



**YOUNG**  
*at* **ART**

## ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18



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## Introduction

Young at Art, as Northern Ireland's leading children's arts provider, enriches the lives of children and young people through the arts, delivering high-quality programmes and events that inspire joy, creativity, imagination and curiosity.

2017-18 was an important year for Young at Art as we celebrated our 20th Belfast Children's Festival. The festival remains at the heart of everything we do and has changed significantly since its humble beginnings at the dawn of Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement. The festival has grown to be one of the largest dedicated children's art festivals in the UK and Ireland, and is firmly established as the highlight of the family cultural calendar across Belfast and beyond, with over 40% of audiences visiting the festival from outside the greater Belfast region. Internationally renowned artists rub shoulders with new and emerging local practitioners, and delegates from across Europe and beyond come to Belfast to experience some of the finest performance work for young audiences.

Our talented staff harness their creativity and imagination daily to present better and more innovative year-round programmes and activities in the face of on-going budgetary constraints and rising costs. Young at Art is indebted to their dedication and resourcefulness, and, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Eibhlín and her team for their tireless hard work.

Looking forward, the development of our new corporate strategy will steer the company forward to 2022, whilst 2018-19 will be our 'coming of age' year as Young at Art celebrates its 21st festival with a brave, innovative and ambitious programme of work.

We intend to continue to wow, to inspire, to excite, to provoke, to enable, and to do so for many years to come!

Maria Lee  
**Chair**

## About Young at Art

Young at Art (YAA) is Northern Ireland's leading children's arts provider. Established in 1998 as the creator of the region's first international arts festival for children and young people, Young at Art has grown both as an organisation with a year-round programme of activity and the **Belfast Children's Festival (BCF)** significantly. The festival is now, in terms of footfall, the largest on the island of Ireland and one of the largest in the UK. In 2017/18, the organisation and wholly-owned subsidiaries (Young at Art Events, and Fighting Words Belfast) reached **70,985 children and adults**, delivering performances, workshops, exhibitions and special projects, all tailored to their needs.

The Belfast Children's Festival, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday this year is internationally focused and multi-artform with a long history of positive collaborations with other sectors and organisations. Its work ranges from high quality international contemporary performances to specialist long-term projects, such as engaging with early years groups in a range of art-forms in areas of high deprivation and supporting emerging individual artists to develop their own work.

Young at Art is core funded by Arts Council of Northern Ireland (Principal Funder), Belfast City Council and Education Authority.

## Summary

2017 – 2018 was a landmark year for Young at Art as we celebrated our big anniversary with our 20<sup>th</sup> Belfast Children's Festival.

Despite on-going economic and political upheaval and significant cuts to public sector arts funding, we successfully delivered a year-round programme with our highest public engagement to date. Across the year Young at Art, our agency Young at Art Events, and our creative writing centre Fighting Words Belfast, delivered, **767 events** attended by **70,985 children and adults** from all **11 local authority areas**. We also provided employment for a permanent staff team of 13 (3 fulltime, 10 part-time). We also engaged 378 casual/seasonal employees and 514 artists, and professionally developed 5 interns and 4 placement students and 382 volunteers also received valuable mentoring and experience.

Demand was high as most events were at full capacity throughout the year, and the festival events averaged an 82% occupancy rate. A full programme was offered in dance, theatre, visual arts, literature, music and a range of cross art form events.

Key impacts in the year:

- The 20th annual international Belfast Children's Festival in March 2018 presented **129 events** attended by **31,375 children and adults**. In post-event evaluation **91%** of respondents rated their festival experience as excellent (71%) or very good (20%).
- Our agency and trading arm, Young at Art Events, engaged with a further **33,713 adults and children** throughout NI.

- Our creative writing centre, Fighting Words Belfast engaged with a further **2,191 children and young people**
- 48 schools attended the festival, benefitting from subsidised tickets, educational resource packs and teacher CPD training
- Equality of Access – **29%** of festival bookers came from designated 'high deprivation' communities, assisted through strategic education and engagement projects and partnerships
- **40%** of festival attendees hailed from outside the Belfast/Greater Belfast area with audiences coming from all 11 local authority areas. Internationally
- **6%** of the festival audience came from outside NI
- The festival was attended by 33 national and international delegates, including programmers and producers from USA, Canada, South Korea, India, China, Malta, Belgium, and all 'home' nations (ROI, Scotland, Wales, England).
- Creative industries and professional development with 5 industry events, *TYANI* showcase platform, mentoring of 4 ScratchWorks artists, and two Works-in-Progress.

As Young at Art commenced the third and final year of the 2015-18 strategy, we continued to consolidate our strands of work more clearly, developing an acute clarity of our purpose and the need for our work. This Annual Report aligns our programme of activities with these strategic priorities.

We also commenced a strategic review process, taking time to undertake a Governance Health Check and engaging consultancy support to develop our emerging strategy for 2019-2022.

# Strategic Objectives 2015-18

## Vision

Young at Art's vision is that all children's lives are enriched through the arts

## Mission

We deliver great arts projects and events for children and young people because we believe that the arts inspire joy, creativity and curiosity





## **Strategic Aim 1: Present arts activities and performances that provoke thought and emotion**

### **1.1 Deliver an Annual International Festival for children with a performing arts core**

#### **Belfast Children's Festival 2018**

2018 was a landmark year as we celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> annual Belfast Children's Festival (BCF18). For 6 days, from 9-14 March, 31,375 children and adults attended 129 events delivered by 119 artists and performers in 17 venues across the city of Belfast, and experienced one of the largest programmes of arts and creativity for children in the UK and Ireland.

The festival is multi-art form and had a number of distinct elements, all delivered to a high standard:

#### **International Programme**

BCF18 welcomed artists from Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, UK and Republic of Ireland.

Architects of Air (UK) made a long-awaited welcome return to the festival presenting the unique **Miracoco Luminarium** (9-11 March) on the main lawn of Botanic Gardens. This monumental walk-in sculptural installation encouraged visitors to discover its dazzling maze of winding paths and soaring domes, inspired by Islamic and Gothic architecture. *Miracoco Luminarium* was a celebration of the beauty of geometry, with simply natural daylight filtered into radiant colour through the structure's fabric. An unforgettable sensory experience of light, colour and sound for all the family.



Miracoco Luminarium

The stunning **Horses** (9-11 March) from Belgium's world-renowned Kabinet K made its UK & Irish Premiere at the festival. *Horses* was a contemporary dance performance of untameable energy, in which five child and five adult performers explored wanting to be grown-up and wanting to remain a child, power and vulnerability, carrying and being carried, and how we learn to trust and count on each other. *Horses* showed us the power and integrity of human relationships, for all aged 8yrs + on the Main Stage of the Lyric Theatre.



Horses

We welcomed two productions from Sweden. Teater Pero's delightful **Aston's Stones** (12-14 March) introduced 3-6 year olds to Aston – a little dog with a big heart. Aston collects stones, every stone he stumbles upon! One was sad, one felt cold. Some were big, some were small. But, as Aston's living room is at risk of gradually getting taken over by his collection, his parents must help him find a new home for his friends. This endearing story of how easy it is to love and appreciate the joy in small things charmed audiences at the MAC. Dalija Acin Thelander brought her beautiful installation-based interactive and multi-sensory experience and dance performance **Sensescapes** to the Crescent Arts Centre (10-11 March). This Stockholm-based choreographer immersed babies 3-18 months and their carers in a landscape rich in stimuli, including visual, tactile and audio elements designed to trigger babies' curiosity.

**Getting Dressed** dived into a world of colour, texture and movement. Second Hand Dance (UK) asked if we have ever put on our coats the wrong way? Or couldn't find the right armholes in our trousers. The dancers invited audiences aged 4-7 years to be creative with the clothes they wear and try getting dressed just a little bit differently in the MAC (9-11 March).

**EGG-tion Hero** from the Netherlands was a hilarious site-specific theatre performance set in the contemporary Irish art gallery of the Ulster Museum. Two hapless gallery



attendants didn't quite manage to watch over a priceless artwork – an egg no-one is allowed to touch! Laughter was guaranteed as *EGG-tion Hero's* madcap antics thrilled audience members aged 3+ years (and gallery visitors!).

And we saw the welcome return of Branar Téatar do Pháistí (ROI) to BCF with a charming adaptation of Belfast author Oliver Jeffers' award winning and much loved book ***How to Catch a Star*** (9-14 March) at the Lyric Theatre. Audiences aged 4+ years followed the adventures of a boy who was always looking up, as he dreamt of having a star as a friend. The performance combined world-class puppetry with a magical soundtrack and beautiful lighting and staging.

"Every year it gets better. My 4 yr. old girl has attended since she was under 2. Her heroes for the past couple of years are anybody who is a female dancer, musician or circus artist. Her self-confidence and creativity have been directly boosted by the festival, every time we attend."

BCF18 Audience Feedback

### **TYANI SHOWCASE**

The TYANI (Theatre for Young Audiences NI) Showcase profiled some of the finest performance work for young audiences being created here in Northern Ireland. The showcase included performances, works-in-progress, 'scratch' performances, discussions and networking events. The range of events took place over four days (Friday 9 – Monday 12 March) and included theatre, contemporary dance, opera, and comedy.

33 delegates attended the platform, including delegates programming in UK, ROI, Malta, India, Belgium, USA, Korea and China, 44% of whom had never been to Northern Ireland before.

The itinerary also offered delegates the opportunity to see a selection of the festival's international programme, in the festival's landmark 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.



Penguins

A key highlight in this year's programme was the Irish premiere of **Penguins**, a co-production between Cahoots NI, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Prime Theatre. This delightful, non-verbal production for young audiences (ages 3+) is based on the true story of Roy and Silo, two male chinstrap penguins who together hatched an abandoned egg and raised a chick at New York's Central Park Zoo. Featuring music, movement and visual effects, this warm and engaging story explored friendship, acceptance and the ever-changing definition of what makes a family.

