

Impact Report 2024

the Albany





The Albany is a performing arts centre that exists to inspire, develop and support creativity in South East London. With year-round activities and events including award-winning programmes for young creatives and adults over 60, music, theatre, and family performances, our work is led by the talent and imagination of our local communities.

The Albany is an incubator for new ideas and initiatives. We are home to an incredible **22 organisations** who are delivering impact every day, and we are a hub for the next generation of talent – from our Creative Coding courses to our youth record label, REZON8. This year, two national networks we were running - Future Arts Centres and the Family Arts Campaign – both became independent companies funded by the Arts Council and flew the nest, proving that by giving time and space to nurture ideas here in Deptford, they can go on to have national significance.

After the momentous delivery of We Are Lewisham, the Mayor's London Borough of Culture in 2022 – for which the Albany was lead producer – we were appointed as **Lewisham's first Anchor Cultural Organisation**. We are sharpening our focus on the significant social and economic impact we can have here in the borough of Lewisham; but our work has also gained international recognition, as we were nominated for a major international award, and our Artist of Change project – where artists are embedded in local communities – has been replicated in arts centres across Europe.

Gavin Barlow,
CEO

As with all arts venues, we are navigating a very challenging environment, with continued reductions in funding, the cost of living crisis, and the recovery from Covid, at a time when the needs of the communities we serve are similarly challenging. I am proud that we have nevertheless continued to deliver a strong creative programme of events for our local community, reaching over **50,000 audience members**, and offering more than **500 tickets for free** or for just £1.

Our new Creative Strategy is focused on maximising our impact and involving local people even more in every aspect of our work and our decision making. We will be recruiting a new Community Council who will have a direct say in what they want to see happen in the building; we will be supporting artists; and we will put funding directly in the hands of local communities through our Pizza & Pitches commissioning scheme.



Vicki Dela Amedume,
Creative Director

The Albany consistently punches above its weight – we are adventurous and ambitious in trialling new ways of working, putting our faith in artists and young people, and delivering a high quality programme of events that Deptford residents can enjoy on their doorstep.

This report highlights just some of our key achievements over the past year, from our theatre, comedy and music shows to our year-round programmes such as Come As You Are and Meet Me... at the Albany; we are a unique, creative centre at the heart of our community. But you don't just have to take our word for it - you'll also be able to hear from some of the people who have been directly impacted by our work.

This has been my first year as Chair of the Albany's Board of Trustees, and I'm looking forward to leading the organisation into an exciting future – from embedding their new Creative Strategy to moving forward with plans to transform the building.



Michelle Matherson,
Chair, Board of Trustees

Our year at a glance

Awards

Shortlisted - Art Explora Academie des Beaux Arts award

Championing new forms of audience engagement and participation in the arts.

Winner - Community Initiatives Board of the Year, Board Awards 2023

Recognises our work to recruit a diverse and inclusive Board of Trustees.



Vision statement

The Albany is the engine room for people to reach their creative potential, tell their stories and define their own culture. Together we will inspire new possibilities for positive change.

Values

Open and welcoming

We foster an inclusive space, both physically and culturally, where anyone can feel welcome and heard.

A home for ideas, creativity and action

Everyone has the potential to be creative. We believe that creativity can make real change for individuals and on urgent issues around social justice and the climate crisis.

A connector of people

We put our communities at the heart of any process. We share our knowledge to shape change and create something better for everyone.

Responsive and flexible

We're co-operative, willing to listen and adjust our approach according to the task in hand. We love seeing amorphous ideas become reality.

Committed to representing the extraordinary creativity and diversity of Deptford and Lewisham

We're deeply rooted in Lewisham and South East London. We advocate for its residents, representing the diversity of our borough and the voices of Black and Global Majority people.

Adventurous and ambitious

We believe that a sense of adventure is essential to achieving our vision. While we are rigorous in our approach and celebrate our successes we're not afraid to try something new.

On our stages

We programme work that speaks directly to people living near the Albany. Lewisham is one of the most diverse boroughs in the UK, with just under half of residents (48.5%) coming from Black and Global Majority backgrounds. We are committed to amplifying the voices of diverse performers, and sharing stories that resonate powerfully with our audiences.

We provide a home for local artists, giving them the space and time to develop work which may not be given a platform elsewhere. This year, we supported two bold, ambitious new shows from **Associate Artists Camille Dawson and Quang Kien Van**, and gave space to countless more.

