



PITLOCHRY  
FESTIVAL  
THEATRE

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2024/25





### ***The Sound of Music Young Company 2024***

Two teams of six talented young performers, aged 6 to 16 years, were selected to play the von Trapp children in our production of *The Sound of Music*, which ran from 15 November to 22 December 2024, providing an extraordinary opportunity for young people to take centre stage in iconic roles.



We are proud to offer a range of opportunities for young people to access and benefit from high quality cultural engagement, by providing pathways to learn, explore and create together, both onstage and backstage. In addition to NT Connections and *The Sound of Music Young Company 2024*, we also ran work experience placements, our school engagement programme (which included year-round tours and our flagship schools project Common Ground), and regular sessions through our Drama Club, Youth Dance and provision for early years.

### **NT Connections Festival 2024**

Pitlochry Festival Theatre is one of only two Scottish venues to host the National Theatre's prestigious Connections Festival, which showcases the best of exciting young acting talent. The Festival aims to celebrate young people, theatre-making and the importance of access to the arts.

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Thanks  
Our Supporters

**Since 1951, Pitlochry Festival Theatre has been the heart and soul of Highland Perthshire. Attracting over 100,000 visitors every year, we're more than simply a place to come and see a show, we're Scotland's leading producer of musical theatre and the country's only rurally-located major arts organisation.**

Our purpose is to improve lives by sharing Pitlochry with the world and the world with Pitlochry, and our mission is to create life-changing experiences for as many people as possible in our communities, through our theatre and our environments.

As a charity, in everything we do – from community engagement to creative development, from sustainable practice to artistic collaboration, and from showcasing new work to staging timeless classics – we are committed to nurturing an exciting cultural future for Scotland.

#### **Footloose (front cover)**

Adapted by Dean Pitchford and Walter Bobbie, and based on the original screenplay by Dean Pitchford, this was a co-production between Pitlochry Festival Theatre and the New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich. Directed by Douglas Rintoul and augmented with new songs, *Footloose* was staged in the main Auditorium to rave audience reviews, and 5 and 4 star reviews from critics who called it 'glorious' and 'uplifting' (*The Scotsman*). The show ran from May to September 2024 at Pitlochry, before transferring to Ipswich in October.

# SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

21 JUN - 27 SEP

BY JANE AUSTEN  
ADAPTED BY FRANCES POET

A Pitlochry Festival Theatre  
and OVO Production



## ***Sense and Sensibility***

This Jane Austen classic was adapted by Frances Poet, directed by Adam Nichols and designed by our Head of Production, Nick Trueman. A co-production between Pitlochry Festival Theatre and OVO, St Albans, it was uniquely built with the versatility to be staged on OVO's outdoor Amphitheatre after its June to September run in our Auditorium. We are indebted to Katharine Liston for her generous donation in support of this production.

*"This year, perhaps more than ever, I've been thinking about leadership and ambition in the arts. At a time of political and economic uncertainty, clarity and boldness feel essential. Alan Cumming's appointment symbolises more than artistic excitement – it offers a chance to rethink how we connect, how we create and how we sustain ourselves."*

Kris Bryce | Executive Director

**Welcome to our Annual Review 2024/25, an opportunity to reflect on our impact as a charity and our moments of magic as a theatre over the last 12 months. Here, we celebrate and thank the people and partnerships behind our success, and we share our ambitions for the year ahead.**

It's fair to say that this has been a year of positive transition and momentum, during which we were delighted to welcome Alan Cumming as our new Artistic Director. Alan's energy, vision and deep passion for Scottish theatre represent an exciting new chapter for us; his tenure will help to champion Scottish creativity, nurture emerging talent and open our doors ever more widely to audiences, artists and communities. As we welcomed Alan, we also celebrated the extraordinary legacy of Elizabeth Newman, whose six years as Artistic Director saw Pitlochry Festival Theatre evolve into Scotland's largest producing theatre. Elizabeth's contribution to our artistic excellence, her support of our talented team and the spirit of collaboration she instilled cannot be overstated.

While the landscape is turbulent, Pitlochry Festival Theatre continues to prioritise accountability and impact – cultural, environmental and economic. Our strategic path is clear, our purpose is strong, and we're enthusiastic about the next chapter.

Behind the scenes, we remained focused on strengthening our financial foundations, ensuring our sustainability in a challenging economic landscape. The team delivered powerful productions and creative partnerships, grew our community engagement programmes, and took meaningful steps towards our goal of becoming Scotland's first net-zero theatre. I thank them for their dedication. We welcomed new audiences, commissioned new writing and laid the groundwork for the next steps in our creative and capital development programmes.

In closing, my thanks go to our supporters, partners and audiences, and to the many artists and collaborators whose generosity and passion make all this possible. We are aware of broader economic fragility going into 2025/26, but this year has shown us that when strategy, creativity and care come together, meaningful impact follows. In that, we find confidence for the road ahead and I look forward to your part in that journey with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kris Bryce".

**Kris Bryce**  
Executive Director

## The Winter Words Festival 2025

With a programme curated by Alan Cumming, Winter Words ran from 21 to 23 February, bringing leading writers, poets, broadcasters, chefs and performers to Pitlochry. Across three days, the Festival offered talks, conversations, readings, food events and activities that highlighted Scottish writing, culture and ideas.



*"We strive every day to make sure that as soon as anyone walks through our doors, we welcome them and we make their experience special – no matter if they're coming to see a work in the main house or just sit down with a coffee and take in the view. Our building and our staff are all part of a potentially magical, life-changing experience for every single person who crosses our threshold, and we must never forget that we are the custodians of our audiences' dreams and memories."*

Alan Cumming | Artistic Director

*Alan, can you talk about your first impressions of Pitlochry Festival Theatre as Artistic Director (rather than an artist or visitor) and talk us through your first five months 'behind the wheel'?*

"I think overwhelmed would be the best word to describe my first impressions and indeed a lot of my first five months! Overwhelmed at the welcome and enthusiasm and support I felt during Winter Words – the first piece of programming I did for the Theatre and my first time interacting with audiences and properly working with all the Theatre's staff – and also overwhelmed by the turnout of local people, their energy and sheer joy at my DJ set on the Saturday night of the Winter Words weekend. And then overwhelmed by the amazing artists from all over the world who have reached out and expressed their excitement and who want to be a part of the next phase in the Theatre's history. Overwhelmed also by the magnitude of the task I have taken on and by the areas that I am not an expert in; overwhelmed by what I have to learn, what I have to translate and the work I have to do."