*"My little boy is 3 and I took him to see the Penguins. He was mesmerised throughout the show and even before he got out of the theatre, he lay down on the carpet and tried to swim like the Penguins. He loved the show and is still talking about the Penguins and how they took care of the little baby Penguin."* Audience comment

**The Assistant's Revenge** was the second offering in the programme from Cahoots NI. Aimed at ages 8+, the murder mystery tale was packed with music, glamour, magic, death-defying escapology and more twists and turns than a ten-inch corkscrew!

Belfast-based Amadan Ensemble presented a brand new show, **Pink & Blue** (ages 4+) that explored what would happen if we could all be who we wanted to be and accepted others as who they are.

Maiden Voyage brought us **Each for Other**, as part of their *Dance Exposed* programme bringing high-quality accessible dance to new audiences in public spaces. The dancers literally stopped people in their tracks in Europa Bus Centre (Saturday 10 March) and in the foyer of the Ulster Museum (Sunday 11 March).



Each for Other in Ulster Museum

*"Our family are divided over 'Getting Dressed' and 'Dance Exposed' as the best events we attended. Two of us actually went to 'Dance Exposed' twice; it was that good."*

BCF18 Audience Feedback

A family friendly version of **Pigeon & Plum's Vaudeville Cabaret** returned with two sold-

out shows on Sunday 11 March in The Black Box. Jugglers, contortionists, acrobats, strongmen, magicians and comedians graced the stage.

Audiences were treated to an exclusive peek at the recently-published **Your Little Tiny Welcome to the Great Big Whole Wide World**, a beautiful book of illustrations and quirky thoughts by the late Patrick Sanders, and heard the very first outing of some brand new songs inspired by the book and performed by Rachael McCabe.

The TYANI showcase also hosted two works-in-progress sharings. A children's opera in one act from Greg Caffrey and members of the Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble, the imaginatively titled **The Man with The Chocolate Beard** played in the beautiful surroundings of the Banqueting Hall at City Hall, and followed the attempts of a man to secure a dance partner at a turn-of-the-century society ball. Prime Cut Productions brought us a rehearsed reading of **Unheard** in The Dark Horse, a new theatre piece from Fionnuala Kennedy on the experiences of young people in care.

The **ScratchWorks** evening in The Barracks offered delegates a chance to see four new and innovative performance works from individual artists at the very first stages of development. This year, the selected artists were David Morgan, Claire McMahon, Maria Connolly and Sarah Gordon. The programme was curated by Richard Croxford.

The showcase programme was supplemented by work from other local companies, including the Oh Yeah Music Centre (**Volume Control** on Friday 9 March for ages 13+, a gig organised by young people for young people with emerging young musicians and DJ's, and **Acoustic Picnic** on Saturday 10 March aimed at ages 0-5 and their parents and carers) and Seedhead Arts (**Mini Mid Week Magic** on Wednesday 14 March); **Baby Rave** was hosted for the first time in the Oh Yeah Music Centre playing to sell-out crowds on Sunday 11 March.



Baby Rave in Oh Yeah Music Centre



## 1.2 Develop Children's Relationship with Visual Arts and the Public Realm

### Visual Arts Programme

The visual arts programme this year included two visual arts engagement programmes and three exhibitions: two specially commissioned by Young at Art, plus a major retrospective of illustrator and Ireland's Children's Laureate na nÓg, PJ Lynch.

### I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream

Ulster University and Young at Art partnered to develop an inter-generational engagement project between an Ulster University PhD student and local families designed to remove barriers to engagement with the visual arts. **I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream** was an exciting artistic collaboration between families from Moving Up, Moving On (MUMO) in West Belfast and illustrator, Duncan Ross, who together used drawing and dialogue to explore their relationship with place.

The artist was selected because his PhD explored topics around engagement and inter-generational community artistic practices. The 8 cross-community families with children aged 7-10 years, drawn from parts of West Belfast (Upper Springfield/Clonard area) that register some of the highest indicators of deprivation in Northern Ireland, participated in a series of process-based participant-led workshops. Duncan Ross worked with the families to develop skills across a range of media and materials to create a body of work. In turn, Duncan created his artistic response to the themes and focus emerging from the families' work and, drawing on the BCF18 theme of FAMILY, focussed particularly on 'picturing the family through drawing'. Commencing in November 2017, this project culminated in a public exhibition of the families' work exhibited alongside Duncan's, in Ulster University's Belfast Campus foyer during the festival (9-14 March).



I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream

## The Big Picture

This legacy project of PJ Lynch, Belfast-born illustrator and Laureate na nÓg, focused on the art of visual storytelling that celebrates children's literature and the power of the imagination.

**The Big Picture** project involved Donegall Road Primary School, Blythefield Primary School, St Mary's Primary School, Fane Street Primary School and St Joseph's Slate Street Primary School. Young at Art's Resident Artist Ash Reynolds oversaw the project and workshop delivery with support artist Elaine Taylor.

In January, one class from each school participated in two workshops. Drawing on the BCF18 theme of FAMILY, each child produced a visual reflection on an A5 canvas of their experiences of 'Family' and 'Home' and what these themes meant to them. Visual storytelling proved to be a valuable approach, as some schools had a high proportion of children newly arrived in Belfast with little spoken English.

Once complete, Ash Reynolds incorporated imagery from the individual canvases to form a large 6ftx4ft panel, creating a 'Big Picture' narrative for each school. All five school panels were displayed alongside each child's individual canvas in a public exhibition running throughout BCF18 at the Crescent Arts Centre Gallery, the schools' nearest arts venue. A short video explaining the process played on loop in the gallery. Following the festival, each panel was returned to its school for permanent display, and each child received their own mini-canvas back to take home.



Joseph's Slate Street Primary School P2 - Big Picture

On the opening day of **The Big Picture** exhibition (9 March), PJ Lynch met and congratulated the children involved in the project, and they all had the opportunity to enjoy PJ's retrospective exhibition, *Pilgrims, Princesses and Beardy Old Men*, in the Ulster Museum and explore *Miracoco Luminarium*.

**The Big Picture** was generously funded by the office of the Laureate na nÓg. Additional financial support was received from Translink and Arts & Business NI as the project continued Translink's community engagement work in the areas surrounding the new Belfast Transport Hub and the 'Weavers Cross' neighbourhood. The Crescent Arts Centre supported the project with generous in-kind support towards gallery venue hire and technical support.



*'I can only but praise the Big Picture Project. Working with Ash and Elaine was a pleasure. It was a lovely idea to allow each child to paint and keep their own individual canvas. The children's exhibition was amazing. We were all in awe of the 'Big Picture' that was created from our pencil drawings. We all enjoyed our visit to the exhibition at the Crescent Arts Centre Gallery, the Ulster Museum and the Miracoco Luminarium. We had a wonderful day and we all take great pleasure at looking at our 'Big Picture' which is on display on our main corridor. I would willingly participate in any future projects and we are looking forward to next year.'*

Teacher, St Joseph's Slate Street Primary School

*"We absolutely loved taking part in the Big Picture project. The children loved the experience. The artists that came to the school are so professional. The celebration event was fantastic and made the children feel really special to see their work hanging in a gallery. We received our work back and love being able to showcase it in our school."*

Teacher, Donegall Road Primary School

BCF18 hosted an exhibition of Ireland's Children's Laureate na nÓg, Belfast-born PJ Lynch. Throughout the festival the general public were treated to **Pilgrims, Princesses and Beardy Old Men**, an exhibition of stunning drawings from PJ Lynch's award-winning books, in the Ulster Museum. This was a major retrospective of his work, and opened especially in time for the Belfast Children's Festival.



PJ Lynch talking to local schoolchildren

## Public Realm

### Big Botanic Birthday Bash

Our BCF18 festival weekend was dominated by the large number of diverse, free family-friendly events on offer within our **Big Botanic Birthday Bash**, a two-day event across the Botanic Gardens and Ulster Museum sites celebrating Young at Art's 20 years of creativity. The event offered families site-specific performances, arts workshops, interactive events, pop-up performances, walkabout performers, face-painting, music and literature events. At the centre, positioned on the Botanic Gardens Main Lawn, was the spectacular **Miracoco Luminarium**, a giant walk-in inflatable sculpture for all the family. The **Big Botanic Birthday Bash** and **Miracoco Luminarium** attracted over 17,300 visitors.



Inside Miracoco Luminarium

The jam-packed weekend schedule included site-specific theatre performances of **EGG-tion Hero** from Maas Theater en Dans, **Each for Other** contemporary dance performances by Maiden Voyage Dance, music performance and songs by Rachael McCabe (in response to Patrick Sanders' book **Your Little Tiny Welcome**), art and craft workshops by Young at Art Events, the popular **Book Clinic** by Children's Books Ireland, **The Longest Story Ever Told** from Fighting Words Belfast, NI Opera's **Little Lullabies** opera performances for babies, a drumming workshop with Gathering Drums, **ArtCart** art & craft workshops from Wheelworks, and a sunflower growing workshop by South Belfast Outreach Team of Belfast City Council. The Ulster Museum also programmed art workshops related to PJ Lynch's exhibition in their Discover Art area, and a family gallery tour, **The Artist as Thief**.

*"We went to the Botanic Gardens event on the Sunday, to the Luminarium, the planting area, the drums, the 'you are what you eat' section, the dancing in the museum - absolutely brilliant, we all loved it, such a lovely day!"*

BCF18 Audience comment

Media Partner, QRadio ran a range of dedicated festival features and competitions, and an Outside Broadcast, with presenter Eoghan Quigg and Q Crew, from the Big Botanic Birthday Bash.

*"We loved the Luminarium in Botanic! It was much better than I was expecting so a very pleasant surprise and we ended up going to the museum afterwards which we wouldn't have thought of doing before as our daughter is so young but she loved the whole day!"*

BCF18 Audience comment

With our festival partner, Translink, we once again encouraged families to travel to the festival by public transport, sharing details about special family ticket deals. Young at Art produced a travel activity pack to entertain families on their journey that was available in the February edition of NI4Kids and to download for free from our website.

On Saturday 10 March, passengers at the Europa Bus Centre were treated to amazing moves and fast-paced action in **Each for Other**, a new work for public space commissioned by Maiden Voyage Dance from acclaimed Scottish choreographer, Jack Webb. We also created and delivered 'All Aboard with Translink' craft workshops over the Big Botanic Birthday Bash weekend, and delivered bespoke workshop activity in rail stations across NI in the lead up to Christmas.

