



**The Glasshouse**  
International  
Centre for Music

Music lives and grows here

# 2023 A year like no other

Image: Self Esteem and Royal Northern Sinfonia at BBC Proms

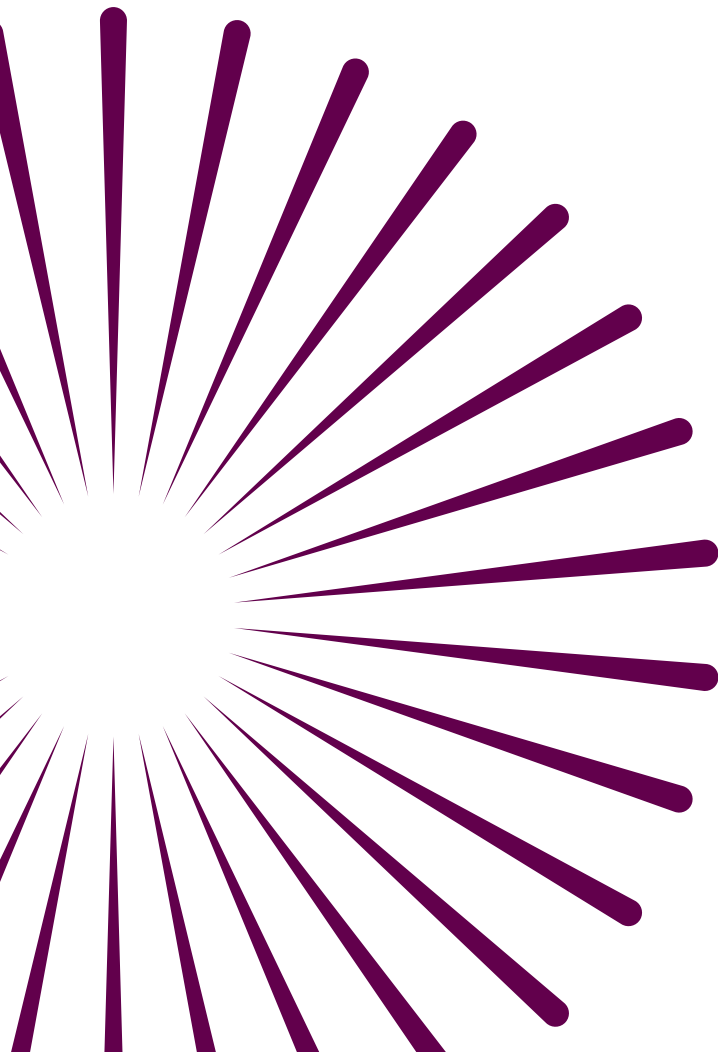
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# The Glasshouse International Centre for Music



## Music lives and grows here

**The Glasshouse is a home for live music lovers – from diehard fans, aspiring artists, and tambourine-shaking toddlers to rock legends, pop icons, and our own acclaimed orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia.**

**With top-notch gigs, concerts, and classes every week – in our home at Gateshead Quays, out in communities across the North East, and online – anyone can join us in creating and celebrating outstanding music.**

**And as a charity we're focused on making sure all of that is available to anyone – no matter where you're from, how old you are, how much money you have, or what challenges you face.**

**“The festival goes north for a euphoric weekend that moves from Brahms to barking like dogs... a triumphant communal experience”**

The Guardian

## A year like no other

Keep reading, and you'll see 2023 was a year full of highlights. But two big moments stick out for us...

In June, we hosted the first ever weekend-long BBC Proms festival outside of London in its 128-year history. More than 5,000 music lovers – including 500 children – joined us. Almost all of them were attending the Proms for the first time.

From a pop-classical mash-up with Self Esteem and Royal Northern Sinfonia, to an all-Northern jazz group, and from spirituals to CBeebies. The critics loved it, and our audiences raved about it.

Watch our Proms film [Made in the North East.](#) ↗

And while we started 2023 as Sage Gateshead, in September we became The Glasshouse International Centre for Music. Our search for a new name started when it was announced that the arena and conference centre built next door would be called The Sage.

Our new name was inspired by the idea that music lives and grows here. Because our communities told us that's why we matter. You talked, we listened, and here we are, The Glasshouse International Centre for Music. New name, same great home for live music lovers.