*What aspects will inform your artistic direction and can you share any plans for the future?*

"Looking back at the last 40 years of my life, I realise I have forged a career that has been able to straddle many genres, but each one able to feed and live comfortably alongside the other. I do tiny, independent films and I do blockbusters. I do experimental, devised theatre and I do classics and musicals. I champion new and up and coming artists as well as celebrate the work of my established peers. So that ethos and that formula is how I aim to work at Pitlochry. I will both champion new, Scottish talent and welcome more established, international artists to come and join us. Together I think we can create an international destination of theatre excellence."

*We talk about being located in a small Highland town but gathering people from all over the world to share and experience stories together. Can you talk us through how you plan to achieve and deliver that?*

"The theatre has a mantra about 'sharing Pitlochry with the world and the world with Pitlochry'. I did not make this up but it was actually one of the things that made me realise I could do this job when I was thinking of applying. So, I want to bring my experience and knowledge and contacts, and merge these with the aim and direction the Theatre is already going in. Above all, I want it to be fun. Sometimes I feel we all forget about fun."

*We also talk about the importance of working in collaboration – both strategic and creative – looking ahead, what will collaborations mean and look like for the Theatre in the future?*

"What's increasingly clear is that it is imperative for theatres to co-produce with other venues, to share costs and make work more financially viable. But that also means that each time a Pitlochry production is seen elsewhere it is an advert for our ethos and our standards of excellence. Considering the talent I hope to attract, and also the level of interest we have received from producers and other venues already in our planned programme, I think we are moving in a very positive direction in the future. This is both in terms of having our work performed domestically and internationally but also in terms of increasing our revenue streams from commercial runs that will plough money back into Pitlochry and enable us to take more risks and expand our artistic horizons."



**Alan Cumming**  
Artistic Director

# A SNAPSHOT OF 2024/25

## THE BRENDA LINE

15 AUG - 18 SEP

WRITTEN BY HARRY MOULD



### ***The Brenda Line***

The world premiere of this new piece of writing, penned by Harry Mould, was performed for Studio audiences during August and September by cast members Charlotte Grayson and Fiona Bruce. Mould's first play shines the spotlight on the women who volunteered for the Samaritans in the mid-1980s, carrying out the complex task of being 'The Brendas'. Their story is represented with compassion, honesty and respect.

**57,414**

audience numbers  
at the Theatre

**22,379**

at other venues

**Footloose at New Wolsey Theatre**

9,589 people attended 30 performances

**Sense and Sensibility at OVO**

1,898 people attended 13 performances

**Shirley Valentine at the Lyceum**

2,515 people attended 19 performances

**A Streetcar Named Desire**

5,918 people attended 18 performances at the Lyceum and 1,892 attended 4 performances at His Majesty's Theatre Aberdeen

**The Brenda Line at the Traverse**

567 people attended 4 performances

**54,190** tickets sold

across our summer and winter sessions

*"Exciting programming and efficient marketing were central to the year's success, with The Sound of Music becoming our highest-grossing winter show ever. The response to that production was a real reminder of the power of well-loved titles to bring people together across generations. Along with bold seasonal shows, new writing and co-productions, we delivered 509 magical performances to over 60,000 people."*

Kris Bryce | Executive Director

**Over the last year, against a backdrop of uncertainty across the sector, we have kept a clear line of sight on financial sustainability, strategic delivery and cultural value. We've invested in our future, kept a close eye on costs and delivered work of real scale and reach.**

Creative Scotland's funding uplift, doubling their annual support from £425,000 to £850,000 by 2026, was one of the strongest percentage increases in the country and not only reflects a belief in the Theatre's resilience, planning and performance, but supports our goals for long-term sustainability. While cost inflation remains a real concern, and we remain the lowest funded producing theatre (relative to the other major producing theatres in Scotland), we've held our position through disciplined management and a growing focus on commercial revenue.

#### **A sense of optimism and energy**

Alan Cumming's appointment has already had a significant impact, bringing a real sense of optimism and energy across the sector. And what's been most striking is the response from artists, funders and partners alike, reflecting a spirit of renewed enthusiasm for what's possible in regional theatre. Internally, his arrival has brought invigorating early thinking on how we make and share work and, combined with upgraded facilities and improved infrastructure, it's opening up new conversations about how we create experiences that reflect both ambition and care.

#### **Investing in our future**

Philanthropic funding, which is absolutely vital, remains challenging, particularly for cultural charities like ours, and we redoubled our fundraising efforts over 2024/25 in the face of an increasingly turbulent future. We identified three cross-cutting themes to inform our development and philanthropy strategy – producing magic, nurturing talent and building communities – and continued investment in our stunning estate will support all three themes.

*"We are hugely grateful to all our supporters, who have given so generously throughout the year. It is heartening to know there are those who care as passionately as we do about the magic we produce on stage. Their gifts ensure we can continue to nurture talent and connect with our communities; their investment ensures our future remains bright."*

Zuleika Brett | Director of Development

#### **Creating magic inside, outside and online**

In our main Auditorium, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* captivated audiences with its memorable songs from the 1960s, while *Footloose* was a joyful and exuberant celebration, staged 40 years after this iconic Hollywood film first hit cinema screens. And just as Frances Poet's beautiful adaptation of Jane Austen's classic *Sense and Sensibility* delighted audiences with its timeless romance and emotional depth, so Willy Russell's warm, feel-good drama, *Shirley Valentine*, enchanted audiences in Pitlochry and then further afield, during its later run at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh.

Outside in the Amphitheatre, we delivered two wonderful productions in the summer of 2024. The return of Elizabeth Newman's adaptation of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett was a sellout success; this classic children's story continues to charm families with its timeless magic and was a delight to produce. *Dido and Aeneas*, a co-production with Scots Opera Project, was a new and fresh version of Henry Purcell's opera, using Scots Language and Scots Gaelic. With a professional cast of 5 and a community cast of 25, it saw our Amphitheatre resound to the sound of glorious music. We are grateful for the support of Cruden Foundation, whose investment in Amphitheatre enhancements in 2024 enables wonderful performances such as these to be staged.

