

# The Fenton Arts Trust

Succurrere Artibus

Registered Charity No. 294629

Number 24

## Fenton News

**A**s I write this piece in the middle of December 2025, I cast my mind back to the year 2000, and the establishment of The Fenton Arts Trust as we now know it. **Shelley Baxter** describes below how the large endowment that enabled the Trust to expand its activities from that year on to the point where 25 years later we have been able to realise Shu-Yao's vision by supporting hundreds of emerging professional artists of all genres in the UK to the tune of over £2 million in total. The difference these grants have made are described by some of the recipients below; beneficiaries tell how an award can be "transformative" and "absolutely crucial", and how they have benefitted from "valuable insight", gaining confidence and increased visibility in the process. I would like to express my immense gratitude to Shelley, who has just retired as a Trustee (after completing over 12 years as Trust Manager), and her foundational work, together with that of founder chair **Richard Ward**, in the early days. Shelley's input over the years of my involvement has been essential to the ethos of the Trust, which reflects Shu-Yao's original intentions. Shelley will be greatly missed on the board, but she will continue to represent the Trust at events across the country.

**Sue Davies-Scourfield - Chair**



*"In 1985 when I attended the first of many delicious home-made dinners with Shu-Yao Fenton and Richard Ward to discuss the possibility of creating a charity, I never imagined I would still be actively involved 40 years later. With a view to helping emerging artists of all disciplines, we attended art school shows, and musical and theatrical events, mostly in the South initially as we were London based then and gave a few hundred pounds to whichever endeavours appealed to us and accepted our offers."*

However in 2000, Shu-Yao sadly died and Richard and I were thrown into the ring to add some more Trustees as Shu-Yao's estate delivered a considerable sum. Richard became Chairman and I became Manager. Since then we have been continually blessed with Trustees, all of whom have more than delivered on their remit. The time has raced by and it has been a fascinating journey not least because the Arts change with every generation. I leave the Trust happy with our combined achievements and I look forward to future events."

**Shelley Baxter**



**Founder:**  
Shu-Yao Fenton

**Trust Manager:**  
Christine Bisatt

**Trustees:**  
Paul Bayley  
Sue Davies-Scourfield (*Chair*)  
Sue Logan  
Fiona Thompson  
Jeremy Whitton Spriggs  
Stephen Wilson (*Hon. Treasurer*)

## Annual News 2025



▲ Fiona and Shelley on a visit to West Dean College



▲ Shelley and Trustees, June 2025 (L-R: Stephen Wilson, Sue Logan, Sue Davies-Scourfield, Shelley, Jeremy Whitton Spriggs, Paul Bayley, Fiona Thompson)

## Poetry London

The grant to Poetry London enabled it to relaunch its Poetry Apprenticeship Scheme, providing mentorship to two emerging poets under the guidance of acclaimed poet Pascale Petit. Through this scheme, both poets have been able to take significant steps forward in their creative journeys.

*"My Poetry London Apprenticeship was an incredible experience. Pascale Petit's insights and suggestions were pivotal to developing the final draft of the manuscript of my first collection. I've recently sent it out to several publishers together with Pascale's short endorsement of the collection – fingers crossed it ends up on a back cover!"* **Nasim Luczaj**

*"The apprenticeship scheme has been transformative for me. The quality of teaching and precision of feedback has given me the tools to improve my practice far beyond the scope of the programme itself. I could not have accessed such valuable mentorship without the generous funding made available by The Fenton Arts Trust"* **Freya Gillard**



# Beneficiaries 2024 - 2025

## Propel



▲ Propel Issue 11: Cover Design: Patricia Ferguson

Funding from The Fenton Arts Trust allowed Propel Magazine to publish two online issues showcasing 40 early-career poets, and to produce a two-year retrospective anthology featuring work from 120 emerging voices. The project has already had a profound effect on many of its contributors. Poet Oluwaseun Olayiwola described his appearance in the magazine:

*"It came near the beginning, when I started to send poems from my first manuscript out. As one of my first acceptances, and from one of the foremost critics in the UK, it really gave me the confidence to keep sending out individual poems to different publications."*

Since then Oluwaseun has released his debut poetry collection *Strange Beach* which went on to win an Eric Gregory Award and was Poetry Book Society Winter 2025 Special Commendation.