Have a look at our [launch video.](#) ↗



Image: Royal Northern Sinfonia and Principal Conductor Dinis Sousa

# A snapshot of an unforgettable year

“This is my happy place,  
where my heart can sing”

Audience member

## The year in numbers

Numbers don't capture the magic of music, but they do provide a snapshot of just how busy we were.

**359** concerts and gigs set our stages alight.

Royal Northern Sinfonia performed **282** pieces.

**2.7 million** people joined us live, watched online or tuned in on the radio.

**4,000** music makers rocked up for their weekly jam sessions.

**400** children and young people soaked up a total of **9,500** weekly music sessions.

Another **8,000+** children from over **75** local schools shone bright on our stages, embarked on music projects, or tapped into our resources.

We backed over **150** artists, helping them fine-tune their craft.

Our website was buzzing with activity, welcoming **5.9 million** visits from music fans far and wide.

As the region's prime conference spot, we greeted over **20,000** delegates, often introducing them to the North East for the first time.





Image: Local saxophonists at our Open House Weekend

## The year in stories

All throughout 2023, there were ‘pinch-me’ moments, smiles all around, and lasting memories were made. We could tell a thousand stories, but here’s a few to give you a taste.

2023 was a stellar year for Royal Northern Sinfonia, led with gusto by Principal Conductor Dinis Sousa. They played at home and away, in halls and in schools, from Kendal to South Korea, and beamed live into people’s living rooms.

Watch highlights from the [South Korea tour](#). ↗

There were sold-out concerts across the board – Beverley Knight brought the house down, living legend Graham Nash had us hooked from start to finish, and Mogwai saw us rocking all night long.

Children and young people have been learning music with us for nearly 20 years, and to see our alums shine bright gives us a warm fuzzy feeling. Singer Amonik is now turning heads in London’s West End, violinist Connie landed the Elton John Award scholarship at Royal Academy of Music, and musician Zak Younger Banks is part of a critically acclaimed new theatre production touring the North East.

Read Amonik’s [story](#). ↗

**“Every orchestra wants to make its concerts stand out from the crowd, and on Friday night, the Royal Northern Sinfonia certainly succeeded”**

The Telegraph

Our concert series From The Glasshouse brought audiences a garden of musical delights including homegrown talent, wildflowers from further afield, and new music. Among them, Ruth Lyon and Eliza Hull brought us their Access All Areas tour, celebrating disabled creatives.

Enjoy Ruth and Eliza [in action](#). ↗

Our programme felt a burst of fresh energy, thanks to 25 Young Programmers making creative decisions behind the scenes. These 16 to 25 year old local music lovers had a say in who’s on our stages and how we do things at The Glasshouse, picking up new skills and new friends along the way.

Read about a night in the life of a [Young Programmer](#). ↗

RNS Moves collaborated with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra’s Resound Ensemble to produce brand-new music by Kate Whitley – championing the brilliance of inclusive ensembles.

See how RNS Moves [got in the zone](#). ↗



Image: Beverley Knight

# The world's best music

## Made in the North East

From the banks of the River Tyne, we host the best music from our region and around the world, and we make it too. Whether it's kids picking up an instrument for the first time, local artists taking their music to the next level, or Royal Northern Sinfonia performing Brahms in Middlesbrough, we make sure everyone in the North East can enjoy a creative life full of music.

Because whether we're making it up or taking it in, music boosts our mood and confidence. It banishes loneliness and stress. It teaches children skills for life, and helps young people thrive. Music brings communities together and drives prosperity. Music can be an inspiration, a motivation and a career. And the people of the North East deserve nothing less.

## The best music is happening right here, right now

Stars don't just grace our stages, they grace our Make Music Centre too. For example, Royal Northern Sinfonia teamed up with superstars Benjamin Grosvenor, Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Hyeyoon Park. Over 3,000 people came to see them, and over 30 young people learned tricks of the trade in a workshop with the stars.

See what happened in the [workshop](#). ↗



Image: Royal Northern Sinfonia at Middlesbrough Town Hall

Young people took centre stage throughout the year. Young Sinfonia created new music with composer and former member Anna Appleby. Jazz band Jambone lit up our concourse stage during BBC Proms. Quay Voices joined Royal Northern Sinfonia on stage to perform Home Alone. And nearly 2,300 children from 54 local schools sang their hearts out at our annual Big Sing and Big Sing for Mini Singers.