We continued to produce work on our digital platform, Sound Stage, reaching audiences across the world who may not be able to visit us in person. Our 2024/25 programme featured audio drama by members of the Theatre's ensemble cast, including a reading by Rachael McAllister of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's beautiful story *The Little Prince* and a Chekhov Double Bill of two monologues – *About Love*, performed by Ali Watt and *Trouble* performed by Matthew Churcher. Both were adapted by Elizabeth Newman from the original and were followed by a post-show discussion with the writer, comedian and broadcaster, Viv Groskop.

### Celebrating our festive highlights

With music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein and book by Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse, *The Sound of Music* was a huge success as our 2024 festive show. Playing to 16,630 people over 37 performances, it also yielded our most successful Box Office takings ever for a winter production. With an extraordinary cast, including two young companies of von Trapp children, the show enjoyed standing ovations at every performance. During the festive season we also welcomed visitors from all over Scotland to celebrate with us, as Santa Claus returned to his much-loved grotto for our Big Festive Weekend and the Drama Club performed in a Nativity production at Holy Trinity Church for the fourth year in succession.

### New audiences, new voices, new partners

The importance of nurturing new audiences and voices was at the forefront of our work in the Studio during 2024/25, and we were delighted to bring diverse and dynamic new work to this intimate setting. *Nan Shepherd: Naked and Unashamed*, a co-production with Firebrand Theatre Company, made in collaboration with Dr Kerri Andrews, was a huge success and David Rankine deservedly received a Leon Sinden award for his portrayal of all the male characters in the play. We also commissioned and produced *The Brenda Line* by Harry Mould, one of Scotland's rising stars, a play which then transferred to the Traverse in Edinburgh. And, alongside our 2024 co-productions and tours, our 2023 production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was revived for Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum Theatre and His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen in the autumn of 2024. Amongst their best-selling titles that year, it expanded our audience reach, enabled us to strengthen our relationships with leading UK venues, and supported us to give future life to – and draw revenue from – an existing production.

***"Our mission is to create life-changing experiences for as many people as possible in our communities, through our theatre and our environments. This is embedded in everything we do and, as a Theatre for All and a Theatre for a Lifetime, we work hard to engage, inspire and gather people through our work and our activities, both on and off stage. From the Explorers Garden to the Matinee Club, and from the legacies of creative projects inspired during lockdown to our talented Theatre Show Choir, we continue to work for and with the communities we serve."***

Nick Trueman | Head of Production (outgoing)

### Participation, engagement and outreach

Our engagement programme, connecting with people of all ages, would not be possible without the support of generous donors. In particular, we thank The Basil Death Trust for supporting our Drama Club activities; The Gannochy Trust who enable us to invest in staff to facilitate engagement activities; and SSE Griffin and Calliacher Community Fund for their support of our schools' programme, Common Ground.

To nurture existing and emerging artists over 2024/25, we offered the Writer's Room, online artist 1-2-1s, artist drop-ins and artist open days, as well as mentorship and individual artist development. In partnership with The Pleasance, we supported *Oran* by Wonder Fools to go to the Edinburgh Fringe, where it sold out all 18 performances before transferring to the Pleasance Theatre, London, for three nights. And in partnership with Imagine, we ran a week-long Imagine at Pitlochry Festival Theatre residency for playwright and director Kolbrún Björt Sigfúsdóttir to develop a new play.

***"We provide a unique offering to our community and beyond. Our vibrant programme of artistic output and world-class theatre, produced right here in Pitlochry, is shared with audiences from our own community, from every corner of the UK, and internationally. Equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of our work and we are committed to being accessible, being representative and acting with fairness and respect to all."***

Deborah Dickinson | Producer (outgoing)

£1,675,443

box office income  
for 2024/25,  
an increase of  
**39%**  
from 2023/24 with  
**30%**  
coming from our  
best-selling  
Christmas show,  
*The Sound of Music*