We programme high quality, award-winning performances for our local audiences, which this year spanned genres from theatre to music, dance and visual arts, and featured an international collaboration between young artists in the UK and Ukraine. But we also put the power back in their hands: our Pizza & Pitches project invites local people to bring their own ideas to the table, and pitch to receive funding to make them a reality. This enables us to bring our audiences into our decision making, discover new talent, and uncover truly inspiring stories.

Feedback from audiences continues to focus on how welcome they feel in the building, and on our outstanding access provision. We strive to keep our work affordable and accessible, and as well as giving away £1 tickets to our shows, we also continued our partnership with Tickets For Good, giving away free tickets to NHS workers and those in receipt of the government's Cost of Living payment.

277 performances
6 commissions and co-productions
45% of audiences from Lewisham
93% rated their experience good or very good
92% agreed or strongly agreed that the Albany is a welcoming place for all the community
94,000 views or listens to digital content



Awards

- **Shortlisted** for **Best Ticketed Event** (Association of Cultural Enterprises) for 2022's *Sun & Sea*
- **Gold** for **Attitude is Everything Charter of Best Practice**. We were the first ever venue to achieve this level, which shows a commitment to providing a gold standard of accessibility.



Babylon (image by Kang Ong)



Lemon Lounge (image by Ellie Koepke)

*The support you showed me in bringing *The War Inside* to life was invaluable to the project and to my personal journey as an artist*

Camille Dawson, Associate Artist



On our Stages Programme Highlights

Out of Harm's Way

July 2023

Young people took over our buildings for a week-long festival, produced in collaboration with SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS, which included a collaboration between British and Ukrainian young artists.

The War Inside

Sept 2023

Associate Artist Camille Dawson created an immersive piece about her experience with auto-immune disease.

Babylon

Oct 2023

Associate Artist Quang Kien Van presented a genre-bending dance-gig-theatre piece.

Talking About The Fire

Oct 2023

An R&D series of performances and workshops from Chris Thorpe, exploring nuclear weapons, ahead of a full production at the Royal Court Theatre and a return to the Albany in 2025.

Lemon Lounge

March 2023

A sold-out club night from a south London not-for-profit sound system collective, building on relationships forged during London Borough of Culture 2022's Lewisham Sound System Trail.

Engaging the youngest theatregoers

We cultivate a love of the arts from childhood, inviting our youngest arts attendees into the building with regular events for local families.

This year's programme included work from disabled-led theatre company Daryl & Co, a new show featuring traditional Indian instruments from City of London Sinfonia, and our Christmas

production, *The Light Princess*, a co-commission with ARC Stockton, which explored themes of friendship, inclusivity and individuality. The commission involved an award of £44,000 for each company to develop their show, as well as up to four weeks' R&D and rehearsal space, and production, technical and marketing support.

85 family performances
12,948 audience members
26 schools and nurseries attended the Christmas show

We LOVED bringing our show to the Albany, what a gorgeous venue you have and what lovely audiences you gave us too!

Producer of Museum of Marvellous Things



toooB (Image by Glenn Foster)



Engaging the youngest theatregoers Programme Highlights

The Museum of Marvellous Things

Oct 2023

A half term run of shows featuring giant puppets, magical effects, interactive storytelling and live original music, based on the picture book by Kristina Stephenson.

toooB

Oct 2023

A gentle sensory adventure for babies and toddlers.

The Light Princess

Dec 2023

A production for Christmas from local company LASTheatre, commissioned by the Albany and ARC, Stockton.

Wonderland

Jan 2024

A new show about the changing seasons for babies and toddlers, developed by City of London Sinfonia and performed in the children's library at Deptford Lounge.

Boxed In

March 2024

A co-production from Half Moon Theatre and disabled-led theatre company Daryl & Co.



Right: *Wonderland* (Image by Henoc Bayolekama)



Living outside our bubble

Case study

In their words... "There is always a brilliant lineup of family shows, close to us. [It's] a brilliant way to introduce the kids to coming to the theatre.

The shows have been high quality, the chance of these shows being in Deptford is fab! We have gone to the theatre in Central London before, but it is a very different experience. The Albany feels like part of what we can do

and part of our life here in Deptford. The kids love being here, knowing that there is a theatre where we can watch shows but also the garden, a safe green space that is conveniently attached to a café.

The variety of shows seem to be carefully curated to speak to aspects of people's lives [...] I think every one of the shows has given us something to think about. It's had an impact, opened our eyes in different ways.

I don't think there is anything else that does what the Albany does, certainly not within walking distance to us, that brings that element of story and bigger perspective in such an accessible and high quality way."