Check out the region's [young stars](#). ↗

Meanwhile, local artists got support to build thriving careers, right here in the North East. Because the region's music scene is vibrant, diverse and creative, and we're determined to play our part. For example, at our Summer Studios residencies, 51 musicians, producers, rappers and singers got stage time, rehearsal space and expert advice.

Discover new artists on our [YouTube channel](#). ↗



# Everybody in

“If you can see it, you can be it”

Helen Harrison, conductor

## Staying the course

Two decades ago, inclusion was one of our founding principles, and it's still at the heart of everything we do. We want lots of voices to shine bright. This goes for our team, the artists we support and put on our stages, and the music lovers who come to hear and make music with us.

Knowing our communities, we focus on making sure people from different backgrounds and all abilities can join in. Because for lots of people money's tight, or they need some extra help to get involved, and this should never stop us from enjoying music, or making a career out of it.

## Being the change we want to see

It matters who we see on our stages. Last year, we teamed up with Royal Philharmonic Society again to boost the careers of seven women conductors. We also ran an open call for Global Majority string players, together with Black Lives in Music and three other orchestras, to recruit and elevate talent across the country.

Get to know the women conductors in [WoCo](#). ↗

We also kept up with our 2019 Keychange pledge, guaranteeing gender balance among headline artists. LGBTQ+ artists shone bright thanks to our collaboration with Curious Arts. And in our work supporting artists, we focussed on musicians whose tunes might otherwise get overlooked.

Meet the two artists behind [Crystal Queer](#). ↗

And we made sure local people can live their best creative life. Young adults with additional needs and disabilities played, sung and experimented with tech during their weekly music sessions. Over half of the young people on our Make Music programme received a bursary. And nearly 24,000 tickets were free or heavily discounted.

Read how Matti got herself a [family band](#). ↗



Image: Performers at Make Music: Young People's summer festival



# Caring for our planet

## Our journey to net zero

**The climate crisis is a critical threat to our audiences, artists, region, and planet. That's why we've made a pledge to be net zero by 2030. We're steadily reducing our carbon emissions to a minimum by 2030. After that, we'll contribute to local rewilding projects that suck in carbon to offset whatever is left. So, when people come to us, they'll know we're not just looking after them, but the Earth too.**

**Our journey to net zero involves working with artists and audiences, as well as making changes to our building. It won't come as a surprise – the building takes a lot to keep going, and at 20 years old, there's lots to upgrade. Plus, we're out on tour, and all that fuel adds up.**

**“Being net zero by 2030 is an ambitious aim – 20 years ahead of the UK government deadline – but it's important to act quickly in a crisis”**

Scott Morrison, The Glasshouse Environmental Responsibility Lead

## Creating lasting change

What did we do in 2023? Well, this may sound a bit dull, but we've been replacing our lights with LED lighting which uses 80-90% less power than halogen bulbs. We replaced a grand total of 382 house lights, 70 downlights, and 78 emergency lights.

Here's 10 more ways we're [caring for our planet](#). ↗

We're powered by the award-winning Gateshead District Energy Scheme. This means our electricity and heat are produced locally by solar power and an innovative mine water heat pump. For many days last summer, our building was run almost entirely on renewable energy. The Scheme will be fully net zero by 2030.

Read about the [scheme](#). ↗

And because music can change hearts and minds, we put music about the climate crisis on our stages. Kerrin Tatman premiered their post-apocalyptic tale, *Requiem for a Fading World*. And *Fell Silent* was Anna Hughes' exploration of the links between human activity and the natural world.

Find out more about [Kerrin's Requiem](#). ↗



# Digital discovery

## Diving into digital

**During the pandemic, we launched into digital – almost from a standing start – and found new ways to connect with music lovers. Now, alongside ace live music, we keep innovating our digital side. It means we can reach more music fans, and play with exciting new ways to experience music.**

**What do we mean by digital? For us, that covers everything from forging new partnerships, to pushing the boundaries of our artistic programme, and creating digital music resources. Digital is now in our blood and pumping through our veins.**

**“By streaming we actually see the face and physical movements of the conductor. Nothing beats the live performance, but we streamers get so much closer to the performers”**

Audience member

## Reaching new heights

Last year, we launched The Glasshouse Player, where we host livestreamed, hybrid and On Demand classes, from beginners' electric bass, to an intro to music production. And for those who can't make it to our home, our livestreams are now free to watch and reaching all corners of the world from Mexico to Taiwan; hola and li-hó!

