

# The Belfast Ensemble Limited

## Company Limited by Guarantee

### Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2024

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The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

#### Reference and administrative details

**Registered charity name** The Belfast Ensemble Limited

**Charity registration number** NIC108409

**Company registration number** NI640393

**Principal office and registered office** Crescent Arts Centre  
University Road  
Belfast  
Northern Ireland  
BT7 1NH

#### The trustees

R Brown	
T Mctighe	
K Taroff	
L Harris	(Resigned 4 April 2024)
G Neill	(Resigned 11 December 2023)
J Rae	(Appointed 11 October 2024)

**Independent examiner** Finegan Gibson  
Causeway Tower  
9 James Street South  
Belfast  
BT2 8DN

#### Structure, governance and management

The Belfast Ensemble was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 24/08/2016 (No: NI640393). It is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and is also a registered charity since 19/10/2022 (No: 108409). Artistic direction and management are undertaken by an Artistic Director and Executive Consultant, while the administration is carried out by a Company Manager, with support from a book-keeper, all of whom are part-time.

Trustees were sought at incorporation and since with a view to covering several areas of relevant expertise. As at 31 March 2024 there were four trustees none of whom have any financial liability in the event of the charity winding up. The Board meets quarterly alongside a Finance & Operations sub-committee, each of whom has their own Terms of Reference.

# **The Belfast Ensemble Limited**

## **Company Limited by Guarantee**

### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **Objectives and activities**

The Ensemble's charitable objective is:

i. To advance the education of the public in the arts and in particular to present, promote, organise, manage and produce musical works of cultural and educational work including music dramas, operas, operettas, film, television and digital broadcasts, dance productions and cultural events and exhibitions for the public benefit.

Our constitution states "The Belfast Ensemble is a non-profit 'new music' organisation making its work in the city of Belfast. The Company's mission is to establish a performance ensemble that produces a season-by-season programme of music-theatre activities. These activities will engage, through touring and residencies, with the wider world."

#### **Achievements and performance**

The Ensemble created, performed and recorded several original and live works during this period in Belfast, London and Brighton. We toured our award winning production - Abomination - A DUP opera to the QEH at the Southbank Centre and Theatre Royal as part of the Brighton Festival, supported generously by Culture Ireland. Marc Almond performed with the Ensemble at the Grand Opera House as part of Belfast International Arts Festival and a new ambitious commission, The Headless Soldier, at The Lyric Theatre as part of and generously supported by Outburst Queer Arts Festival. The year also saw our Artistic Director, Conor Mitchell begin to compose a new work for the Ulster Orchestra to be performed at The Ulster Hall in May 2024. In July we embarked on our first international tour to Festival de Marseille with a revised version of our first show, the Doppler Effect in partnership with Festival de Créations Queer Contemporaines TRANSFORM! And Outburst Arts at the Festival de Marseille as part of the British Council's UK/France Spotlight on Culture in association with Culture Ireland and to local audiences at The MAC in September. Conor was also made one of six Southbank Centre Associate Artists (2024 - 2027) with the offer of collaborating and experimenting with their 6 resident orchestras and other artists.

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### **Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)***

**Year ended 31 March 2024**

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#### **Financial review**

Revenues increased 348% to £430,929 (2023: £95,974) with a profit of £150,121 (2022: deficit of £4,851) recorded for the year. Amount of £280,808 was spent on direct Charitable activities. The Ensemble remains a going concern in a healthy financial state.

#### **Public Benefit**

All of the charitable activities are undertaken for the benefit of the public. The trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

#### **Policy on Reserves**

The Belfast Ensemble aims to maintain reserves at a level that will enable the organisation to provide for contingencies, withstand periods of poor trading conditions or, in extreme circumstances, to manage a fundamental restructure, or orderly wind-down, of its activities. The trustees have established the level of reserves (that is those funds that are freely available) that the charity should ideally have. The current level determined, devised to cover core costs for a period of three months is £35,000.

The Belfast Ensemble aims to make a small surplus through its engagements. It is intended that any such surplus will be used to ensure that the reserves policy is achieved and maintained. Additionally, it is intended that any such surplus will be used as a contingency fund in order to effectively manage any deviations in budget expectations, including bad debts; or to assist in maintaining a positive cash flow balance if required.

#### **Risk Management**

The Finance Committee has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. A risk register has been established and is updated quarterly and shared with the Board for discussion and ratification. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Significant external risks to funding have led to the development of a strategic plan which will allow for the diversification of funding and activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors in our work and practice. All procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

#### **Related Parties**

Neither the board nor the individual trustees are involved in any artistic decisions as to programming or casting. All trustees give their time freely and no trustee received remuneration in the period 2023/24, beyond the covering of essential expenses.

#### **Plans for future periods**

We will host a one-off gala concert of an existing musical in late spring 2025 and are thrilled to have been awarded a grant from the Arts Council of Ireland Opera Projects and Production Award to develop a new concert work for the Republic of Ireland and Belfast in Autumn 2025 which will see us create stronger partnerships across the island and the UK and enable us to connect with international delegations as potential commissioners for future work. We will develop and present a full production of the gala concert in Spring 2026 in partnership with The Lyric, Belfast. Our commitment to generating, profiling and supporting creative talent in Belfast remains critical to our mission and plans for residencies and masterclasses will continue with a two week intensive in Summer 2025. Work will also begin on a new ambitious opera for 2027/8.

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#### **Small company provisions**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 10 December 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Brown', is positioned above the printed name and title.

R Brown  
Trustee