*Rebecca is a local parent who brings her children to see family shows at the Albany.



Deptford Lounge: Managing a community hub

The Albany manages Deptford Lounge, an award-winning, purpose-built library, event and meeting space, on behalf of Lewisham Council. We have welcomed over 3 million visitors since the building opened in 2012.

In the summer, we bring the community together for events on the square, and in winter we are a warm space, welcoming people in for a hot drink and a comfortable space to read, chat or study. All year round, we hire out our spaces to local community groups for events, meetings, clubs and sports.

It's been amazing having Deptford Lounge to call our home over the winter. Always a friendly and helpful welcome, the pitch has been a godsend through the cold and wet. We have really loved playing in a venue in Deptford particularly!

Deptford Ravens, regular hirers of the rooftop ball court

210,781 footfall
11,764 people attended **106** events
21,000 people attended **32** exhibitions
We co-created work with **14** community groups and **20** artists
5,400 visitors to Vietnamese Lunar New Year Festival

Above: DL exhibitions (image by Ines Yearwood-Sanchez)



Managing a Community Hub Programme Highlights

Roller Disco

A new monthly event, attracting skaters from across South London and almost always selling out.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions ranged from Urban Transitions created by A-Maze Arts Collective with local residents, to Trader Tales celebrating the historic Deptford Market, and the Garden of Hope installation created from waste materials, which included 18 workshops for 400 local school children.

Off The Chest

An inclusive poetry open mic night which celebrated its fourth birthday at the Lounge this year.

Festivals

This year we produced a Winter Festival, and hosted Deptford X, Deptford Literature Festival and New Cross and Deptford Free Film Festival. We continued to host the Vietnamese Moon Festival and the Vietnamese Lunar New Year Festival, which attracted 5,400 visitors, an increase of more than 50% from the previous year, making it the largest Vietnamese community-led event in the UK. We even featured on Vietnamese TV!



Our Vietnamese Village in London

Case study

Image by Vietnamese Family Partnership

In their words... "We have been involved and supported by the Albany for 20 years now. From projects and workshops working with young people and single parents of Deptford, through to our bi-annual festivals: Moon Festival in the mid-autumn and the New Year festival in Spring.

Our community feels welcome and at home here and can celebrate our existence; though it's for

everyone, it's a great space for integration, to bring the positive out of everyday life, and bring community spirit.

The best thing about the Albany is the staff team have a sense of community, and the experience to work with us. It is not about bricks and mortar for us, but the relationship that creates memories, builds loyalty and has an impact on people.

We feel that it is a house for the community, a permanent and recognisable space, to gather, to be together. A sometimes-invisible community becomes visible and celebrated twice a year, and we have amazing plans with Deptford Lounge and the Albany over the coming years to build and grow our work with the Vietnamese community in Deptford."

*Quynh is the founder of the Deptford-based charity, Vietnamese Family Partnership.



The beating heart of Deptford

Above: CaffA (image by Ines Yearwood-Sanchez)



The Beating Heart of Deptford Highlights

CaffA

Our community café is a meeting, social and work space, and home to everything from Meet Me at the Albany for older people to Heart n Soul's Allsorts for learning disabled adults, and screenings of the FIFA Women's World Cup over the summer. Highlights this year included becoming a designated 'warm welcomes' space, offering free hot drinks and soups those who needed it; and partnering with Refugee Cafe to host a Ukrainian chef who cooked delicious food using produce from our garden.

Community Garden

Our garden is a green oasis in the heart of Deptford. We offer opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to get outdoors, grow food and connect with nature. This year we held weekly gardening sessions for learning disabled students from Lewisham College; regular lunchtime gardening sessions for adults; holiday sessions for children; and projects with Tidemill School, Meet Me..., and the Metro LGBTQ+ charity.

Creative Communities Membership

Our new membership scheme aims to build a community of local creatives, offering them access to low-cost co-working, fixed desk and rehearsal space, fundraising support, a resource hub and networking opportunities. Since the membership launched, 500 desks have been booked alongside 67 hours of subsidised space bookings.

As Lewisham's Anchor Cultural Organisation, our local communities are at the heart of everything we do, and our buildings are usually abuzz with groups, artists and organisations who have chosen to make us their home.

Our 22 residents include nine Arts Council England National Portfolio organisations, and we regularly collaborate with them on events including Heart n Soul's Squidz Club, a club night for young people with learning disabilities that takes over the entire Albany building; and Spread the Word's Deptford Literature Festival.