### **1.3 Stimulate a Love of Stories & Storytelling in children and young people**

#### **Literature Programme**

Our literature programme in BCF18 included a range of interactive sessions and talks.

#### **Irish Language Author Programme**

This year, for the first time, we offered an Irish Language author programme in Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, which saw a total of six sold out events conducted through Irish: **Creative Writing with Áine Ní Ghlinn** for ages 9-10 (9 March); **Bí ag Spraoi Liom!** with author, Sadhbh Devlin, and illustrator, Tarsila Kruse, for ages 6-8 (13 March); and **Rí-Rá le Rita agus an Róbat** with Máire Zepf for ages 4- 6 (14 March).

Thanks to funding from Foras na Gaeilge, we were able to wholly support the tickets costs and bus transport for school groups to and from this event.

*"It's encouraging for the children to learn about the arts through the medium of Irish. Thank you for giving my class the experience – we rarely have the opportunity to attend such events."*

Teacher, Bunscoil an Sleibhe Dhuibh

*"The children loved the story and activity after. They are creating sentences about the story since coming back to school. Iontach ar fad."*

Teacher, Scoil an Droichead.

#### **BCF Literature Programme**

With fun visuals, creative games and lots of audience participation, Shane Hegarty, author of the Darkmouth series of fantasy adventure books, shared his inspiration and

approach to writing in a highly entertaining and engaging morning, **Monsters and Heroes**, at The Black Box (14 March).

For the third consecutive year, the festival hosted the **Shortlist Announcement of Children's Books Ireland's Book of the Year** (Monday 12 March). Held at the Crescent Arts Centre, the event was attended by local schoolchildren. A selection of the shortlisted authors and illustrators were on hand to tell the children about their books and answer their questions.

*"We are writing this letter to thank you for arranging the amazing trip for us today. We feel really lucky to be one of only three schools invited. We truly enjoyed listening and finding out the information from the author, illustrator and publisher. Our favourite part of the day was getting to ask all these people questions. Thank you for allowing us to visit the gallery upstairs and allowing us to create our own canvases. We really appreciate all the time you gave us. Furthermore, thank you for the five books you gave us. We can't wait to read them. Please keep our school in mind for future events."*

Nettlefield Primary School

BCF18 saw the return of the ever-popular Children's Books Ireland's **Book Clinic**, where young readers feeling uninspired by their bookshelves could pop along to the Ulster Museum (11 March) to discuss their reading preferences at an 'appointment' and get 'prescribed' some exciting new book choices.



Pupils at the Children's Books Ireland's Book of the Year Shortlist announcement

Also providing lots of fun, Fighting Words Belfast encouraged everyone to contribute to **The Longest Story Ever Told** (10 March), adding their own piece to the story in 60 seconds.

Belfast-born Laureate na nÓg, **PJ Lynch**, returned to his hometown to reflect on his



career. In a special lecture pitched at ages 16+ in the Ulster Museum (10 March), he charted how his dream of becoming an artist was realised.

Finally, audiences were treated to an exclusive peek at the recently published, **Your Little Tiny Welcome to the Great Big Whole Wide World**, a beautiful book of extraordinary illustrations and quirky thoughts by the late Patrick Sanders. Rachael McCabe performed songs inspired by the book, accompanied by a selection of illustrations as a backdrop. The public were able to purchase a copy of the new book at the event at the Ulster Museum (11 March).

### **Fighting Words Belfast**

Our wholly-owned subsidiary and creative writing centre, Fighting Words Belfast, has delivered creative writing workshops and activities to **2,191** children and young people aged 6-18, and recruited and trained 37 new volunteers. School groups have travelled from as far afield as Moville, Co. Donegal to take part in regular Fighting Words Belfast schools workshop sessions, and the Write Club after-schools sessions ran year round at Skainos, and at the Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts.

Other highlights included Fighting Words Belfast participating in Ireland's Laureate na nÓg's **The Big Picture** legacy programme, with their own Big Picture project in partnership with other Fighting Words centres in Dublin, Glencree and Cork.



More Crosswords celebration event

And building on the success of last year's project, Fighting Words Belfast also delivered **More Crosswords**, a cross-community cross-border project that linked 7 schools from Belfast and Dublin together to jointly produce their own book, *'The Teleportation Electrician'*, which was celebrated at a special event in Seamus



Heaney's *Homeplace* in Bellaghy, attended by QUB Children's Writing Fellow Máire Zepf. **156** children participated in total.

Fighting Words Belfast also developed a teen drama workshop for Eastside Arts Festival in partnership with Accidental Theatre; and a pilot programme for children with autism with BHSCT Speech and Language Unit, which culminated in the Creativity and Sharing Creativity in Autism, Special Needs and Fighting Words event (14 March) hosted by the QUB Seamus Heaney Centre with keynote speaker Koulla Yiasouma, NI Commissioner for Children & Young People, as part of the BCF18 Industry Events Programme. (For full details on our Industry Events Programme see Section 3.3, page 30)

In September, members of the Write Club at Duncairn (13-18) were invited to write stories based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. On Monday 20 November, their stories appeared in a special supplement in the Irish Times featuring writing by twenty-five teenagers based on the themes of the Convention. There was also 80,000 copies of it delivered free to secondary schools all over the country, including Northern Ireland.

Fighting Words Belfast Volunteer Nora Greer was awarded Belfast City Council's Older Volunteer of the Year in December.



Nora Greer picking up Belfast City Council's Older Volunteer of the Year Award

## **Strategic Aim 2: Enable access to great arts activities for all children and young people**

### **2.1 Represent the Rights of Children to Access the Arts**

At Young at Art we believe that every child should have the right to access exciting and original creative experiences, regardless of who they are or where they come from. Our programme is almost wholly universally accessible and we offer a range of access provisions to ensure accessibility for all. We promote child-inspired work by professional artists with an emphasis on performance and exhibition content over participatory activities.

#### **Access Programme**

This includes ensuring all venues during BCF18 were suitable for those with physical disabilities, and the provision of an Access Programme for children experiencing greater barriers to attendance and engagement, including the provision of relaxed performances (*Getting Dressed, Penguins*), and wholly subsidised tickets and special transport for special schools.

(For full details on our Access Programme see Section 2.4, page 23)

#### **Creative Child**

Creative Child is an engagement programme that aims to overcome the barriers to access – economic, educational, social and physical - with direct contact creative experiences using arts-based engagement explores communication, opinion, literacy and creativity with children aged 3-11 years in some of Belfast most deprived areas.

(For full details on our Creative Child Programme see Section 3.1, page 26)



A Creative Child nursery school attending *How to Catch a Star*, at the Lyric Theatre

## 2.2 Provide a Range of Accessible Activities for a Wide Audience

Young at Art provides a year-round programme of arts-based activities across the North of Ireland offering a diverse range of activities serving different ages, experience and needs.

### **The Agency: Young at Art Events**

The social enterprise agency set up by Young at Art in 2011 reached over 33,713 participants in 2017/18 through a range of productions and projects to an ever-diversifying range of clients.

Highlights of the year included:

Sold-out performances of 2 **Baby Rave** days for BCF18 (11 March) and Baby Rave Afrobeat at the MAC (10 June).

**The Normans and Their Legacy in Ireland** project for Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council delivered 26 workshops over 2 months in 5 primary schools and 2 community groups, and culminated in a public exhibition of the children's work in Moat Park Pavilion in June.

**ISLAND Arts Centre's Children's Arts Festival** was delivered in the summer to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. This large project ran from 22 July – 28 August and included an interactive children's art exhibitions throughout the arts centre galleries and community walkways, 2 week-long art summer camps, a week-long performing arts summer camp including a special finale performance, and 8 community workshops.



ISLAND Arts Centre Children's Arts Festival



In summer 2017, YAAE delivered **Footsteps in the Forest & Waking the Giant** for Newry, Mourne & Down District Council. The magical forest tour 'Footsteps in the Forest' took place in Slieve Guillion with Walkabout Characters and Event Managers to assist with this large event. It was a huge success, with high levels of engagement throughout the weekend. NMDDC were quick to get back in touch to book the same animation services for their next large public event – 'Wake the Giant' in Warrenpoint.

The agency developed a walking tour, *You'll Never Believe What Happened Next*, for **BT1** that run on Sundays across the summer period to attract more footfall into the city centre during the quieter summer months. Due to the event's success it was extended into a bi-monthly event. The agency also delivered other activities to BT1 including half-term activity in February.



Family Walking Tour

**Translink Christmas Activity** (November) as part of Young at Art's sponsorship agreement with Translink the Agency delivered a range of Christmas activities in bus & rail stations across NI, including 'Santa Stop Here' door hanger workshops to coincide with Christmas Light Switch On Events in Belfast, Bangor, Lisburn, Coleraine, Derry and Carrickfergus.

And order books were busy with successful Halloween, Christmas, and Easter activities.

Belinda Cree was awarded the NI Creative and Cultural Skills Intern of the Year Award for her previous work with the agency during a 6-month internship, and was also shortlisted for the national Creative and Cultural Skills UK Intern of the Year award. Belinda is now Young at Art Events Admin and Ops Assistant.

### **Fighting Words Belfast**

Fighting Words Belfast has delivered creative writing workshops and after schools activity to 2,191 children and young people aged 6-18 at Skainos, and at the Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts, including a range of one-off programmes, inspiring local children and young people to get involved in creative writing.

(For full details on Fighting Words Belfast see Section 1.3, page 15)

## **2.3 Grow Young Audiences for Artforms Through Partnerships**

### **Visual Arts Programmes**

Young at Art developed and delivered a range of visual arts programmes in 2017/18, aimed at encouraging children, young people and family attendance to, and engagement with, visual art.

Highlights included the engagement programme and exhibition **The Big Picture** with 5 primary schools as part of the Ireland Children's Laureate na nÓg legacy project at the Crescent Arts Centre Gallery; **I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream** an engagement programme and exhibition of work from 8 families from an interface area in West Belfast and artist Duncan Ross at the Ulster University Belfast Campus; and a major retrospective exhibition of Ireland Children's Laureate na nÓg PJ Lynch **Pilgrims, Princesses, and Beardy Old Men** as part of BCF18 at the Ulster Museum.