## Royal Exchange Theatre

In 2024 the Royal Exchange sought funding to offer members of its Front of House and Bar teams, many of whom are freelance artists, the opportunity to develop their dramaturgical and text work skills. This took the form of a six-week professional development course that focused on in-depth dramaturgy and script analysis. The aim was to equip participants with the skills to confidently read scripts and provide constructive feedback to playwrights; offering participants new career opportunities and contributing to the long-term development of the local artistic community. Rosie Bingham, Fundraising Officer, commented:

*"TFAT's grant meant we could pay 10 members of our Front of House team to attend the workshops and complete 1.5 hours of homework between each session, upholding our commitment to developing artists whilst paying the Real Living Wage. From the final cohort, our Literary team were able to recruit readers for a paid opportunity, reading for the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting. We want every staff member to feel valued, included and empowered; and the impact of this training has led to richer artistic networks and conversations around the organisation. Thank you for making all of this possible."*

## Michael McEvoy



▲ Michael & dancers performing *The Gate House*. Photo: Neil Harrison

The Trust supported dancer Michael McEvoy's plans to create a highly personal choreographic work in which he told the story of three generations of his family's life against the background of the Troubles in NI. In his application Michael evocatively described his aims to create a "a love letter to Belfast" and "sharing of lineage over a pint of Guinness". The production took place in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast in November 2024.

*"The Gate House was an ambitious and deeply personal creation — not only as an emerging artist navigating a site-specific premiere as part of the Belfast International Arts Festival, but also as a young artist discovering my voice as a maker."*

*The support from the Trust was absolutely crucial. As an unfunded emerging choreographer, I didn't have the backing of a major Arts Council grant or production funding. Without the Trust's financial support, this work would have remained at the work-in-progress stage. Thanks to their belief in the project, and in me as a young artist, I was able to present my first full-length production on an international platform."*

## Exeter Phoenix



Exeter Phoenix asked the Trust to help them support emerging artists in the local area. In addition to delivering a professional development programme which led to the delivery of four 'Creative Growth' workshops supporting 86 artists, they used some of the grant to offer two commissions to visual artist **Adam Garret** and to the performance duo **The Hedgesong Collective**, who created *The Wheel of the Woods* for the Green Phoenix Festival. As a result of this, the duo has been invited to collaborate with Richard Chappell Dance (who coincidentally are Trust beneficiaries in 25-26).

▲ Pictured above: The Hedgesong Collective. Photo: Exeter Phoenix

## Edinburgh Art Festival (EAF)



▲ Hamish Halley (inset) & still from his film *Please Keep*. Portrait: Arthur Heck

The Trust offered a grant to EAF to support its Early Career Artist-in-Residence programme. Lucy Cargill, EAF's Fundraising & Business Development Manager, reported:

*"In 2025, **Hamish Halley** was selected for the residency and presented 'please keep' (2025), a poetic film installation exploring memory, place, transformation and the ecology of care. The work was shown at The People's Story Museum in Edinburgh's Old Town, drawing striking connections between archival storytelling, family histories, and contemporary working life."*

*"Our early-career artist programme, formally known as PLATFORM, has been a transformative pillar of our artist development strategy - it supports early-career practitioners with resources, mentoring, and a platform to share daring new projects. Hamish's residency exemplifies this: it has provided him with space, support, and audience engagement to grow his practice. We're proud to champion artists like him whose unique voices will shape the future of contemporary art in Scotland."* Kim McAleese, Director

*"This residency allowed me the time and support to develop my work in a focused environment. Sharing my work at EAF2025 for the first time helped me connect with audiences and gain confidence and visibility I wouldn't otherwise have had."* **Hamish Halley**



## Rachel E. Thorn



▲ Tour poster of *Me for You* featuring Rachel (on right). Design: Richard Moorhouse & Ben West

Actor and emerging playwright Rachel approached TFAT to help with fees to support the tour of her play.