Supporting Lewisham's creative community is central to our ethos – we take a lead role in the new Lewisham Strategic Partnership, 86% of our room bookers receive a community or charity discount, and we make a point of platforming local suppliers in our CaffA.

- 68** community-led co-productions
- 176** organisations supported
- 22** residents
- 145** Creative Communities Members
- 161** days of free rehearsal and meeting space offered to artists, community groups and creative companies
- 85** small arts and culture organisations connected with for the first time
- 163** hours of free advice and support offered



*** A great place to be**

Case study

In their words... *"I have seen changes in the garden space over time [...] we helped install the pond, there has been an increase in plant varieties in the garden and now we even have an area dedicated just to our students to garden where they have built a tent and the students love it. [...] After Covid the garden was more overgrown but now it looks beautiful. I have seen an increase in enjoyment with the students, they see the changes in the garden as well, they ask lots of questions like "what is going to be here?" and see the completions of the projects they are working on. It's great for their well-being and to interact with nature. We are very grateful!"*

* Marite is a teacher at Lewisham College, who brings a class of learning-disabled students to gardening sessions each week.

Image by Emmanuel Cole

Nurturing the next generation

Our youth programme is led by the ideas and imagination of the young people we work with. Our projects for 5 to 25 year olds provide opportunities to explore a variety of creative forms from dance to music, theatre and even digital, whilst developing valuable life skills including confidence, leadership and team working. We also support young people into work in the creative industries; providing training, mentoring and advice in everything from coding to lighting and sound for live events.

This year we pivoted our work to focus more on using creativity to support young people with their mental health. Young people conducted research on the lack of spaces for their peers to go when they're not at home or at school; which led directly to the creation of a new weekly building takeover, **Come As You Are**. Our youth record label, **REZON8**, also moved to offer sessions using music and lyricism as a tool to support positive mental health.

The Albany has helped me to become a creative person. [...] It's like having a life outside of school and outside of home so that's really nice. It definitely helped with my mental health.

Love2Dance participant

827 sessions

1,300 young people, of which

78% were Black and Global Majority,

52% were resident in social housing

92% reported increased skills, social connections and confidence

126 young creatives were supported to develop their own work

156 professional artists were employed to deliver sessions

2,271 hours of paid work provided for young people



Nurturing the next generation Programme Highlights

Love2Dance

Our street dance sessions for 8 –18 year olds, delivered in partnership with Lewisham Council Housing Services. Our dancers performed in a sold out showcase, and one group made it to the finals of the UK Street Dance competition.

People, Places and Poetry

Youth Programme participants Aleksa Asme and Kaylah Jackson published a report which found that 83% of young people believe there aren't enough spaces they can access easily and safely, instead spending their time on the streets, at bus stops and in shopping centres. Both Aleksa and Kaylah are now trustees of the Albany.

A Big Conversation

We collaborated with local youth organisations Lewisham Music, Lewisham Youth Theatre, Heart n Soul and SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS on a creative research project about young people and mental health, funded by the Mayor of London. More than 10,000 people engaged with a series of podcasts about the topic.

Come As You Are

We launched a weekly building takeover providing space to hangout, free recording sessions, workshops, open mics and free food.

REZON8

Our youth-led record label offers free time in a recording studio, bootcamps, open mic events and support for young people to use music and lyricism as a positive tool for their mental health.

Creative Coding Collective

A six-week coding bootcamp, offering an introduction to web app development, HTML, CSS and Javascript as well as support into employment.

SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS

Youth theatre collective SLC took up residence in a new container space in the garden, creating a free meeting and work space for young people.

We Move

Eight social action projects created by young people, funded by Children in Need, including creative care packs for young trans people, and a short sci fi film set on a local housing estate.

Backstage Technical Training

A six-week course providing insight into lighting and sound for live events, offering a direct pathway into paid work with the Albany technical team.

Love2Dance (image by Darcy Voller)

REZON8 (image by Darcy Voller)



From enemy to lover

Case study

In their words... *"The Albany has had a real impact on my life. Everything I've learned from here carries over to other places...It has really helped to kick start my career. I've been given a lot of opportunities to grow and explore what I want to do as an artist."*

I had a bad experience working at another venue this week, where I didn't know anyone and felt so weird and out of place. Nobody introduced themselves or tried to talk to me, it had a bad vibe. So today I came back to the Albany and felt so much more comfortable. When I bring new people like my friends or my partner to the Albany, they say they feel very welcomed by everyone. It just feels authentic and genuine. A big moment for me was performing my own show in the Studio earlier this year. I've done something at 18 years old that many people only start doing when they're much older. It was so surreal.