(For full details on our Visual Arts Programmes see Section 1.2, page 11)

### **Literature Programmes**

Young at Art developed and delivered a range of literature programmes and events in 2017/18, aimed at encouraging children, young people love of stories and storytelling.

Highlights included a range of literary and author events in BCF18 including Darkmouth author Shane Hegarty's **Monsters and Heroes** at The Black Box; **Your Little Tiny Welcome to the Great Big Whole Wide World** with Rachael McCabe based on the book by the Patrick Sanders at the Ulster Museum; and Children's Books Ireland's **Book Clinic** at the Ulster Museum. For the third consecutive year the we hosted the **Shortlist Announcement of Children's Books Ireland's Book of the Year**, at the Crescent Arts Centre, and for the first time an **Irish Language Author Programme** in Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich with six sold author events conducted through Irish including **Creative Writing with Áine Ní Ghlinn, Bí ag Spraoi Liom!** with author, Sadhbh Devlin, and illustrator, Tarsila Kruse, and **Rí-Rá le Rita agus an Róbat** with Máire Zepf.

(For full details on our Literature Programmes see Section 1.3, page 15)

### **Fighting Words Belfast**

Fighting Words Belfast has delivered creative writing workshops and after schools activity to 2,191 children and young people aged 6-18 at Skainos, and at the



Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts, including a range of one-off programmes, inspiring local children and young people to get involved in creative writing.

(For full details on Fighting Words Belfast see Section 1.3, page 15)

## 2.4 Support Children Experiencing Barriers to the Arts Through Targeted Activities

### Engagement Programmes

Young at Art delivers a range of arts engagement initiatives and programmes, supported by our dedicated Education and Engagement Officer.

### Creative Child

2017/18 was the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year of current BBC Children in Need funding for our Creative Child engagement programme. The programme aims to overcome the barriers to access – economic, educational, social and physical - with direct contact creative experiences using arts-based engagement explores communication, opinion, literacy and creativity with children aged 3-11 years in some of Belfast most deprived areas.

(For full details on our Creative Child Programme see Section 3.1, page 26)

### I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream

Young at Art embarked on a new Visual Arts and Families project, in association with Ulster University and Moving Up Moving On (MUMO). **I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream** was an exciting artistic collaboration between families from MUMO (Moving Up, Moving On) and illustrator, Duncan Ross, who together used drawing and dialogue to explore their relationship with place. The project started in November 2017, and culminated in their work being exhibited in Ulster University's Belfast campus during the festival.



MUMO families, artist, Duncan Ross, and YAA Education Officer, Emma Berkery, at opening of **I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream** exhibition at Ulster University

(For full details on I Think I Will Tell You About My Dream see Section 1.2, page 11)

## The Big Picture

This legacy project of PJ Lynch, Belfast-born illustrator and Laureate na nÓg, focused on the art of illustration and visual storytelling that celebrates children's literature and the power of the imagination. In association with the Office of Laureate na nÓg, Young at Art was able to bring this project to Belfast and worked with five local schools, responding to the themes of 'Family' and 'Home' using visual storytelling.

Young at Art's Resident Artist, Ash Reynolds, oversaw the project and workshop delivery with support artist, Elaine Taylor. Each child produced a mini canvas and these were assembled onto larger panels to create a 'Big Picture' narrative for each school. The exhibition of all five panels, along with the children's original artwork, was exhibited with a sixth interactive panel for the general public to engage with in the gallery space of the Crescent Arts Centre throughout BCF18.



Brendan Gallagher, Community Engagement Manager Translink, YAA Resident Artist Ash Reynolds and Donegall Rd PS pupils and teacher Clare Ward at exhibition

(For full details on The Big Picture see Section 1.2, page 11)

## Access Programme

The Belfast Children's Festival has always catered for children and young people with differing needs. Central to this provision is a commitment to ensuring that as many events as possible across the programme are welcoming, supportive and accessible to a broad a range of needs.

As part of our Access Programme in BCF18, Young at Art offered four Relaxed Performances, catering to both Special Schools and the general public, for two productions (**Penguins** and **Getting Dressed**) designed for children who may be living with additional sensory and communication needs including learning difficulties and autism and their schools and families. To respond to the need for a high level of preparation prior to a visit to the theatre for these children and their schools and families, Young at Art developed a resource pack that included a printed visual story of the journey to the venue and the performance. The aim of the pack was to make the experience feel more familiar to the children, as some do experience extreme

anxiety when trying new activities.

The Programme also included specialist training for our event managers and venue staff to greet the children and their families or schools on arrival, appropriate lighting and sound levels, and the provision of anxiety aids if required to relieve the children's stress levels. These included stress balls and earplugs. Young at Art also created a special 'chill-out zone' beside the venue auditorium so children experiencing anxiety could leave and re-enter the performance as they wished.

The BCF18 brochure and website listings also included accessibility icons (wheelchair accessible, guide dog friendly, induction loop, relaxed performances) for parents and families to better inform their choices and support their needs.

*"We really appreciated the planning that had gone into the visual story and the resources given to our pupils. The staff were so responsive to our pupils and accepting of their difficulties and differences, which was wonderful. For example, a staff member noticed a pupil of mine was becoming a little restless and he was quickly but subtly offered some ear defenders, which worked perfectly to ensure the pupil enjoyed the rest of the performance. The stress balls and calm space available were so thoughtful but our pupils didn't even need them as they were so engaged in the performance"*

Teacher, Harberton Special School.

### **CPD Programme for Teachers**

Our CPD Programme for Teachers, Educational Professionals and Trainee Teachers is tailored to support schools and to develop teacher skills in critical appraisal of performance and engaging with children through drama techniques in the classroom.

(For full details on our CPD Programme see Section 3.2, page 28)

## **Strategic Aim 3: Engage with children and young people to develop their critical thinking and personal skills**

### **3.1 Deliver Engagement Programmes that Connect with Artform Critique**

Throughout the year Young at Art delivers a range of engagement initiatives, supported by our dedicated Education Officer, to connect children and young people to the creative arts.

#### **Creative Child**

Creative Child is a child-led direct contact programme of creative experiences for nursery and primary school children in some of Belfast's areas of highest social deprivation to support key development skills in confidence, imagination and critical thinking. Building on primary and secondary research and evaluation each year, Creative Child has evolved into an extended engagement program, delivering a series of child led, process based, creative workshops combined with performance visits for children, their teachers and parents.



Participants in an Extended Creative Experience in An Cultúrlann



The Creative Child programme aims to grow children's skills in opinion-forming, critical appraisal, imagination and articulation. The programme works with children aged 3 to 11 years within their schools while also offering training & creative support to parents and teachers, thus enhancing the environment around children to increase their creativity.

Working with 23 schools (15 nurseries and eight primary schools) in the North, West and East of Belfast, including 5 Irish medium schools. Each child in the project receives seven creative experiences, including pre- and post-performance workshops in two mediums (drama or dance and visual art) delivered by specially-trained professional artist facilitators and support workers, a visit to a festival performance, a parent/child workshop, an 'extended cultural experience' visit to another venue, either Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich or the Strand Arts Centre, and nursery schools also received a box of props related to their chosen performance.

Their teachers receive dedicated CPD training and a resource box to support them to 'extend' their use of drama techniques when back in the classroom. Artists working on the project were provided with fully-funded places on two of our CPD courses.

In 2017/18, Young at Art delivered the Creative Child programme completely through Irish for all five Irish medium schools involved. Additionally, we piloted new content in our parent and child sessions and in the extended creative experiences. We also piloted a shared reading parent and child session in Ballysillan Primary.

In total in 2018, Creative Child engaged with **787 children, 78 teachers and 1180 parents and grandparents through 223 workshops.**

Project evaluation has evidenced:

- increased creativity and imagination in children,
- increased ability to think individually, to articulate ideas and to critically evaluate in children,
- increased confidence and willingness of teachers, parents and children to try new things,
- increased level of creativity in teachers, in teaching methods and in classroom practices, and
- increasing awareness of the value of imagination, creativity and the Arts among children, parents and teachers.

A full, independent report carried out by Stranmillis University College is expected in September 2018.

### **Fighting Words Belfast**

Fighting Words Belfast has delivered creative writing workshops and after schools activity to 2,191 children and young people aged 6-18 at Skainos, and at the Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts, including a range of one-off programmes, inspiring local children and young people to get involved in creative writing.

(For full details on Fighting Words Belfast see Section 1.3, page 15)

## **3.2 Offer Professional Development in Arts/Arts in Education**

### **Creative Child**

Creative Child is an engagement programme that aims to overcome the barriers to access – economic, educational, social and physical - with direct contact creative experiences using arts-based engagement explores communication, opinion, literacy and creativity with children aged 3-11 years in some of Belfast most deprived areas. It includes a range of CPD training and resource opportunities for teachers.

(For full details on our Creative Child Programme see Section 3.1, page 26)

## **Professional Development Programmes**

### **TYANI SHOWCASE**

The TYANI (Theatre for Young Audiences NI) Showcase profiled some of the finest performance work for young audiences being created here in Northern Ireland. The showcase included performances, works-in-progress, 'scratch' performances, discussions and networking events. The range of events took place over four days and included a range of networking events, talks and discussions.

(For full details on our TYANI Showcase see Section 1.1, page 8)

### **Industry Events Programme**

Interrogating topics in the field, exploring key trends and sharing best and emerging practice across a range of artforms is key to ensuring that we, and the sector as a whole (artists, practitioners, educationalists and researchers) remain at the leading edge of youth arts practice.

This year Young at Art presented a series of 5 industry events aimed at students, professional arts practitioners and those working in related fields of youth, education and research.

(For full details on our Industry Events Programme see Section 3.3, page 30)

## **CPD and DEP Programmes**

We offer a range of education support schemes tailored to support schools and to develop teacher's skills in the critical appraisal of performance and engaging with children through the creative arts including:

- CPD Training for teachers in Drama;
- Degree Enhancement Training for student teachers;
- CPD training for artist facilitators in child-led practice;
- Dedicated schools and community groups pre-booking service for festival events;
- Significant ticket subsidies for schools and community groups;

- Special festival events tailored specifically for school groups; and
- Free Teacher Resource Packs for all schools attending festival performances.

