



balletLORENT

YEAR IN REVIEW 2024-2025

balletLORENT

balletLORENT is a nationally-recognised touring dance theatre company, based in the North East of England for over 30 years.

Led by Liv Lorent MBE, our mission is to create world-renowned, distinctive dance for diverse family and adult audiences and participants of all ages, life experiences, cultures, and backgrounds.

As an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation, we receive the third highest level of funding amongst dance companies in the North of England, recognising the strategic importance of our work.

We are the largest touring dance theatre company in the North East of England.

Since 2022, **balletLORENT** has been based at the John Marley Centre in Scotswood, in the west end of Newcastle, where we have a space for performance, rehearsal, creativity, and community engagement.

We deliver a rich programme of classes and activities for both adults, children and young people, alongside developing our professional productions for tour and welcoming audiences to bespoke performances in our venue.

balletLORENT is dedicated to serving its community and making dance accessible — whether as a way to appreciate the art form, pursue a creative career, or simply enjoy movement as a rewarding activity.

Front cover
Dancers: Virginia Scudeletti, Caroline Reece
Photo: Luke Waddington



Dancers: Virginia Scudeletti, Caroline Reece,
Geoff Hopson, John Kendall,
Montaine Ponceau, Cameron Woolnough
Photo: Bill Cooper

A Year of Connection, Story, and Transformation

This year has been filled with audiences of children and young people as we toured our often sold-out Velveteen Rabbit to Edinburgh, London, Manchester, and local venues, Bishop Auckland and Washington. We forged beautiful connections with diverse young audiences seeking a soulful, interactive experience with the rabbits and the playroom fairy.

Our passion for working with performers of all ages extended to a sculpture exhibition on parenthood at the Hatton Gallery, where three **balletLORENT** artists performed alongside their toddlers.

Snow White and Snow White The Sacrifice featured a cast of young children in ensemble roles, alongside a young Snow White and a slaughtered doe. Their performances were supported by 11 professional dancers, led by Caroline Reece as a 60 year old Queen. We also welcomed back Geoff Hopson, who, at 53, brings an elegant gravitas as our King and one of the seven Miners.

The Sacrifice has been one of our fastest-selling productions, reflecting a strong appetite among adult audiences for dark, emotionally rich escapism within a familiar fairytale.

We've loved engaging both matinee and evening audiences and feel thrilled to attract such enthusiasm.

Our ambition to bring new audiences to dance continues to thrive, including through partnerships with broadcasters like Marquee TV. Our latest full-length film, Rapunzel Red, explores dark themes of infertility and loss. Velveteen Rabbit is also available to stream, with Snow White The Sacrifice coming soon.

Collaboration with our Youth Academy and Knitters, Movers & Shakers group remains a highlight, contributing ideas, choreography, designs, and props at our North East home, the John Marley Centre. The local community's support fuels our creativity and connection.

We are a company with a big heart and a warm welcome—more important than ever in these challenging times. Thanks to our funders and supporters, we remain a place of belonging and creativity for dancers, collaborators, volunteers, and students.



Liv Lorent MBE, Artistic Director & CEO



Reflecting on Our 2024–25 Year

2024–25 was a time of growth and exploration for **balletLORENT**. We worked across national stages, strengthened local partnerships, tried new creative formats, and published our first book. Throughout the year, we stayed focused on making work that is ambitious, emotionally engaging, and connected to the community.

We started the year in **April 2024** with The Velveteen Rabbit, which drew sold-out audiences at Sadler’s Wells, London. This was a big step for a show originally designed for smaller venues and younger audiences. Performing at such a prestigious venue confirmed the production’s strength and helped raise our national profile.

At the same time, we launched a film version of Rapunzel After Dark, titled Rapunzel Red on MarqueeTV, expanding our reach to digital viewers in the UK and beyond. These projects showed our ability to move between live performances and digital platforms, helping us reach a larger and more diverse audience beyond traditional theatre-goers.



Sadlers Wells, London



Filming of Rapunzel Red at Gala Durham

In **May**, we worked with artist Katie Cuddon on her exhibition A is for Alma at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle. Under the direction of Liv Lorent, dancers and their children performed within the gallery, responding to Cuddon’s sculptures. This collaboration explored the relationship between parent and child, blending movement and visual art. The performance was filmed by our in-house filmmaker Alex Ayre, capturing this unique creative exchange.