PITLOCHRY  
FESTIVAL  
THEATRE

A PITLOCHRY FESTIVAL THEATRE PRODUCTION

# THE SOUND OF MUSIC

15 NOV - 22 DEC

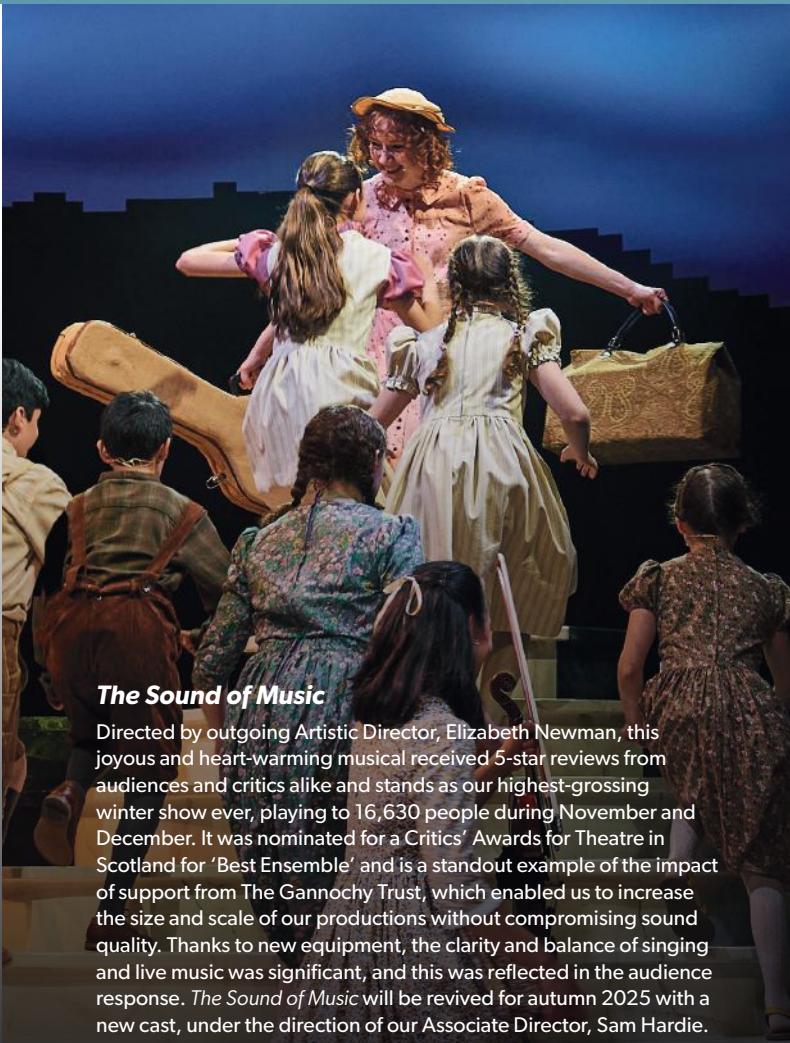


MUSIC BY  
RICHARD  
RODGERS

LYRICS BY  
OSCAR  
HAMMERSTEIN II

BOOK BY  
HOWARD LINDSAY  
AND RUSSEL CROUSE

SUGGESTED BY "THE TRAPP FAMILY SINGERS"  
BY MARIA AUGUSTA TRAPP



## *The Sound of Music*

Directed by outgoing Artistic Director, Elizabeth Newman, this joyous and heart-warming musical received 5-star reviews from audiences and critics alike and stands as our highest-grossing winter show ever, playing to 16,630 people during November and December. It was nominated for a Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland for 'Best Ensemble' and is a standout example of the impact of support from The Gannochy Trust, which enabled us to increase the size and scale of our productions without compromising sound quality. Thanks to new equipment, the clarity and balance of singing and live music was significant, and this was reflected in the audience response. *The Sound of Music* will be revived for autumn 2025 with a new cast, under the direction of our Associate Director, Sam Hardie.

1,282,129

## online impressions

across Meta Ads, Google Display Network, Spotify, YouTube, Acast and TikTok for the summer season; as well as *The Sound of Music* and Winter Words Festival through our digital advertising campaign

**2,495,011**

web page views  
an increase of 26% on 2023/24

**812,105**

emails sent

as part of our direct communication activity with a click-to-open rate of 49.1%

**23,077**

followers on  
social media

an increase of 26% on 2023/24

Our regular outreach activities included Early Stages, Youth Dance and the Theatre Show Choir, as well as summer activities such as Matinee Audience Club and Make and Play. We ran targeted activities in our wider communities too, including Drama Club and the NT Connections Youth Company at Pitlochry High School. We also ran our flagship schools programme, Common Ground, at Logierait Primary, Kenmore Primary, Breadalbane Academy and the Royal School of Dunkeld, delivering this on school premises to minimise any barriers to access, such as travel or travel costs. Finally, our stewardship of the NT Connections Festival enabled four youth theatre companies from across Scotland to present their work in our Studio, connecting different groups of young people and their work.

Creating opportunities for young people, from all backgrounds, to explore theatre in a safe and inclusive setting is as rewarding for us as it is for them. The activities we deliver build confidence and a sense of self; provide the opportunity to develop new talents, new interests and new friendships; and, we hope, instil a love of theatre that will last for a lifetime.

### **Harnessing continuity, curiosity and collaboration**

Turning to opportunities for our own workforce, we invested over 230 hours of targeted skills training across all our operational teams and ensured that the leadership transition from Elizabeth Newman to Alan Cumming was thoughtfully managed. This was a year where the value of continuity, curiosity and collaboration within our team has been particularly clear. We continued to strengthen our partnerships too, working with organisations across Scotland and the UK, from Firebrand in the Scottish Borders to the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich. Creatively rewarding, these collaborations reflect the shared pressures faced across the sector and underline the benefits of working together to share both cost and risk.

### **Maximising the impact of marketing**

A refreshed focus on marketing saw us enhance the quality of our content to strengthen our reputation and increase audience engagement across digital channels, e-communications and print formats. By presenting a consistent visual brand for Pitlochry Festival Theatre, and a consistent tone of voice across marketing materials for all our in-house productions, we connected and presented a bold and cohesive body of work. All four Auditorium shows – *Footloose*, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Shirley Valentine* – featured prominently in our summer season advertising campaign, with the aim of attracting new audiences, increasing brand awareness, driving frequency of bookings and boosting sales.

***"Over 2024/25, to drive ticket sales and expand audience reach, we continued to use insights and data to monitor ticket sales trends, audience profiling and segmentation, audience feedback and online metrics. Our integrated marketing campaigns adopted a multi-channel approach to promote the upcoming season most effectively."***

**Kath Clark | Head of Marketing and Communications**

Our marketing activities delivered significant progress during the summer season in both revenue growth and audience development, with income from in-house productions 139% higher than 2023/24 and new audiences increasing by 30% from 2023/24. Additionally, around 50% of our summer season audience attended Pitlochry Festival Theatre for the first time, a significant increase from a pre-pandemic benchmark of 19% in 2019/20. We also noted a shift in audience demographics, recording a younger average age, particularly within the 35-54 age bracket. Our 2024 Christmas show, *The Sound of Music*, achieved record-breaking success, becoming our best-selling production since *Wizard of Oz* in 2018, and ticket sales increased by 12.8% vs 2023's *Sunshine on Leith*.

### **Driving efficiency, enhancing experience**

Our ambitious programme of capital improvements is rooted in our rich history of evolution and innovation and will ensure we remain the cultural heart of Highland Perthshire for generations to come. We've now fully removed ourselves from the gas network, setting a bold example for sustainable practice in the arts, and our air-source heat pumps, first installed in 2021, continue to perform well. Our new Building Management System is helping us manage energy more efficiently right across the site and, together with improved insulation, these measures are having a notable impact.

2024/25 also saw the completion of key infrastructure upgrades, including roof and glazing work and energy system improvements, helping us move closer to our ambition to be Scotland's first net-zero theatre while contributing directly to both operational savings and enhanced visitor experience. These strategic improvements were made possible thanks to significant support from donors including Scottish Government (through the Tay Cities Region Deal), Dunard Fund and The Gannochy Trust. Special thanks also go to Mr and Mrs Robert Akester for their extraordinary gift.