*"The Trust generously supported me with my play Me For You, which we toured to Red Ladder venues, Slung Low and Pleasance Courtyard in Summer 2024. The tour wouldn't have been possible without The Fenton Arts Trust and I'm extremely grateful. The play went on to be nominated for the BBC's Alfred Bradley Award for writers in the North of England new to writing for audio."*

We are happy to be supporting her again with another project in 26-27.

## Tara Theatre



▲ A workshop scene from Ayan Philip's play *Dead Internet*. Photo: Tara Theatre

In June 2023 we offered Tara Theatre funds in support of its NOVA programme, an 'open call' commissioning scheme for emerging playwrights of South Asian heritage. Due to the untimely death of its artistic director, the programme got underway in 2025, with three chosen writers supported to write a short piece of work which reflected the season's themes: War & Protest; Climate Emergency; AI & Automation. These were then performed in front of an invited audience of supporters and industry professionals. Writers **Amin Ali**, **Ayan Philip** and **Neetu Singh** reflected on their experiences.

*"I've developed a stronger dramaturgical eye. I've also grown more confident as a collaborator in the rehearsal room, learning how to respond to feedback and adapt my writing when working with directors and actors. I've also gained valuable insight into the practical side of the industry, from how literary departments operate to what makes a script stand out."*

*"NOVA at Tara Theatre felt like the perfect storm: a dedicated space for South Asian creatives, and an opportunity to develop my writing with the support of experienced theatre practitioners."*

*"NOVA has connected me with a wide network of inspiring industry professionals who are part of Tara's wider community."*

## Northern Ballet



▲ Images (above & bottom) from *Sketches*: photos Emily Nuttall

*"Northern Ballet's Sketches programme was devised to nurture choreographic talent within the company. With the generous support of the Trust, we were able to support six emerging company artists and one guest choreographer, providing mentorship, studio space and time with our dancers to experiment and create. The resulting pieces were presented in Leeds across two sold-out evenings of performance in May 2024. Following his successful participation **George Liang** was offered a professional commission to choreograph a new Northern Ballet children's production, *Hansel & Gretel*, which toured nationally in 2025. Another 2024 participant, **Heather Lehan**, will present a new work as part of the Royal Ballet & Opera's prestigious International Draft Works in April 2026. Sketches is now established as a regular programme, supporting Northern Ballet's ongoing commitment to talent development on and off the stage."*

Danielle Sharma-Pay, Head of Trusts & Foundations

## Hallé Concerts Society



▲ Euan Shields at work with the Hallé Youth Orchestra. Photo: Sharyn Bellemakers

The Hallé approached the Trust for funds to help support the post of Assistant Conductor and helped it expand the reach and significance of this important role. **Euan Shields**, 2023 winner of the Siemens Hallé International Conductors Competition holds the position for three years and becomes Music Director of the Hallé Youth Orchestra. This opportunity for emerging conductors to hone skills and build their reputation is a proven step into a successful career in a competitive sector.

*"Euan has been a huge asset for the Hallé and is a wonderful individual and we are very proud of his progress. We are grateful to The Fenton Arts Trust for believing in this important programme and helping us develop and deliver the next generation of leaders in the music sector."*

Kath Russell, Director of Development



# Financial Support 2024-2025

The Fenton Arts Trust awarded 31 beneficiaries (individuals and organisations) a total of £150,938 in support of the arts in the UK during the financial year.