Here at the Albany, there's always someone to share a smile or a hello with, and I feel I can talk to people. [...] It's awesome to have access to people who aren't teachers or parents – they're older but there's no power dynamic there. It's really inclusive. We all just want the same outcome, not working for each other but with each other."

* Rofeda is 18 and has been a participant in the Albany and SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS youth programmes for five years.

Top image: Rofeda by Valya Korabelnikova



SOUNDS LIKE CHAOS (image by Valya Korabelnikova)

Inspiring creativity at any age

This year we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Meet Me... at the Albany, our award-winning programme for people aged 65+, delivered in partnership with our residents Entelechy Arts. The sessions bring formerly lonely or isolated older people together to work with artists to learn or rediscover creative skills, make friends and have agency over their social lives. Members are just as likely to be suspended on silks in a circus workshop, enjoying a performance of jazz, mask making, writing poetry or singing in the weekly choir.

This year, alongside our weekly building takeovers, which include arts and choir sessions, we also delivered:

Meet Me... on the Dancefloor

A series of dance workshops, encouraging members to get active. The first six sessions were led by IRIE! dance theatre, who taught West African and Caribbean folk movement. These sessions were funded by Sport England.

Meet Me... on the Phone

Weekly phone calls for those who feel unable to join our sessions in person. The focus of these calls has ranged from poetry to watercolour and creative conversations led by local museums and galleries.

70 Meet Me members
40 volunteers
63 artists employed



Meet Me (image by Ines Yearwood-Sanchez)



I feel like I am going to meet my other side of the family.

Ochuko, Meet Me Member

Meet Me (image by Ines Yearwood-Sanchez)

* Out of my shell

Case study

In their words... "I started coming to Meet Me @ eight years ago – my Mum passed away October 2015, so I must have started coming around March 2016. I was her carer; I used to take her to hospital appointments, to activities, see the family, have a laugh. It makes me emotional to talk about it, even now - but after she died I didn't really know what to do with myself. Then Rosemary – one of the volunteers here – said I should come down on a Tuesday, see if I'd like to volunteer too. I thought – and this isn't really caring in the same way, I know – but do I really

want to do that again? But once I came down, all the people were so friendly and made me feel so welcome – and they'd gone through things like I had, lost people... it helped me with my own grief.

I've had lots of great memories with Meet Me – the trip to Brighton, going to the Queen's House in Greenwich, the Caravan Project... That was where we all sat outside and wrote poems, toasted marshmallows, and sang songs. It opened me up too – my Mum used to say I wouldn't say boo to a goose [...] but Meet Me At has given me a purpose, brought me out of myself. I even say when they give me a hospital appointment on a Tuesday – I can't do it then! I'm volunteering!