# 678

young people engaging  
and participating

Common Ground  
project

**308**

(supported by SSE Griffin  
and Calliachar Community Fund)

Workshops  
and tours

**318**

Work experience  
placements

**12**

NT Connections

**112**

Youth Company

**10**

Youth dance

**21**

Drama Club  
at Pitlochry  
High School

**22**

(supported by  
The Basil Death Trust)

Early Stages

**26**

Make and Play

**26**

# SHIRLEY VALENTINE

4 JUL - 28 SEP

BY WILLY RUSSELL



**461**  
editorial pieces and  
**106**  
reviews

published on various  
platforms including *The  
Scotsman*, *The Guardian*,  
*The Times Scotland*, *The  
Daily Telegraph*, *BBC  
Radio 4 Front Row*, *Variety*,  
*The Hollywood Reporter*,  
*BBC Radio Scotland*, *The  
Herald*, *The I*, *STV What's  
On Scotland* TV and *BBC  
Scotland*.

**84**  
Our Net  
Promoter  
Score  
showed a 6% increase  
in customer satisfaction

**490** - strong  
membership

## Shirley Valentine

Written by Willy Russell and directed by outgoing Artistic Director Elizabeth Newman, this one-woman show saw Sally Reid reprise her 2022 award-winning performance (Critic's Awards for Theatre in Scotland 'Outstanding Performance' award) from July to September 2024. On playing the titular heroine, Sally said: "The things that Shirley feels and all the things she goes through are universal and timeless." The show played in Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum Theatre in June.



# 509

live performances

# 5

new plays  
commissioned  
for 2025

*Water Colour*

written by  
Milly Sweeney

*This is a Gift*

written by  
Kolbrún Björt  
Sigfúsdóttir

*The Great  
Gatsby*

adapted by  
Elizabeth Newman

*Nessie*

written by  
Shonagh Murray;  
a co-commission  
with Capital Theatres

*A Toast Fae  
the Lassies*

written by John Binnie;  
musical arrangements  
and additional music  
by Alyson Orr

# 5

partnerships

**Capital Theatres**

Musical Commissioning  
Hub Round 2

**Firebrand  
Theatre Company**

# 4

co-productions  
in 2024

*Sense and  
Sensibility*

with OVO

**Imaginate**  
at Pitlochry Festival Theatre

**Byre Theatre/  
Playwrights'  
Studio, Scotland**  
on the St Andrews  
Playwriting Award

**Edinburgh  
National  
Partnership**  
with the Pleasance

**Footloose**  
with New Wolsey Theatre

**Dido and Aeneas**  
with Scots Opera Project

**Nan Shepherd:  
Naked and  
Unashamed**

with Firebrand Theatre  
Company, in collaboration  
with Dr Kerri Andrews



## Creating a Highland Destination

As we push towards financial sustainability, it is vital that we present and promote ourselves as a year-round venue and the first-choice stop on the A9, for both visitors and the local community. Our enhanced front of house areas, new menus and thoughtfully curated bar and retail stocks saw our till revenues increase by 46% during 2024/25, while entries to the Explorers Garden increased by 259%. Firmly positioning ourselves as 'more than a Theatre', we aim to welcome visitors all year round, whether they pitch up with children to use our soft play area, break their journey with a quick coffee and cake, or meet up with friends and family to enjoy a relaxed and great-value lunch, looking over the lawn to the River Tummel. We are a unique venue, in a special location and our commercial strategy is built around the compelling concept of 'A Highland Destination'.

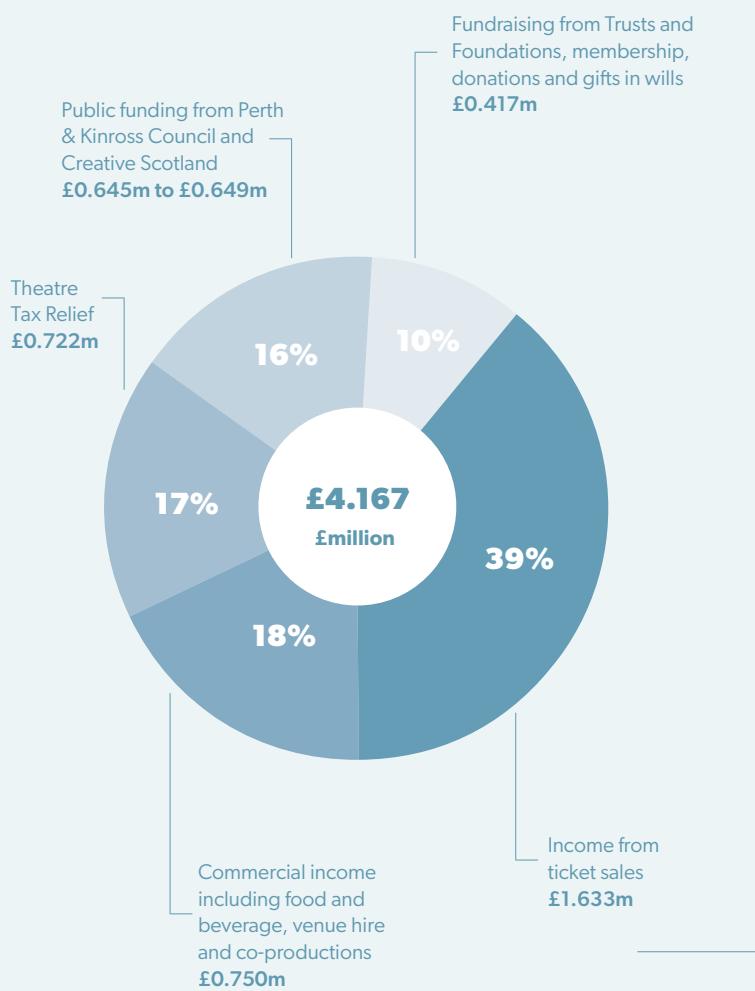
## A strong, accessible and sustainable future

Looking ahead, our focus will continue to be on the development of our campus master plan, designed to ensure our facilities match the ambition of our work and keep us at the forefront of theatre making in Scotland. This future phase will open up exciting opportunities for training, skills development and creative collaboration, allowing us to support the next generation of artists and theatre professionals, and is only possible thanks to the continued commitment of our supporters; we are particularly grateful to The Northwood Charitable Trust, who generously supported our Talent Development Programme during 2024/25. It is vital that we continue to attract support of this kind to enable us to build a stronger, more accessible and more sustainable future for Pitlochry Festival Theatre, and for the generations of audiences and artists to come.