Ben Rowarth	<i>The creation of new work for choir, cello and electronics. Provides young composer first opportunity to join electronic and acoustic sound.</i>	5,000
Chandenie Gobardhan	<i>Support for emerging choreographer Chandenie Gobardhan to kick-start the creation of their first-ever full evening dance theatre piece.</i>	3,750
Edinburgh Art Festival	<i>PLATFORM exhibition 2024, showcasing ambitious new work from four early-career UK-based artists as part of Edinburgh Art Festival.</i>	5,000
Exeter Phoenix	<i>Creative Hub Incubator: a pair of supported Visual Art and Performance commissions and a Professional Development Programme for artists.</i>	4,658
FACT Liverpool	<i>FACT Together is a digital residency, exhibition and commissioning programme supporting early-career artists in the North of England.</i>	5,000
Farnham Sinfonia	<i>Six aspiring professional musicians will each perform a major concert work in public as a featured soloist with our professional orchestra.</i>	5,000
Film London	<i>Programme supporting six early career moving image artists to develop their careers, artistic practice and extend networking opportunities.</i>	5,500
Halle Concerts Society	<i>Assistant Conductor Scheme: mentoring early career conductor for 2-3 years to: assist Principal Conductor; and direct Hallé Youth Orchestra.</i>	5,000
Hampstead Theatre	<i>INSPIRE, Hampstead's year-long mentorship and play development programme, led by Roy Williams, for diverse emerging writers of talent.</i>	5,000
Hull Urban Opera	<i>To allow 3 early-career young opera singers to perform the roles they generated in R&amp;D of new immersive opera The Party by Lente Verelst.</i>	3,000
Jermyn Street Theatre	<i>To fund the Mentoring pillar of our 2024 Creative Associates Programme, for 10 emerging theatremakers from underrepresented backgrounds.</i>	6,000
Lake District Music	<i>Lake District Music's Young Artists Scheme provides a performance platform, training, masterclasses &amp; help securing further engagements.</i>	4,000
Little Angel Theatre	<i>Support a yearlong internship for an emerging puppeteer, where they receive specialist technical training for a career in the industry.</i>	5,000
Michael McEvoy	<i>This grant if successful will support emerging choreographer, Michael McEvoy, to premiere his first full length Dance Theatre production.</i>	5,000
Multi-Story Orchestra	<i>A new scheme for early career musicians from Portsmouth &amp; Gloucester to create &amp; perform new music in The Multi-Story Orchestra 2024 season.</i>	5,000
National Youth Choirs of GB	<i>Supporting emerging professional choral artists, composers, and conductors from a diverse range of backgrounds to launch successful careers.</i>	5,000
National Youth Theatre	<i>Mentoring and paid opportunities for an early-career Designer (set &amp; costume).</i>	3,000
New Sussex Opera	<i>Support for young singers, orchestral players and creatives in the development of a new touring production of Lampe's The Dragon of Wantley.</i>	5,000
Northern Ballet	<i>Sketches: a mentorship programme supporting 8 early-career choreographers to develop and stage new work with a world-class company.</i>	4,740
Poetry London	<i>Poetry London Apprenticeship Scheme, which pairs emerging poets with some of the leading lights of UK poetry for a year's mentoring.</i>	5,000
Propel	<i>Propel champions and platforms early-career poets. Support would enable publication of 2 online magazines &amp; a 2-year retrospective anthology.</i>	4,360
Quandary Collective	<i>This grant will support the proof of concept for our first feature 'Richard II', bringing Shakespeare to the screen in ways not seen before.</i>	4,750
Rachel E. Thorn	<i>Fees for another actor and a director for my play Me For You, which is about the impact of climate activism on a loving relationship.</i>	6,180
Rebecca Allen	<i>Funds to support the purchase of a second-hand contrabassoon.</i>	5,000
Roundhouse Trust	<i>The Resident Artists programme supports exceptionally talented young creatives, aged 18-25, through an early year of their artistic careers.</i>	3,000
Royal Exchange Theatre	<i>A training course to support early career directors and dramaturges to gain in-depth knowledge of the process of dramaturgy on new scripts.</i>	5,000
San Mei Gallery (Van Gogh House London)	<i>Support four early career artists to research and develop new sculpture, film and sound art to be showcased at San Mei Gallery.</i>	6,000
Scherzo Ensemble	<i>Funds to support fees for early-career orchestral players in three fully-staged performances of Donizetti's opera 'Don Pasquale'.</i>	6,500
Shape Arts	<i>Emergent is a new hybrid programme tackling the marginalisation and isolation of talented early stage disabled artists to kickstart careers.</i>	5,500
South East Dance	<i>Support two emerging screendance artists by commissioning new work for inclusion in the 2024 Brighton Screendance Festival, via an open call.</i>	5,000
Theatre503	<i>A catalyst for new writing. 5 debut writers receive a seed commission, professional development workshops &amp; mentorship across 18 months.</i>	5,000
TOTAL		150,938