Dancer: Benedicta Valentina Mamuini with Maverick

In **July**, we turned our West End Newcastle studio into a venue for a new version of The Becoming. Created in 2023 to mark 30 years of **balletLORENT**, the piece featured seven performers of different ages. They brought personal stories and emotions to the stage, supported by costumes designed to highlight their movement. The performance was an honest expression of resilience and creativity, offering audiences a chance to see the work up close.

Also in **July**, we held our Professional Residency Week. This provided professional dancers an opportunity to immerse themselves in our repertoire, costumes, sets, props, and movement styles alongside Artistic Director Liv Lorent and our creative team. It was a focused week of learning and collaboration.

In **August**, our three-day Creative Studio Summer Course gave young people aged 13 to 19 space to explore performance, choreography, and design. Participants developed their own ideas, building skills and confidence through practical workshops that encouraged creativity and storytelling.



Dancers: Toby Fitzgibbons, John Kendall

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Snow White: Cast and Collaborators

CAST:

Snow White - Virginia Scudeletti
Queen - Caroline Reece
King & Miner - Geoff Hopson
New King & Miner - Toby Fitzgibbons
Huntsman & Head Miner - Gavin Coward
Mirror, Ensemble & Understudy Queen - Aisha Naamani
Ensemble & Understudy Mirror - Berta Admetlla
Miner, Ensemble & Understudy Snow White - Montaine Ponceau
Miner & Ensemble - John Kendall
Miner & Ensemble - Natalie MacGillivray
Miner & Ensemble - Tassia Sissins

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director & Choreographer - Liv Lorent MBE
Scenario Writer - Carol Ann Duffy DBE
Composer - Murray Gold
Narrator - Lindsay Duncan
Costume Designer - Libby El-Alfy
Costume Designer - Nasir Mazhar
Set Designer - Phil Eddolls
Lighting Designer - Malcolm Rippeth
Rehearsal Director - Debbi Purtill
Dramaturg - Ben Crompton
Movement contribution by the Dancers
and Rehearsal Director

Production Manager - Callum Graham
Stage Manager - Andrea Scrimshaw
Wardrobe & Assistant Stage Manager - Lou Duffy
Rehearsal Assistant - Juliet Thompson
Tour Re-Lighter - Micheal Morgan
Music performed by Royal Northern Sinfonia
& Murray Gold
Music Editing - Obodo
Set Build - Northern Stage Workshops,
Wood Hub CIC & Newton's Ladder
Scenic Painting - Trish Mayes

Dancers: Virginia Scudeletti, John Kendall,
Geoff Hopson, Toby Fitzgibbons,
Berta Admetlla, Montaine Ponceau,
Natalie MacGillivray
Photo: The Twins



September involved working with four local schools as part of the research process for Snow White. The year 1&2 students observed rehearsals and shared their feedback, which influenced design, costumes, and story structure. This involvement gave young people insight into how theatre is created and helped shape the final productions.

October saw the premiere of our autumn double-bill at Northern Stage. Snow White was a colourful, family-friendly production with humor and magic, while Snow White: The Sacrifice offered a darker, experimental take aimed at audiences 16 and older. Our 11 dancers were joined on stage by members of our Youth Academy, adding new energy to the shows.

This production also saw Caroline Reece take to the stage in the role of Queen at 60, alongside Geoff Hopson, who made his return at 53 — reflecting the range of experience and artistry within our company.

Dancers: Caroline Reece, Geoff Hopson



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Snow White: The Sacrifice Cast and Collaborators

CAST:

Snow White - Virginia Scudeletti
Queen - Caroline Reece
King & Miner - Geoff Hopson
New King & Miner - Toby Fitzgibbons
Huntsman & Head Miner - Gavin Coward
Mirror, Ensemble & Understudy Queen - Aisha Naamani
Ensemble & Understudy Mirror - Berta Admetlla
Miner, Ensemble & Understudy Snow White - Montaine Ponceau
Miner & Ensemble - John Kendall
Miner & Ensemble - Natalie MacGillivray
Miner & Ensemble - Tassia Sissins