*"When we upgraded the Auditorium seats, we carefully preserved the many dedications placed on them over the years, each one a lasting tribute to the generosity of our supporters. Their names will live on as part of a new donor recognition board, reminding us daily of the incredible community that continues to champion our work."*

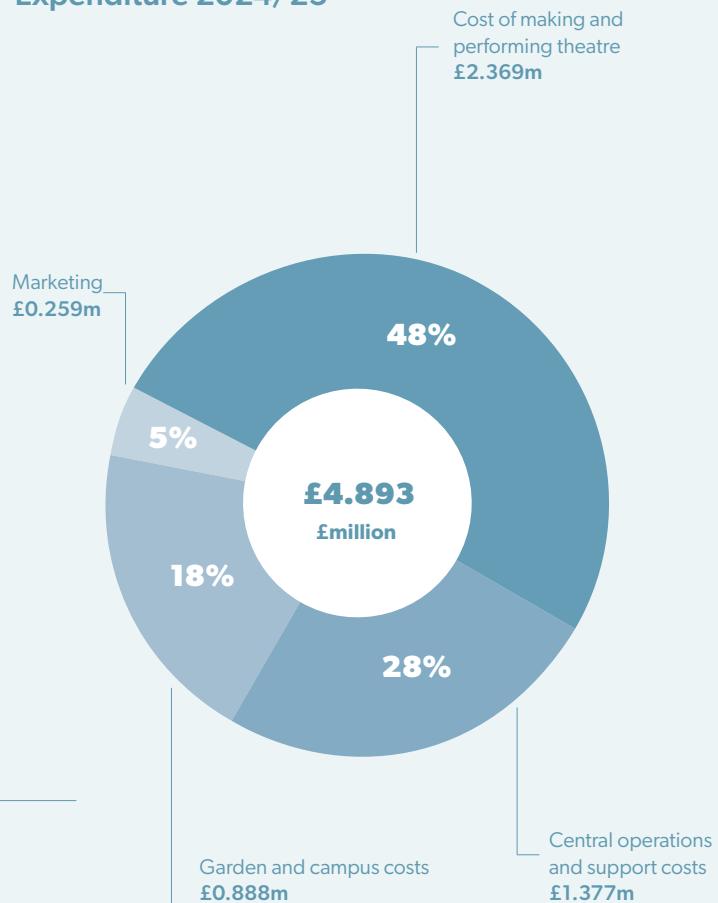
Emma Stewart | Head of Project Development

## Income 2024/25



- 86% of our revenue is self-generated via ticket sales, commercial activity and fundraising.
- We earn £5.46 for every £1 received in public subsidy.

## Expenditure 2024/25



- 52% of our cost base is the cost of employing people, from actors on the stage to the team that look after our gardens. With our commitment to Real Living Wage and fair work, this has been our largest cost increase year-on-year.
- Through investment in sustainability on our campus and procurement, we reduced our energy costs by 37% year-on-year.

*"As Scotland's only rurally-located major arts organisation, Pitlochry Festival Theatre is unique and faces unique financial challenges. Production and staffing costs here are more expensive than for city venues and, for many visitors, it takes extra time and money to get here. Continual investment in our people, our campus and our productions is essential if we are to bring audiences to Pitlochry, and give them reasons to return, time and time again."*

Dougie Cameron | Director of Finance & Operations

**2024/25 was a pivotal year for us – the final year of our ambitious programme of capital improvements and, consequently, the final year of construction disruptions to core operations. Although undeniably challenging, we emerged with record advance sales for summer season 2025, increased theatre capacity, enhanced and refurbished audience facilities, and a significantly more efficient venue.**

However, closing the building during the first months and last quarter of 2024/25 did have a material impact on revenue; long periods of disruption during construction, coupled with continued pressure on our cost base, resulting in a deficit of £726,000. Although supported in the short-term by our accumulated reserves, as a charity this is not a sustainable position and we are prioritising work to engage a new and expanded community of philanthropic supporters to help us deliver our ambitious goals.

#### Income

Positively, our total revenue grew by 18% to £4.167m in 2024/25 with strong growth across all self-generated sources – box office (25%), commercial revenue (84%) and fundraising (15%) – reflecting the validity of our focus on improving audience and customer experience and maintaining the highest standards in productions and commercial enterprises. 2024/25 also marked the final year of Creative Scotland's Regular Funding programme and we're now delighted to be included in their Multi-Year Funding programme for the next three financial years. We are grateful to Perth & Kinross Council, who sustained their grant support. Finally, Theatre Tax Relief (now confirmed by the UK Government at a new permanent rate) continues to be a key component of our financial model, supporting pre-production costs and making quality productions more affordable.

#### Expenditure

Fixed costs at the Theatre are significant due to the unique built and natural environment of our campus, both a huge strategic asset and a huge financial burden, requiring significant annual investment. A combination of our position in Highland Perthshire, where labour and accommodation are in short supply, and our investments in ethical practices – including paying the Real Living Wage to all workers and switching from gas to sustainable but more expensive electric – had an impact and saw our cost base for 2024/25 rising by 12% to £4.893m.

#### Financial outlook

2025/26 will see the first increase in our Creative Scotland grant through the Multi-Year Funding programme and also Alan Cumming's first full year as Artistic Director, both factors giving us the opportunity and capability to plan for a sustainable financial future. However, even with Multi-Year Funding, Pitlochry Festival Theatre remains materially under-funded, relative to other major producing theatres in Scotland. In short, we do much more with far less and tapping into new sources of funding is increasingly challenging in a world of uncertain returns and rising costs. It will be incumbent upon us to robustly manage our cost base while keeping a relentless focus on expanding audiences and revenue here in Pitlochry, taking our work profitably from Pitlochry to the West End, Broadway and beyond, and appealing to funders and donors as a special place in which to make maximum impact through their philanthropy. This will be at the heart of everything we do.

We remain indebted to our public funders – Creative Scotland, Perth & Kinross Council and Tay Cities Region Deal – for their investment in us, and we sincerely thank the trusts, foundations and private donors who have supported us, as well as every single person who bought a ticket, a programme, a cup of coffee or a glass of wine during 2024/25.