## Theatre503



▲ Playwright Joe Kerridge (on right), with Theatre503 workshop performers. Photo: Theatre503

The Trust helped fund a seed commissioning and professional development programme at the theatre. Afterwards Emily Carewe, Executive Director & Co-CEO, wrote to let us know the impact of the programme:

“Thanks to the generous support from The Fenton Arts Trust, we were able to offer more support than ever before to the five commissioned writers developing their seed commissions. The impact of this expanded development was acutely felt by the writers participating. It proved to us that increased individual support is a vital strand of this development and leaves the writers in a more professionalised and prepared position when entering the industry.”

The Fenton Arts Trust, P.O. Box 68825,  
London SE23 9DG | [www.fentonartstrust.org.uk](http://www.fentonartstrust.org.uk)

The Fenton Arts Trust has sought permission wherever possible to reproduce the images used in this newsletter and has credited the photographers when known.

## Current Beneficiaries

Support for the current financial year (2025-2026) includes the following beneficiaries from around the UK:

Apples & Snakes	Manchester Baroque
British Textile Biennial	Modern Poetry in Translation
Burn the Curtain	Music at Malling
CAMP Membership	National Centre for Writing
Castlefield Gallery	New Contemporaries (1988)
Charles Causley Trust	NMC Recordings
CoMA	Nottingham Playhouse Trust
Curious Directive	Orpheus Sinfonia Foundation
English Stage Company	Papatango Theatre Company
(Royal Court Theatre)	Paul Bradshaw
Ex Cathedral	Phoebe Brown
George Richardson	The Photographers' Gallery
Gothic Opera	Rambert
James Weavers	Richard Chappell Dance
Jazz Re:freshed	Roundhouse Trust
Julia Levai	Royal National Theatre
Literature Wales - Llenyddiaeth Cymru	Standpoint Studios

## Supporting TFAT

We aim to help individuals and artistic institutions by awarding grants and funds in keeping with founder Shu-Yao Fenton's wishes. We welcome any donations in pursuit of this, which can attract further Gift Aid.

**LEAVING A LEGACY:** Recent legacy funds have enabled us to increase our annual grants by a third, which has made a big difference to our beneficiaries at a difficult time, so please do consider us when making your will.

Please make your donation to: The Fenton Arts Trust, Lloyds Bank:  
SORT CODE **30-00-08**, ACCOUNT NO. **00979513**. Thank you.

Fenton Trustees and Representatives actively seek opportunities to attend events and engage with beneficiaries, to gain a fuller understanding of the impact of our grants on their development as professionals. We understand that this is relatively unusual in the sector. If anyone is interested in knowing more about this side of our work, and can potentially help support us with it, please get in touch with our Chair, **Sue Davies-Scourfield**, via the address below.

The Fenton Arts Trust (Registered Charity no. 294629)  
PO Box 268825, London SE23 9DG

If you do decide to support us we will be delighted to hear from you.