Our CPD and Degree Enhancement Programmes (DEP) are tailored to support teachers, artists and facilitators to develop skills in critical appraisal of performance and engaging with children through art-based techniques.

In 2017/18 we delivered 2 CPD training days to **33 teachers**; and 3 CPD artists facilitation training days in child-led practice, strengthening the arts facilitation skills of **19 artists and facilitators** within the NI Creative Sector.



CPD Drama

### **Intern and Student Placement Programme**

Young at Art continues to lead the way when it comes to developing and investing in future cultural leaders. As part of our Intern and Placement Programme in 2017/18 we hosted 5 interns and 4 placement students.

We were fortunate to be successful in applying to the Creative and Cultural Skills Programme to support the costs of two 6-month internships. Erin McClean joined the Young at Art team as Marketing Intern, and Erin Moore worked across both the Young at Art Events agency and the Education and Education Team.

In January 2018, we hosted two Stranmillis University College B.Ed primary and post-primary degree students, Ava McDermott and Emma Murphy.

Creative Coordinator internships through the Open University's Santander Universities SME Work Placements Programme were offered to Emma Hawthorne, Judith Allen and Tania Ahmed.

We continue to support pupil placements from local secondary schools with a regular weekly placement from St Rose's Dominican College.

### **Volunteer Programme**

Young at Art was the first NI arts organisation to receive an Investing-in-Volunteers Kitemark, and we continue to resource, develop and value the vital contribution volunteers make to all areas of the Young at Art family, while working to build and increase the volunteers' skills base.

Key to this is volunteer-led Fighting Words Belfast, which in 2017/18 recruited and trained 37 volunteers in the mentoring and support of children within the creative writing centre.

BCF18 welcomed 42 volunteers from Ulster University's International Hospitality Management Degree Course.

### **3.3 Explore and Cultivate Best Practice**

#### **Industry Events Programme**

Interrogating topics in the field, exploring key trends and sharing best and emerging practice across a range of artforms is key to ensuring that we, and the sector as a whole (artists, practitioners, educationalists and researchers) remain at the leading edge of youth arts practice.

During BCF18 we delivered 5 fascinating talks/discussions and symposiums aimed at students, professional arts practitioners and those working in related fields of youth, education and research.

**What is Normal Anyway?** (11 March), in association with Imagine Festival of Ideas & Politics, explored how modern versions of family and gender are represented and portrayed in performance work for young audiences. Hosted by **Eilidh MacAskill**, the discussion panel included Gemma Mae Halligan from Amadan Ensemble (**Pink and Blue**), Steve Ball from Birmingham Rep and Producer of **Penguins**, and Ruth McCarthy, Creative Director of **Outburst Queer Arts Festival**.

**Spotlight on Inclusive Theatre**, hosted by **Replay Theatre Company**, at the Skainos Centre (12 March) was a lively morning exploring inclusive practice and featured performance extracts and panel discussions. Those who attended were asked to consider how the performing arts sector can get involved and help progress an 'inclusive revolution'.

**Offshore Investment** (12 March) in association with Theatre NI focused on international touring opportunities and the financial and practical support available to individual artists and companies to take up opportunities for international touring. The discussion panel at the Black Box included Gilly Campbell from **Arts Council NI**, Mags Walsh from **Arts Council Ireland**, Ciaran Walsh from **Culture Ireland** and Colette Norwood from



the **British Council**, and was chaired by Sophie Hayles from the **Creative Europe** desk in Belfast

**Too Hot to Handle?** (12 March) in association with Theatre NI, hosted by **Tony Reekie** (international children's theatre programmer and former Director of Imagine), looked at the challenges in creating and programming performance work for young audiences that tackles difficult or sensitive subjects and themes. The panel in the Black Box included Gill Robertson, Artistic Director of **Catherine Wheels**, Aislinn Ó'hEocha, Executive Artistic Director of **Barboró International Arts Festival for Children**, and Christine O'Toole, Tourism, Culture and Arts Development Officer for **Belfast City Council**.

**Sharing Creativity in Autism, Special Needs & Fighting Words Belfast** (14 March) was kindly hosted by the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen's University Belfast, with keynote speaker, Koulla Yiasouma, the **Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People**. In this special event, **Fighting Words Belfast** shared learning from two innovative programmes:

- a creative writing programme for children on the autism spectrum and their parents, developed in partnership with Speech and Language clinicians and **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Arts in Health**; and
- a multi-sensory programme for **Glenveagh Special School** students leading to a unique publication, *Inner Peace*, a young person's coping companion in times of stress. The panel discussion debated the role that community-led initiatives such as Fighting Words Belfast can play in supporting the development of creativity in young people with additional needs, bringing together practitioners, from different disciplines who share a common interest in this field, with parents and volunteers. This was followed by the launch and book signing of *Inner Peace* by students from Glenveagh Special School.

### **CPD Training**

We offer a range of education support schemes tailored to support schools and to develop the skills of teachers in the critical appraisal of performance and engaging with children through the creative arts.

Our CPD and Degree Enhancement Programmes (DEP) are tailored to support teachers, artists and facilitators to develop skills in critical appraisal of performance and engaging with children through art-based techniques.

(For full details on our CPD Programmes see Section 3.2, page 28)

## **Strategic Aim 4: Sustain the organisation's mission for the future**

### **4.1 Devise & Implement a Robust Financial Strategy**

Young at Art continues to strengthen financial probity, working through best practice guidelines in consultation with Young at Art's accountants Finegan Gibson, supported by our Financial Procedures Policy.

#### **Funders**

Young at Art's principal funder is the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, which provides an annual funding award towards some of the costs of the core staffing and a programming award towards the BCF festival programme costs. Belfast City Council also supports core costs under their Core Multi-Annual Funding Programme, while the Education Authority make a small but necessary contribution to the core staffing costs of Young at Art.

Young at Art's creative programme and our engagement activities would not be possible without an array of support from public bodies and the private sector. Our programmes are financed through year-on-year fundraising from a range of sources.

In 2017/18 Young at Art received a total of 39 different sources of support, directly and indirectly, including public bodies, statutory agencies, sponsorships, trusts & foundations, partnership income, in-kind support, and embassies and international performing arts funds including: ARN Foundation, Arts & Business NI, Austin & Hope Pilkington Trust, BBC Children in Need, Belfast Cathedral Sit-out Fund, Belfast City Council (Community Festivals Fund, Family Friendly Belfast, Belfast Festival of Learning), Blackburn Trust, British Council, Culture Ireland, Creative and Cultural Skills, Department of Communities, Enkalon Foundation, Ernest Cook Foundation, Foras na Gaelige (Festivals Fund, Literary Projects Fund), Flanders Performing Arts Institute, George Best City Airport Community Fund, John Thaw Foundation, Kingdom of the Netherlands Embassy, Office of the Laureate na nÓg, Swedish Performing Arts Institute, Tourism NI, Translink, Ulster Garden Villages, Ulster Museum Ulster University, and in kind support from Crescent Arts Centre, MUMO, NI4Kids, QRadio, Paperjam Design, and Ramada Encore.

(See Funding Breakdown in Appendix 3, page 40)

### **4.2 Investigate Options for Shared Resources, Partnerships and Mergers**

Young at Art has a proven track record of working in partnership and we have harnessed this experience to explore increased collaborations with a range of sectoral partners to share resources and facilities and look at joint ways of working to ensure sustainability and viability.

New partners in 2017/18 have included Imagine Festival of Ideas and Politics, MUMO and Office of the Laureate na nÓg; as well as deepening relationships with Black Box,

Botanic Gardens, Bounce Culture, Cahoots NI, Children's Books Ireland, Crescent Arts Centre, Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich, Lyric Theatre, the MAC, NI Opera, Oh Yeah! Music Centre, Replay Theatre Company, Strand Arts Centre, Theatre NI, Translink, Ulster University, Ulster Museum and Wheelworks.

### **4.3 Maintain Effective Governance and Act as a Good Employer**

#### **Governance**

The governance of the charity Young at Art and its wholly owned subsidiaries, the trading company Young at Art Events and the creative writing centre Fighting Words has strengthened with a clearer definition of the separate three companies under the one family banner. Young at Art and Young at Art Events host shared Board meetings regularly overseeing both companies, including an AGM on 7 November 2017. Fighting Words Belfast has a separate Board that includes a YAA Board Member. Each company produces their own individual annual report and statement of accounts.

#### **Strategic Development**

2017/18 was the third and final year of Young at Art's Strategy for 2015-2018, and this report presents our activities following the strategic headings as set out by the strategy. Our new strategy for 2019-2022 is in development and will be published in Autumn 2018, supported by Strategic Consultancy from Green Light Consulting thanks to support from Arts & Business NI.

Young at Art delivers its ambitious creative programme on limited resources. Despite this, the year's programme was delivered successfully with little outsourcing and a highly effective and skilled team.

Young at Art continued to generate the majority of its turnover through fundraising rather than earned income. Its beneficiaries contributed only minimally to activity costs, with all engagement programmes offered free of charge to recipients and BCF ticket prices kept as low as possible. Despite a limited staff capacity available for fundraising this the organisation continues to build and grow and diversify its funding base, and delivered an enhanced festival programme in 2018 in celebration of our 20<sup>th</sup> Belfast Children's Festival. A full list of funders can be found in the company's audited accounts and their support across an array of programmes cannot be underestimated.

### **4.4 Develop & Manage a Stakeholder Management & Advocacy Strategy**

#### **Marketing and Communications**

##### **Awards**

A special moment in Young at Art's annual press coverage was the press exposure surrounding Arts & Business NI's Annual Awards, from the initial shortlisting of Young at Art in four categories in October 2017, to the subsequent announcement of Young at Art as 'Arts Organisation of the Year' in January 2018, plus the winner of the Cultural

Branding Award alongside business partner, Translink.