Head over to [The Glasshouse Player](#). ↗

We also teamed up with international media arts agency, Mediale. We co-produced work that explores how music, digital art and tech can present new ways of experiencing music. We commissioned visual artist Daisy Dickinson, who created three films set in and around the ancient sites and nature of the North East.

Watch Daisy's work on [YouTube](#). ↗

And last autumn, people could step inside Jazz Maze, the virtual reality world of composer, spoken word artist and jazz musician Marcus Joseph. His interactive, immersive comic book VR experience took audiences on an unforgettable journey.

Find out more about Marcus' [Jazz Maze](#). ↗



Image: Audiences at Jazz Maze

# Looking ahead

## Onto our next two decades

**The North East has a lot going for it – a booming Premier League club, too many epic bridges to count, and hard-working, dead canny folk. But money’s tight and lots of people are struggling with their health. Too many children are having a tough time in school, while funding is dwindling. And young people feel they need to move away to get ahead in life.**

**There’s no quick fix. There’s no simple answer. But a thriving music centre is a vital part of the jigsaw. Because we give children’s education a much-needed boost. Because we help locals live happier and healthier lives. Because we encourage people to dream big. And because as an international centre for music, we get people raving about the region and attract investment.**

## A laser-sharp focus

We know what we need to do. Our next era will put music at the heart of our region and its culture. It will involve:

- Royal Northern Sinfonia starting its most artistically ambitious chapter yet. We’re talking vibrant community projects, searingly good performances, strong connections with people and places across the region, international touring, and bold leadership.
- New support for young artists, enabling the next generation of musicians from our region to thrive.
- Being a place where everyone can experience brilliant music, whatever their financial means.
- Achieving net zero by 2030.
- Our region blossoming as a music hot spot, drawing in visitors, audiences, and artists.



Image: Performer at Make Music: Young People's summer festival

## Together, we make it happen

Music lovers cheering loudly. Musicians and music-makers giving it their all. Young people living up to their potential. Colleagues making it happen. Partners sharing their expertise. Companies making us their conference venue of choice. And people and institutions donating generously.

The sum is so much greater than its parts, and we're grateful to all of you. Because this year, there were more: more performances, more work with artists, and more people making music with us than at any time since the world went quiet in 2020.

We make a difference in our communities through music and we're also financially savvy. We don't rely on one income source to support our charitable work – instead we balance lots of different things. We make money from selling tickets, food and bevies, and from hosting conferences and events. We get investment from government, and support from businesses, trusts and foundations and people all over the region – and beyond.

# There's no us without you

## Building back

2023 was a planned recovery year and that's okay. Audience figures have only just recovered to pre-pandemic levels. And due to the cost of living, energy and inflation crises, our costs are a lot higher, even on a leaner business model, and they continue to go up. We're here for our communities, we're here for music and steadily, we're rebuilding and seeing a return to form.

Last year, we continued benefitting from higher rates of orchestra tax relief, and the generosity of our audiences, supporters and donors, especially those in the North East, saw us through. Huge thanks to all our supporters, we wouldn't be here without you.

## Acknowledgements



We want to sincerely thank our Founding Patrons, Founding Endowment Donors, Friends and Champions of The Glasshouse, Friends, Champions and Principal Partners of Royal Northern Sinfonia, as well as everybody who donated online, and supported our 2020-23 Crisis, Recovery and Renaissance campaign.

ABO Sirens Fund, Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, Austin & Hope Pilkington Trust, The Barbour Foundation, Clore Duffield Foundation, Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation, The Hadrian Trust, Harrison Frank Family Foundation, The John Horseman Trust, The Kavli Trust, Netherton Park Trust, The Percy Hedley 1990 Charitable Trust, PRS Foundation, Sir James Knott Trust, Shears Foundation, Swire Charitable Trust, St Nicholas' Educational Trust, W A Handley Charity Trust, Youth Music



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**Thanks for reading.  
What was your  
2023 highlight?**