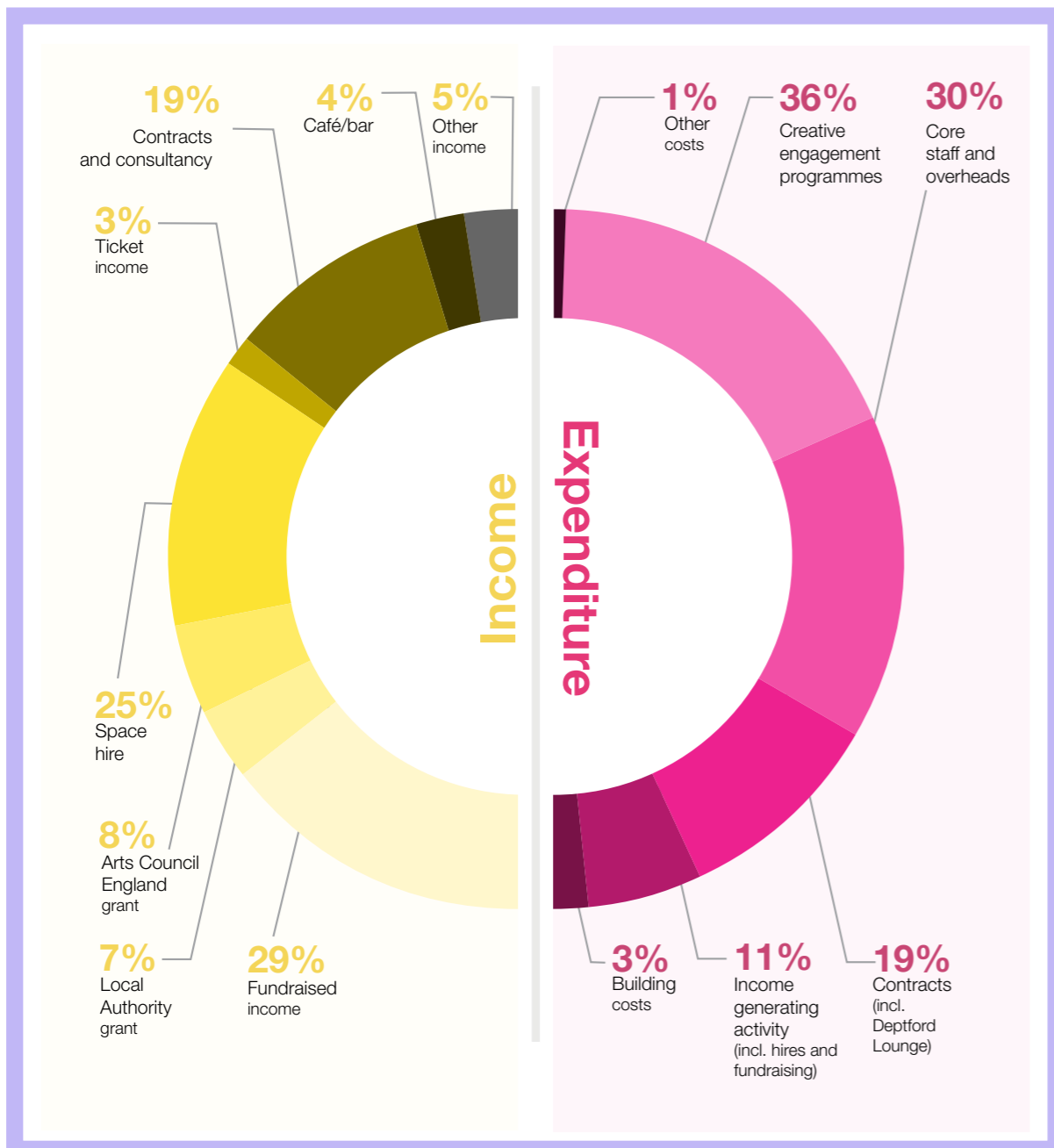
*This storyteller is a volunteer with Meet Me.

Finances

As with all arts venues, we are navigating a very challenging environment, with continued reductions in funding (60% in ten years), the cost of living crisis, and recovery from COVID, at a time when the needs of the communities we serve are similarly challenging. The cost of running a vital community hub is rising, for example in real terms over 10 years we have saved 30% in gas and 37% in electricity consumption but our energy budget has doubled. We are finding that we need to do more, with substantially less.

We receive less than 15% of our income from statutory sources – every year we need to raise a further 85% through a combination of earning our own income and fundraising. Turnover in 23/24 was £2,181,563, with 56% as earned income through space and event hire, resident offices, ticket income, and other income – 29% of income was through donations from trusts, foundations and statutory sources as well as individuals.

Our expenditure for the year was £2,664,180 with a planned deficit budget.



REZON8 (image by Aleksa Asme)

Thank you!

We are grateful to our funders who enabled us to support our community, young people and artists this year:

Arts Council England
The Baring Foundation
BBC Children in Need & National Lottery Community Fund
#iwill Fund
City Bridge Foundation
Clarion Futures
Cockayne - Grants for the Arts
Goldsmiths, University of London
Greater London Authority
Jack Petchey Foundation
Lewisham Local (Warm Welcomes Fund)
London Borough of Lewisham
London Youth
Mayor of London
National Lottery Community Fund
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust;
Sport England
The London Community Foundation
Youth Music

And those who wish to remain anonymous.

Residents

Apples & Snakes
Day 600 Ltd
Entelechy Arts
Fairbeats
Heart & Soul
Independent Theatre Council
Kali Theatre Company
LBL Street Trading
Lewisham Education Arts Network
(LEAN) Theatre Centre
Lewisham Family Self-Help Association
New Earth Theatre Company
Poetry Translation Centre
Recruit a Chef
Refuge Community Outreach Project
Refugee Council Lewisham
Spare Tyre Theatre Company
Spread the Word
Street Traders Lewisham
Studio Raw
Three Boroughs
Theatre Centre
Together UK

Thanks to all the staff, volunteers, artists and freelancers who have contributed to our creative community this year.



The Light Princess (image by Alex Brenner)