In December 17, Belinda Cree was awarded the NI Creative and Cultural Skills Intern of the Year Award for her previous work with Young at Art Events during a 6-month internship, and was also shortlisted for the national Creative and Cultural Skills UK Intern of the Year award.

### **Belfast Children's Festival 2018**

The 2018 Belfast Children's Festival marketing campaign spanned a seven-month period from September 2017 to March 2018 using a variety of online and off-line marketing media to attract our target audiences of families, schools, and arts/education industry delegates.

For the first time, we released pre-sales for three shows (*Penguins*, *How to Catch a Star* and *Horses*), plus the option to buy gift vouchers. These went live on 17 November 2017, in time for the Christmas present buying market. When we consider the movement of tickets (including those events that were free but ticketed), 60% of tickets sold were in the period from November 2017 to February 2018, 25% were sold in the three weeks before festival, and 15% were sold in the week of the festival.



To raise awareness of the fact that this was the 20<sup>th</sup> Belfast Children's Festival, we decided to focus on the birthday celebration aspect. We worked with designers, PaperJam, to create a special die-cut flyer in the shape of a birthday present with a 3D visual effect, tying in with the birthday theme and standing out from competitors. The Young at Art logo also received special treatment, combining a birthday hat sitting on top of the 'Y'. The fold out A3 programme leaflet was replaced by a 160mm square 30-page brochure, perfect for fitting in a schoolbag or handbag and keeping as a souvenir of the 20<sup>th</sup> programme.

The continued emphasis on using digital tools was maintained to promote the festival across our company website (88,468 page views), social media (Facebook 6,465 followers, Twitter 4,664 followers), and through e-newsletters (7.5k subscribers). Moreover, the festival and festival events were listed on numerous 'What's On' listings, arts, community and lifestyle websites and of course, partner/funder websites and communications. (See Appendix 5, page 43, for more facts and figures)

These digital tools were backed up with strong print and outdoor advertising. We engaged a new distribution supplier, Factotum, who promptly and effectively distributed flyers, brochure and posters across Greater Belfast, Holywood, Bangor and Lisburn. Thanks to a partnership with Translink, the brochure was distributed across their



network and 24 specially designed BCF18/Translink posters were displayed across 17 stations. For the first time this year, we oversaw the distribution of the brochure across Libraries NI branches.

Due to the success of last year's partnership with Ni4kids, we took out a 4- page cover takeover of their February 2018 edition (75,000 copies were printed), with a fun travel activity pack inside. These efforts resulted in out-of-Belfast visitors to the festival accounting for 40% of bookers, an increase of 13% compared to BCF17. We also increased the scale of outdoor advertising this year, choosing strategically located sites across Belfast. This included 10 x 48 sheet billboards, 10 Adshel Live sites, five Adshel sites, and six outdoor flags.

When survey respondents were asked how they found out about the festival, the most popular method was through social media (26%); jointly tied for second were Young at Art E-news (14%), Young at Art Website (14%) and Word of Mouth (14%); followed by Brochure (12%) and Outdoor Advertising (10%).



The 20<sup>th</sup> Belfast Children's Festival programme was officially launched at a reception hosted by Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Nuala McAllister, in the Banqueting Hall at City Hall on 11 January 2018 (pictured left). The Lord Mayor was joined by Chief Executive of Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Roisin McDonough. The calibre of hosts demonstrates that the Belfast Children's Festival is a firm favourite in our cultural and civic calendar of events and recognises Young at Art's contribution to the

quality artistic programming of Northern Ireland's only international children's arts festival, the largest children's festival (in terms of footfall) on the island of Ireland, and one of the largest in the UK.

This year we invested in a PR specialist, Mackle Communications, to help drive more coverage and awareness of the 20th Belfast Children's Festival. This was a great success as we secured additional coverage in the Irish News, Belfast Telegraph, Newsletter and sister publications and increased television coverage with a special feature airing on UTV Life on 2 March 2018, as one of 'Pammie's Picks' (also UTV Life) on 9 March 2018, and UTV News covered the Big Botanic Birthday Bash on Sunday 11 March 2018. Radio interviews also increased with mentions on the John Toal Show and Arts Extra on BBC Radio Ulster/Foyle, Belfast 89FM, and of course, media partner, Q Radio. (See Appendix 5, page 43, for more facts and figures)

Partnerships with NI4Kids (75k distribution per issue) and Q Radio (estimated 280k listenership per week) involved a mix of paid for and in-kind additional activity encompassing advertising, editorial, interviews, competitions, and social media activity. Competition prizes were generously donated by Ramada Encore and the hotel's restaurant, SQ Bar & Grill, by Translink and also included tickets to festival shows. The station promoted the outdoor broadcast taking place on the Sunday at the Big Botanic Birthday Bash, with live broadcast from presenter, Eoghan Quigg, and the Q Crew promotional team. In addition, our hotel partner, Ramada Encore, generously gifted advertising airtime on Q radio to Belfast Children's Festival, turning into 18 extra 30-second ads. This was a fantastic promotional boost for the limited budget available.

We also benefitted from strong partnerships built over several years with BCF18 host venues. This involved assistance with Marketing communications, PR, and Box Office/Front of House staff in 14 venues, enabling us to reach more audiences. We continue to work closely with community partners across the city including MUMO (Moving Up Moving On), Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiach, and Strand Arts Centre, ensuring that these partners have all relevant information to include in their communication and marketing platforms. We also use networks built up over 20 years, such as with Theatre NI, Belfast One, Destination CQ, Belfast Festivals Forum, Dance Resource Base, Community Arts Partnership, CultureNI, Dance Ireland, The Ark (Dublin), Baboro (Galway), Barnstorm (Kilkenny), Imaginate (Edinburgh), ASSITEJ (International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People), as well as our fellow TYANI partners, Replay Theatre Company and Cahoots NI and various European festival contacts to inform their audiences about our work. Moreover, we proactively connect with the Marketing and PR teams at Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council, Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, and many other funders, trusts and supporters. (See Summary of Marketing/Advertising in Appendix 5, page 43)

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY IN NUMBERS

A summary of the figures gathered across all annual activity (Young at Art and Young at Art Events and Fighting Words Belfast). These were gathered via Ticketsolve, documented numbers and simple head count appraisals. Exhibition figures were provided by beam-breaking footfall counters.

<b>2017/18</b>	<b>Young at Art</b>	<b>Young at Art Events</b>	<b>Fighting Words Belfast</b>
April	704	2803	101
May	17	1793	324
June	355	8270	247
July	100	1502	26
August	14	6355	87
September	-	292	244
October	-	1953	365
November	182	1069	110
December	10	2554	81
January	403	63	191
February	586	950	173
March	32,710	6109	242

TOTALS:

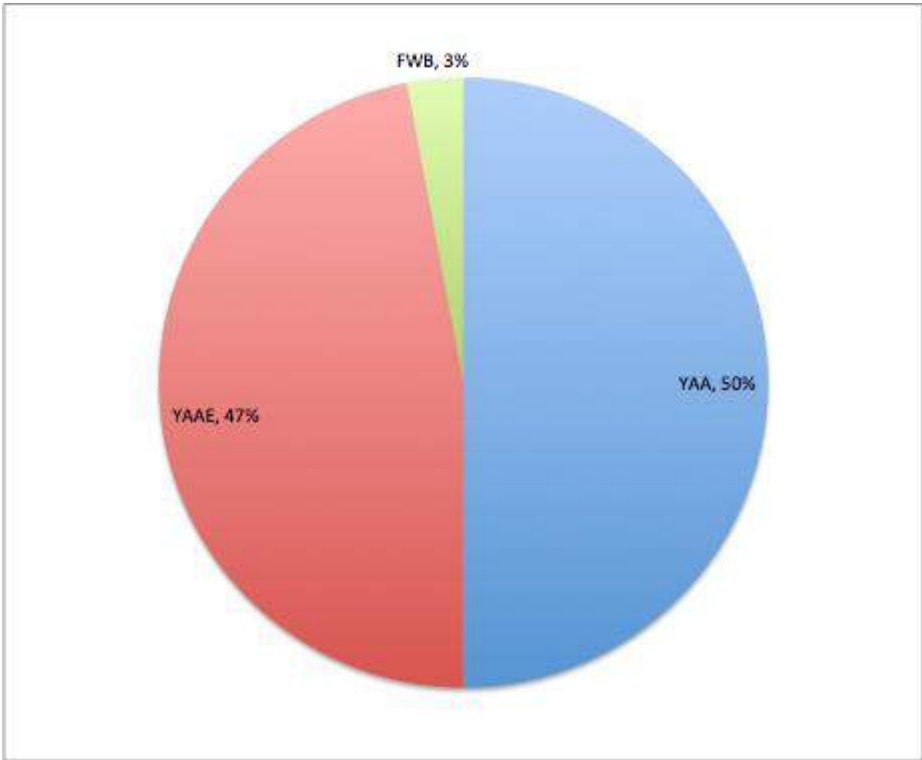
<b>35,081</b>	<b>33,713</b>	<b>2,191</b>
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# APPENDIX 2: ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE & PARTICIPATION FIGURES BY COMPANY

