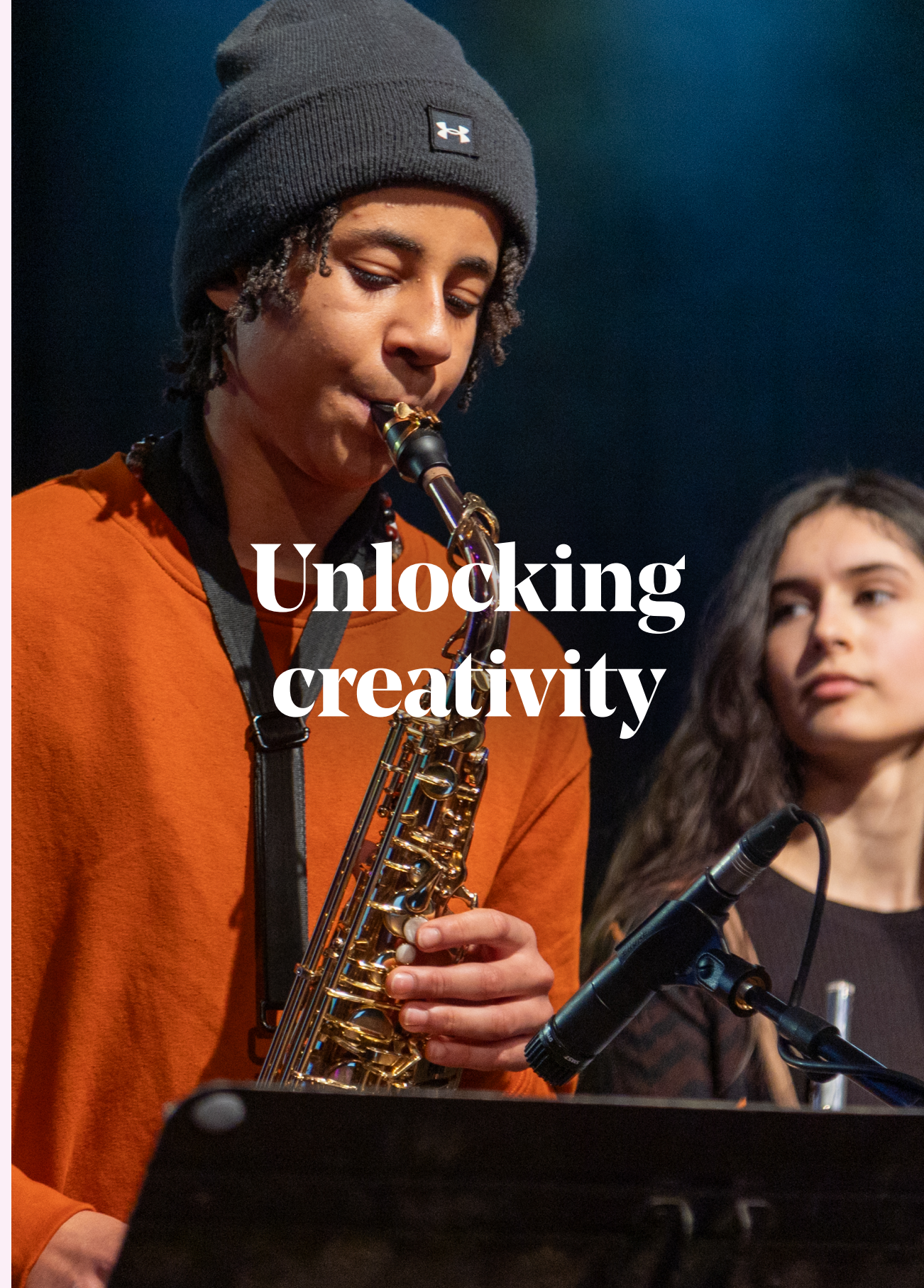
children attended our *Imagine Children's Festival*



Above: Children and parents at our REPLAY installation © Pete Woodhead

Left: Young people taking part in the Secondary Schools Takeover: Hiroshi Sugimoto © Pete Woodhead

Opposite: A musician from Tomorrow's Warriors' Young Artists Development Programme © Pete Woodhead



Unlocking creativity



Championing sustainability

Throughout the summer of 2023 we championed the need for action, care and hope in the face of the climate crisis.

We presented *Planet Summer*, our climate-focused summer season that brought together artists, activists and communities to inject hope into the climate debate. Our programme included key voices such as Greta Thunberg, Mikaela Loach, and Mark Carney. *Planet Summer* was inspired by the Hayward Gallery's exhibition *Dear Earth*, a group show that explored how international contemporary artists reframe our emotional and spiritual responses to the climate crisis.

Planet Summer was also a call to action for the Southbank Centre as we head towards our net-zero targets. Efforts to embed sustainability in the artistic process were increased, and sustainability work was carried out throughout our buildings. In January 2024, our internal Sustainability Champions Group celebrated its first anniversary following a busy year of work reflecting on and making changes to reduce our impact.

68%
reduction in carbon emissions compared to our baseline

10%
biodiversity net gain target set, to be achieved by 2030

28%
reduction in water use from 2022/23

0%
waste to landfill

Opposite: Fefe Talavera, *El Camino* © Owen Billcliffe

Below: *The Climate Conversation*, a discussion with young climate leaders including Greta Thunberg during *Planet Summer* © Pete Woodhead



The Bach Choir with the Philharmonia Orchestra
at the Royal Festival Hall © Andy Paradise



Thank you

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Monica Monajem
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Opposite: Carol Williams' organ recital © Pete Woodhead



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