# DIDO AND AENEAS

31 AUG - 15 SEP

COMPOSED BY HENRY PURCELL  
LIBRETTO BY NAHUM TATE  
SCOTS TRANSLATION BY DR MICHAEL DEMPSTER  
GAELIC TRANSLATION BY MARCAS MAC AN TUARNEIR

A CO-PRODUCTION BETWEEN  
PITLOCHRY FESTIVAL THEATRE  
AND SCOTS OPERA PROJECT



## *Dido and Aeneas*

A co-production between Pitlochry Festival Theatre and Scots Opera Project, directed by David Douglas, *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell is one of the most famous operas of all time. Our version, a new and fresh interpretation using Scots Language and Scottish Gaelic, ran from the end of August until mid-September 2024 and was staged in the Amphitheatre in the Explorers Garden. A community chorus of 25 performers performed alongside the professional company of 5, and we extend our sincere thanks to the Cruden Foundation for supporting *Dido and Aeneas*.

***"Philanthropic donations provide vital funding for Pitlochry Festival Theatre. It is only with this support that we have achieved all we have over the past year, and sustained philanthropy is essential for our future financial health."***

Zuleika Brett | Director of Development

**During 2024/25, we were delighted to receive support from many individuals through donations, memberships and gifts in wills, as well as through grants from Trusts and Foundations. This commitment has been felt through every area of our work, on-stage, backstage and in our community.**

Income from our membership scheme provides essential funding for our core activities, the foundation of all our work, and I'm delighted to report that our membership swelled last year, with more people joining us and demonstrating their love for all that we do.

One of the greatest commitments we receive is through legacies from those who choose to leave a gift in their will to us. We received four such gifts last year and pay tribute to those who had the foresight and generosity to support us in this way, making a lasting impact on not just the Theatre but on the many people who benefit from engaging with our work.

Over the course of the last financial year, we secured a range of both long-term and new support for various areas of activity and were fortunate to receive investments from donors that have been channelled into our Auditorium refurbishment, planting in the Explorers Garden and talent development programmes. We also attracted support for productions on stage, for technical equipment, and for funding our schools and community engagement programmes. In fact, our fundraising efforts redoubled in 2024/25, allowing us to grow support and diversify our funding streams, putting us in a stronger position than ever as we move into the new financial year.

Thank you to our supporters, our talented staff and our audiences. It's only by working together that we can create extraordinary theatre and provide magical moments in a truly magical setting.

# BEAUTIFUL

## THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL

7 JUN - 28 SEP

BOOK BY

DOUGLAS MCGRATH

WORDS AND MUSIC BY

GERRY GOFFIN &

CAROLE KING,

BARRY MANN &

CYNTHIA WEIL

MUSIC BY ARRANGEMENT WITH

SONY/ATV MUSIC

PUBLISHING

ORCHESTRATIONS, VOCAL AND  
INCIDENTAL MUSIC ARRANGEMENTS BY

STEVE SIDWELL

PRESENTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL



### *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*

Directed by Sam Hardie, the Theatre's Associate Director, this brand-new production of the award-winning West End and Broadway musical ran from June to September 2024 and received Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland nominations for 'Outstanding Performance' (Kirsty Findlay) and 'Best Music & Sound' (Richard Reedly musical direction; Hugh Barbour and Toby McFarlane sound design). Kirsty – to our delight – took home the award for Outstanding Performance for her portrayal of Carole King.

*"As I reflect on the last 12 months at Pitlochry Festival Theatre, the word that keeps coming to mind is sustainability. Financial sustainability. Environmental sustainability. Operational sustainability. During 2024/25, we took major strides in these three aspects and more."*

Crawford Gillies | Chair of the Board of Trustees

**Since we were founded as a charitable organisation almost 75 years ago, financial sustainability has been a regular challenge for us, as it has for most theatres. As vital as audience spend and public sector funding are, they are sadly just not enough and, without our philanthropic supporters, we simply would not be able to open our doors. We would invite anyone who shares the commitment of those who already give, to join them in making gifts that make a real difference.**

In September 2024, to an almost audible gasp from theatres across Scotland and beyond, we announced the appointment of Alan Cumming as our new Artistic Director. His arrival came at a point of increasing need to reconfigure our operating model. Staging productions that die at the end of the summer season is not only financially wasteful but clashes with our commitment to environmental sustainability. A significant proportion of our costs are fixed, regardless of what happens on our stages, so we recognised the need to develop strategies to increase the return on both our production assets and our physical infrastructure. New operating models cannot be divorced from artistic output, so staging shows that have a life after Pitlochry and continue to pay their way from afar, means investing in extraordinary productions that others are eager to take. 'Made in Pitlochry' must become a kitemark in our sector, and Alan's insight and influence is proving invaluable as we explore these new (for us) models.

Theatres rely on strong teamwork and a team of exceptionally talented and variously skilled individuals, and it was only possible to attract someone of Alan's standing thanks to the positive momentum we have established under the leadership of Kris Bryce, Executive Director and Elizabeth Newman, Alan's predecessor as Artistic Director. Elizabeth did so much to raise the profile of Pitlochry Festival Theatre and I thank her for her enormous contribution. I would also like to thank the entire Pitlochry team for their steadfast commitment and the Board for their wise counsel, particularly noting the contributions of Heather Stuart (Vice-Chair) and Georgina Gordon who stepped down this year.

The steps we continue to make towards environmental stability are well documented elsewhere in this report, propelling us ever closer to our goal of becoming the country's first net-zero theatre. Less obvious interventions perhaps than other phases of our capital building project (I have yet to hear a 'wow' as we describe our new roof!) they are nonetheless vital in safeguarding our building for the future.

We remain grateful to the support from Creative Scotland and Perth & Kinross Council which has such an impact on the local economy, tourism and the vibrancy of the arts sector in Scotland and beyond, and we are enormously appreciative of the audiences who make everything we do worthwhile. Of course we cannot predict the future, but I know we will be ambitious, we will be outward looking and we will set our sights high in the years to come. With the support of our audiences and our major donors, and the underpinning of our public sector partners, it's a future we can face with confidence.



*Crawford*

**Crawford Gillies**  
Chair of the Board of Trustees



### Participation through the year

Over 2024/25, Pitlochry Festival Theatre saw strong participation across our year-round programme, with audiences, artists and community groups taking part in a wide range of productions, events and activities. The season brought people together through theatre, learning and engagement projects that reflected the breadth of creative work happening both on and off our stages.