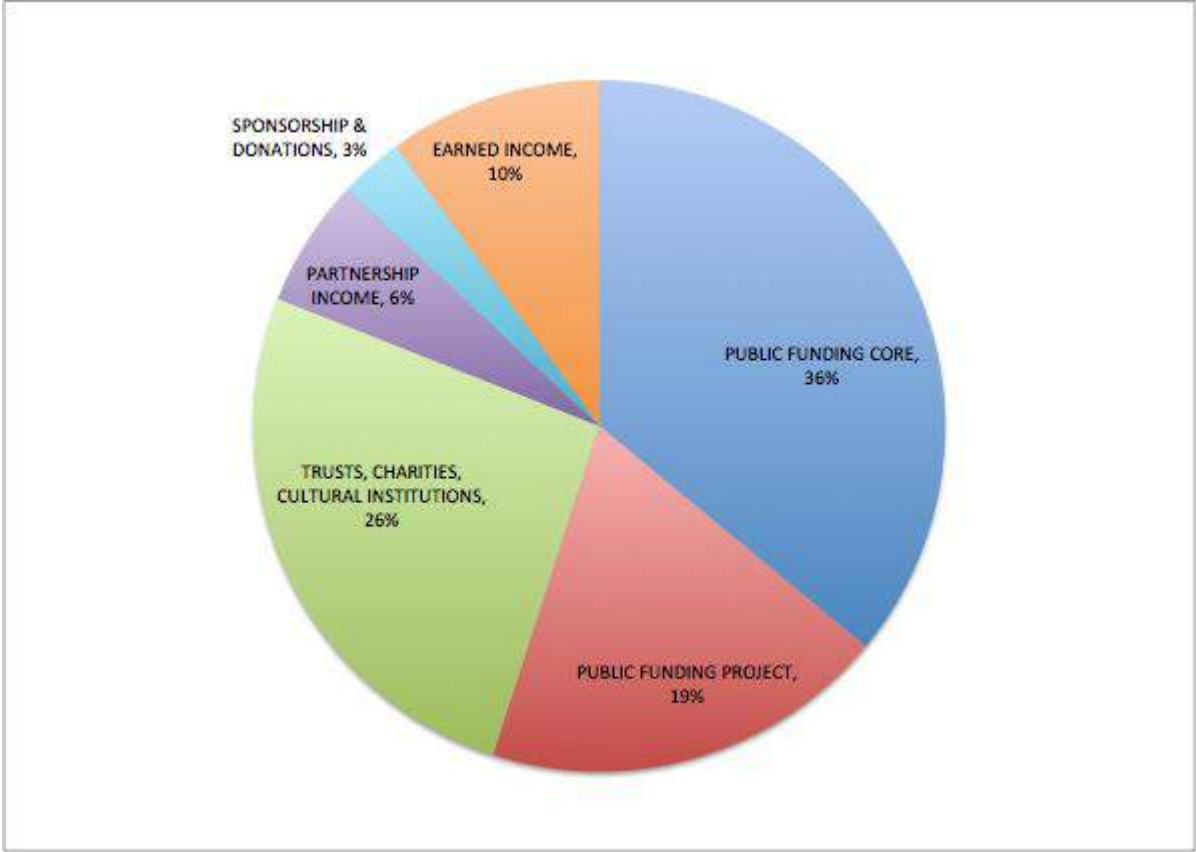
The following data was collected via our BCF18 box office data, Young at Art engagement projects data, and Young at Art Events & Fighting Words Belfast data. It gives an interesting snapshot of our activity across the Young at Art 'Family' during 2017-18.

Table 1. Spread of activities across the three companies: Young at Art, Young at Art Events, Fighting Words Belfast



### APPENDIX 3: FUNDING BREAKDOWN

The following pie chart illustrates a breakdown of the organisational income for Young at Art, excluding Young at Art Events and Fighting Words Belfast. In-kind support has only been included where there is a verifiable figure available but it is estimated the actual value is significantly greater.



# APPENDIX 4: 2018 BELFAST CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

Analysis for this year's festival has been taken from online analytics, Ticketsolve box office system, survey, and effective data capture at many events. This has produced a coherent picture of where audiences are coming from.

As in BCF17, the audience came predominantly from Belfast (54%). There was however a noticeable increase in out-of-town bookers. Due to a province-wide marketing campaign, 40% of bookers were from the rest of Northern Ireland, a 13% increase from the previous year. The remaining 6% were from Republic of Ireland, UK and International. See figure 1.

When we look at the distribution of tickets per geographical area, we can see the effect of the tickets provided through our schools programme that took the portion of tickets for Belfast to 64%. See figure 2. The Delegate Programme grew this year to welcome 33 delegates (11 International, 7 from ROI, 11 from UK, and 4 from NI). These delegates each attended 10-15 events as part of a planned itinerary. Within its planning for BCF19, Young at Art will continue to look at how to improve its capture of accurate and usable data to support evaluation and audience development/growth.

Fig 1: Overall % breakdown of Unique Customers

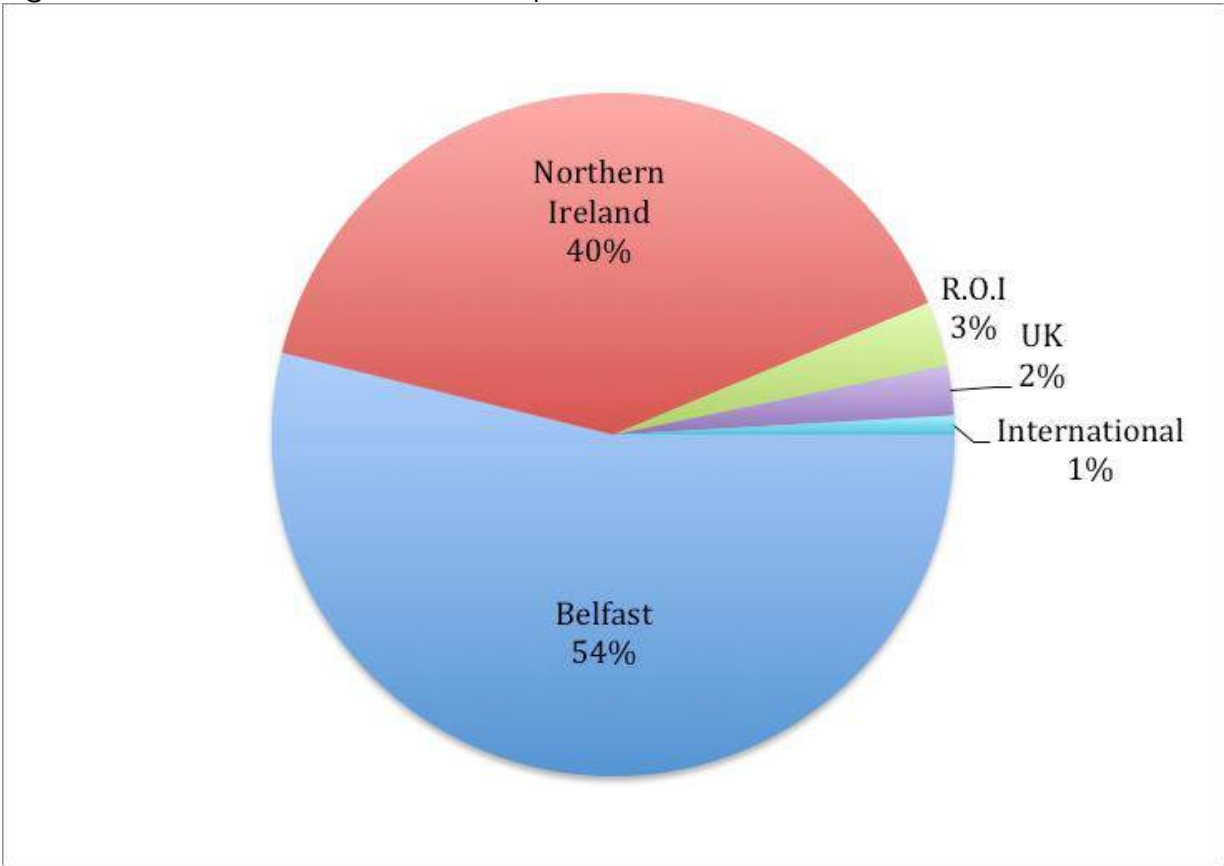


Fig 2: Overall breakdown of tickets by area

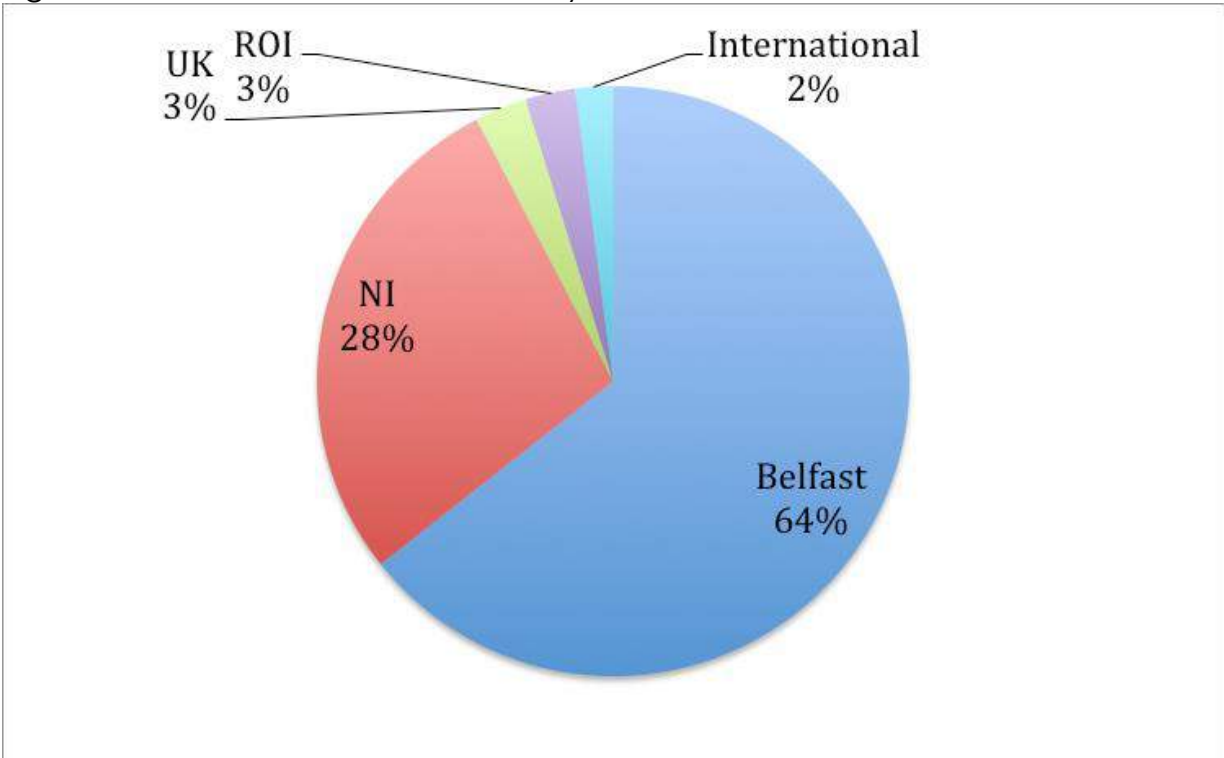
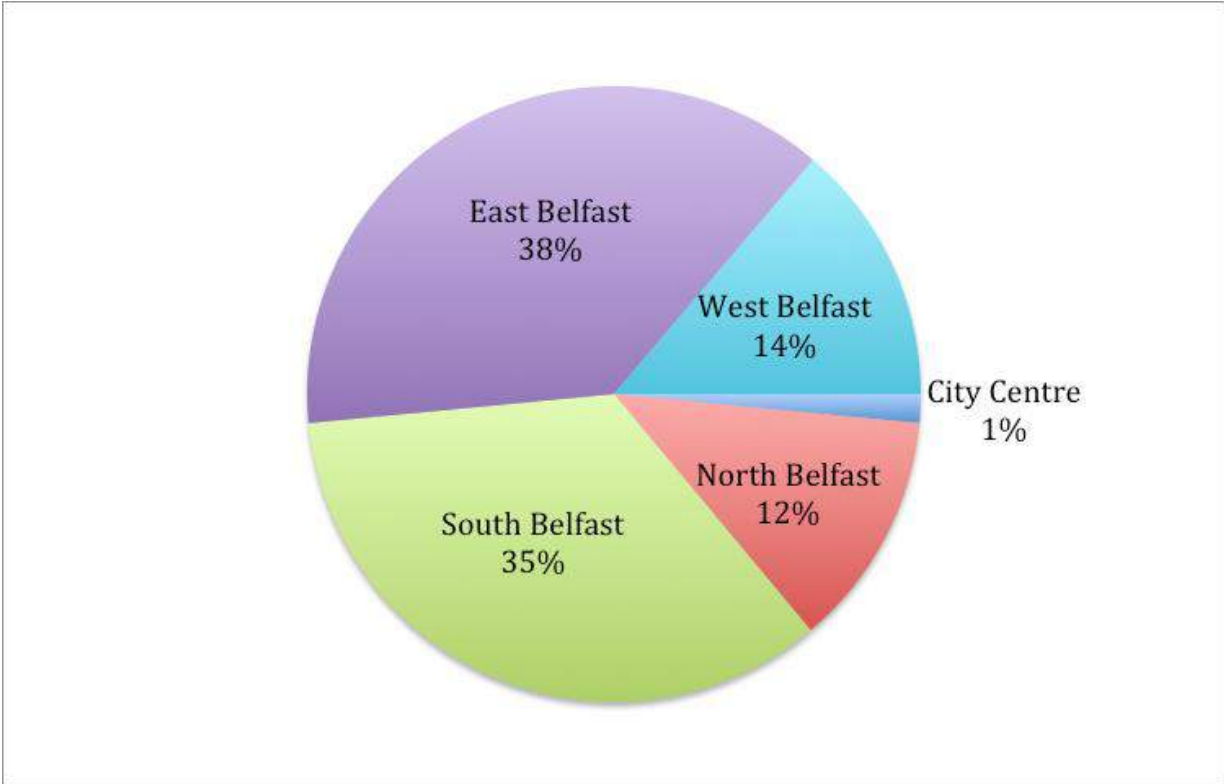


Fig 3: Belfast bookers broken down by area





## APPENDIX 5: SUMMARY OF MARKETING/ ADVERTISING

### 2018 Belfast Children's Festival

#### PRINT

- 10,000 Promotional uniquely cut 'birthday present' Highlights Flyers, distributed around Belfast from November 2017, and at YAA Events agency bookings
- 15,000 Print run of programme brochure (Distributed to family friendly venues, retail outlets, cafes, visitor attractions, libraries, leisure and community centres, cafes, restaurants and hotels across Belfast City Centre and the Greater Belfast surrounding suburbs. Plus new distribution to all Libraries NI branches and Translink stations across network.
- 300 x Launch Invites
- 75,000 prints run takeover of February 2018 edition of NI4Kids (Distribution province-wide in family friendly venues and in school bags.)
- 6 x Festivals Forum Flags
- 150 x A3 posters
- 1x A0 Poster
- 4 x A2 Posters
- 6 x A1 posters Miracoco Luminarium
- 4 x A1 posters Big Botanic Birthday Bash map and schedules
- 1 large-scale Miracoco Luminarium banner
- 2000 x A4 Big Botanic Birthday Bash Maps
- 1000 x A6 Feedback Postcards
- 2 x Pop up stands
- 70 x T-shirts (for Event Managers & Volunteers)
- 200 x Stamped YAA Tote Bags for artists and delegates
- 5000 YAA Stickers
- 33 x Launch Goody Bags
- Visual Arts & Families postcard

#### Outdoor Advertising

10 billboard sites, 10 Adshel Live sites, 5 Adshel sites

Type	Site Address	Cycle 4 (12/2/18 - 25/2/18)	Cycle 5 (26/2/18 - 11/3/18)
Billboard	Antrim Road, Belfast	x	
Billboard	Bridge End, Belfast		x
Billboard	Newtownards Rd, Belfast	x	
Billboard	21-27 Corporation St, Belfast	x	
Billboard	Millfield/Samuel St, Belfast	x	x

Billboard	340-354 Albertbridge Rd, Belfast	x	
Billboard	27-39 Ormeau Rd, Belfast	x	
Billboard	HD Botanic Ave @ Moghul Belfast		x
Billboard	18 Victoria St	x	
Billboard	Sandy Row	x	
6 Sheet	Great Victoria St, Belfast	x	
6 Sheet	Royal Ave (os Schuh), Belfast		x
6 Sheet	Wellington Place, Belfast		x
6 Sheet	Victoria Square		x
6 Sheet	Forestsides Shopping Centre		x
Adshel Live	Bradbury Place (o/s Lavery's), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Bridge St, Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Castle Place (o/s Donegall Arcade), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Dublin Rd (o/s Oxfam), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Howard St (o/s Lesley Buildings), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Malone Rd (adj Eglantine Inn), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Ormeau Rd, Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Oxford St (adj Waterfront Hall), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Queen St (o/s Craftworld), Belfast	x	x
Adshel Live	Ravenhill Rd/Albertbridge Rd, Belfast	x	x

Originally booked 186 Ormeau Rd; however due to snow and ice, the billposter was not able to get access to the site to post safely. As an alternative, JC Decaux offered Adshel screens in Victoria Square and Forestside for the remainder of cycle 5.

**6 x Outdoor Flags (part of Belfast Festivals Forum)**

4 x Belfast City Hall

2 x Cotton Court (Due to works at Cotton Court, the flag poles were removed mid-February and we placed 4 flags at City Hall)

2 x SS Nomadic

## **24 x Poster sites in Translink Bus and Rail stations around Northern Ireland**

- Antrim NIR
- Ballymena NIR
- Bangor Bus and Train x 2
- Botanic NIR x 2
- Carrick NIR
- Coleraine NIR and bus x 2
- GVS NIR x 2
- Lisburn NIR
- Ballymoney NIR
- Central NIR x 2
- Antrim Bus
- Ballymena Bus
- Liganside bus
- Derry Bus
- Newry Bus
- Lisburn Bus x 2
- Newtownards Bus

## **BROADCAST**

Q Radio: 52 x 30 sec adverts 2-9 March

Q Radio: 1 week long Radio Competition plus pre-promote 16-23 February

## **ONLINE**

Regular e-newsletter sent monthly from April to December and fortnightly from January to March to over 7,000 subscribers through Mailchimp

Digital Schools Brochure: - Distributed from September 2017

[http://www.youngatart.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/YAA\\_Schools\\_%20Groups\\_Brochure\\_1718.pdf](http://www.youngatart.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/YAA_Schools_%20Groups_Brochure_1718.pdf)

Digital Festival Brochure:

<http://www.youngatart.co.uk/sites/default/files/BCF18%20brochure.pdf>

NI4Kids website homepage takeover from 1 February to 10 March 2018

2 x Promotional Videos

Highlights: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDyqZEUC8Fg>

Animation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LvmLetkm6s>

Digital Download (Travel Activity Pack):

[http://www.youngatart.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/TravelActivity\\_download.pdf](http://www.youngatart.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/TravelActivity_download.pdf)

Various MPU banner adverts

## **Media & Online Analysis**

The 2018 festival campaign received 55 national and regional features across print, 215 broadcast items across TV and radio, and 53 online articles that largely contributed to the success of the event. We engaged a media-monitoring agency

throughout February and March 2018, and they calculated the equivalent advertising value for print media at £37,910.

## **Publicity**

Strategic partnerships, in-kind marketing support, and partnership investment from Arts & Business NI allowed Young at Art to further its advertising spend and reach in 2018.

- Marketing in-kind support from Translink comprised 6-sheet and poster sites across their network in Northern Ireland.
- The 2018 festival received an estimated £4k in-kind support from media partner NI4Kids, including Homepage takeover of NI4Kids website, online adverts, editorial features, competitions, and bespoke e-zine to 20k subscribers.
- BCF18 received £3k in-kind support from media partner, Q Radio, including additional adverts, a week-long competition on Q Breakfast, street team promotion, and social media.
- We increased out of Belfast bookers to 40%, attributed to the reach of this campaign.

## **Online Analysis**

- From 17 November 2017 to 16 March 2018, the Young at Art website received 88,468 page views, an increase of 9% over same period in 16/17.
- Acquisition of users: 37% arrived via Organic Search, 33% arrived Direct, 19% arrived via Social Media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), and 11% arrived via Referral.
  - Top 3 referral sites:
    - Visit Belfast
    - CultureNI
    - Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
- Invested in advertising spend on Facebook, resulting in an extra reach of 29,042, an extra 48,274 impressions, plus additional 18,853 video views.
- Increased followers by 7.5% on Facebook and 5.5% on Twitter.
- From Jan 18- Mar 18, the combined number of impressions on Twitter totalled 294.7k, with the Young at Art profile receiving 5105 profile visits and 479 mentions.

## APPENDIX 6: STAFFING STRUCTURE (at 31 March 2018)