The successes described in this Annual Review were made possible through the support of many people, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one who has contributed, acknowledging donors, wherever possible, in gratitude for their specific commitments. It is only by investing in us that we can ensure that our Theatre, and Scotland's cultural heritage, thrives now and can be sustained for future generations.

## OUR SUPPORTERS

### John Stewart Society

David and Jenny Balfour | Gavin and Julie Douglas | Fiona S Finlay | R Derek Finlay | Alison and Crawford Gillies  
Dr Catherine Hogel | Mrs Fiona Irvine | Valerie and George Kelsey | Mr Colin Liddell MBE WS | Ms Alison Maciver  
Mr David Rodgers | Robert and Christine Smith

### Festival Cast

Mr Douglas Clark | Mrs Elizabeth MacBride | Dr William and Mrs Joan Steele

### Festival Gallery

Viviene Cree | David and Margaret Fotheringham | John and Christine Hodge | Miss Mary MacDougall  
Mr Robert Meldrum | Mrs Margaret Rey | Mr Ian and Dr Pauline Stanhope-Jones

### Festival Circle

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Mr David Owens | Rev Arthur Payne | Mr George Pearson | Mr Steven Pinchbeck | Mr and Mrs Prescott  
Hugh Pritchard | Mrs Elizabeth Reville | Mrs Joan Richardson | Mr Eric Robertson | Mr and Mrs Roth | Dr I and Dr E Scott  
Ms Lauralyn Scott | Mrs Marjorie Sloan | Mr Mike Smith | Mrs Winifred Soutter | Mr Edward Stewart | Mr Jeffrey Stone  
Mrs Margaret Stone | Miss Margaret Taggart | Mr Shannon Tate | Alison Traynor | Alan Tricker | Sarah Trueman  
Mr and Mrs Waddell | Mrs Ann Wagstaff | Mr Alex Walker | Mrs Elise Walker | Nick and Helen Waring  
Mr Michael Williamson | Mr John Wilson | Mrs Susan Wompra | Ms Linda Wright | Mrs Andrea Vivian

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Dr Cindy Brook | Mrs Elizabeth Duncan | Mrs Muriel Galloway | Mr and Mrs B Hodge | Mrs Muriel Leather  
Mrs Katharine M E Liston | Mr Peter Martin | Jane Martin | Mrs Vivien Parry | Cindy and Howard Rachofsky  
Lord Vallance FRSA | Mr and Mrs Ian Watson | Mr Alan Williams

### Trusts and Foundations

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The Finnis Scott Foundation | The Gannochy Trust | Glendoune Charitable Trust | Macdonald Menzies Charitable Trust  
Jimmie Cairncross Charitable Trust | Kuenssberg Charitable Foundation | Miss A M Pilkington Charitable Trust  
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The Northwood Charitable Trust | SSE Griffin and Calliachar Community Fund | The Theatres Trust

We also acknowledge and gratefully appreciate the support of our many Festival Friends and those donors who choose to give anonymously.

## OUR BOARD

The Directors of Pitlochry Festival Theatre are its Trustees for the purposes of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland Act 2005).

Those who served from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 were:

Crawford Gillies Chair

Jane Martin appointed Vice Chair 7 December 2024

Graeme Bissett

Malcolm Brown

Kris Bryce appointed 1 January 2025

William Douglas

Robert Garnish

Georgina Gordon resigned 6 December 2024

Catriona Heppel

Caroline Roxburgh appointed 1 October 2024

Stephen Stenning appointed 9 December 2024

Heather Stuart resigned 6 December 2024

Catriona Tilley appointed 1 October 2024

Nicholas Waring appointed 9 December 2024

Jane Wilson

Thanks also go to our Honorary President, Colin Liddell MBE WS

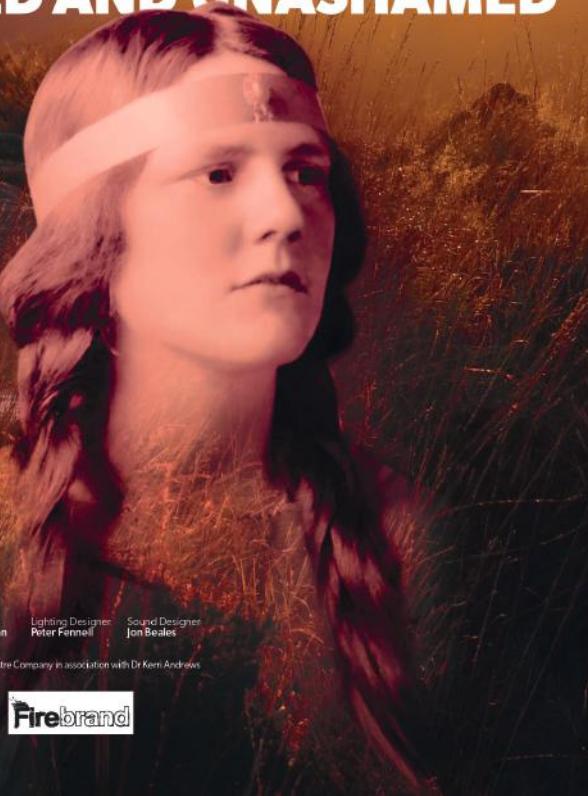


PITLOCHRY  
FESTIVAL  
THEATRE

A Pitlochry Festival Theatre and Firebrand Theatre Company Production

# NAN SHEPHERD: NAKED AND UNASHAMED

Written by  
Richard Baron  
and Ellie Zeegen



Director: Richard Baron Set Designer: Nick Truman Lighting Designer: Peter Fennell Sound Designer: Jon Beales

A co-production with Firebrand Theatre Company in association with Dr Kerri Andrews

PITLOCHRY  
FESTIVAL  
THEATRE

Firebrand

### ***Nan Shepherd: Naked and Unashamed***

This new play, written by Richard Baron and Ellie Zeegen, tells the story of the woman behind the image on the Scottish £5 banknote. Nan Shepherd – Scottish writer, poet and mountaineer – has been hailed as the ‘Scottish Virginia Woolf’ and the play, which ran from May to July 2024 in the Studio, aimed to inspire audiences to find out more about her life and work. *Nan Shepherd: Naked and Unashamed* was a Pitlochry Festival Theatre co-production with Firebrand Theatre Company, in association with Dr Kerri Andrews.

### **Support us**

[pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com/support-us](http://pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com/support-us)

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Thanks to



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