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director & Choreographer - Liv Lorent MBE
Scenario Writer - Carol Ann Duffy DBE
Composer - Murray Gold
Narrator - Sarah Parish
Costume Designer - Nasir Mazhar
Costume Designer - Libby El-Alfy
Set Designer - Phil Eddolls
Lighting Designer - Malcolm Rippeth
Rehearsal Director - Debbi Purtill
Dramaturg - Ben Crompton
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Scenic Painting - Trish Mayes



Dancers: Virginia Scudeletti, Aisha Naamani, Caroline Reece
Photo: Luke Waddington



While the two productions shared creative elements and thematic threads, they offered distinctly different perspectives — *Snow White: The Sacrifice* exploring fear of aging, beauty, and jealousy, and *Snow White* retaining its playful spirit alongside rich emotional depth. Both shows received positive reviews and strong audience acclaim.

In **November**, we were recognised locally with two nominations at the North East Culture Awards: best performance for *The Velveteen Rabbit* and best performer for Natalie MacGillivray.

December brought a special run of *The Velveteen Rabbit* in Gosforth for the festive season, with all shows selling out. We also published our first children's book, allowing audiences to take the story home. Each performance included a 'meet the cast' session where children interacted with the rabbit characters and handmade props created by our community knitting group.

In the new year, *The Velveteen Rabbit* toured further.

In **January 2025**, we performed at a new venue for us in Bishop Auckland, reaching new audiences. February took the show to Edinburgh and Manchester, where it continued to connect with viewers of all ages. Its ongoing success across different locations confirmed it as one of our most popular works.

We ended the year in **March** by filming *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *Snow White: The Sacrifice* at the John Marley Centre. These high-quality recordings not only preserve our work for the future but also enable us to share it with audiences worldwide, expanding our reach far beyond the stage.

Throughout the year, we supported freelance artists with residencies and commissions, engaged young people through participatory projects, and worked closely with community groups. Our focus remained on care, collaboration, and creativity—whether on large stages, smaller spaces, or digital platforms.

We continue to balance creative risks with strong production quality, proving that theatre for children can speak deeply to adults, older performers add richness and authenticity, and meaningful, bold work can come from our region.



Empowering the Next Generation

The **balletLORENT** Youth Academy is a unique training programme for creatively talented children and young people aged 7-18yrs from Newcastle to learn with **balletLORENT**'s world class artists and collaborators.

Juniors (7-12yrs) and Creative Studio (13-19yrs) have exclusive access to our artists and facilities to learn: Dance, Theatre, Performance, Music and Film production, Costume and Set Design, and more...



Youth Academy filming B for Belonging

"He really enjoyed himself tonight thanks so so much for the invite". Parent

Snow White Young Community Cast

Our premiere of Snow White at Northern Stage in October saw 12 members of the **balletLORENT** Youth Academy juniors dance side by side with the professional company over five performances.

Ahead of a national tour of Snow White in 25/26, we have delivered creative dance workshops with over 694 children aged 6-9yrs in schools as we search for talented children to form our local young casts.



Dancers: Virginia Scudeletti, Gavin Coward, Geoff Hopson, Berta Admetlla, Montaine Ponceau, Natalie MacGillivray, Tassia Sissins, ballet LORENT Youth Academy
Photo: The Twins

"He loved it. He would be delighted to come back next Monday and is looking forward to it. We also really enjoyed watching the group's creativity in action." Parent

Youth Academy Junior Achievements:

- Created and performed roles in balletLORENT's Snow White at Northern Stage
- A new film, The Beginning, was released in April
- Performed a pop-up version of The Velveteen Rabbit, based on a **balletLORENT** touring production for young audiences
- Co-created an original 15min work inspired by **balletLORENT**'s The Becoming
- Presented showcases of works at the **balletLORENT** Studios
- Learned dance styles including Bollywood, K-Pop, Tap Dance and Ballet with local guest artists
- Designed and made costumes for showcase events

With funding from Newcastle Youth Fund & National Lottery Community Fund, we launched **Creative Studio**, the senior Youth Academy group, in April, offering 13-19yr olds from the west end of Newcastle the opportunity to hone skills in dance, music recording, film making and set/costume design and other theatre arts. We equipped a new space with a sound recording room and editing suite,



a small studio for dance, film or photography, a wardrobe/making space for costumes and props, and film editing suite.

Open Days and workshops have introduced many young people to Creative Studio, and we've worked closely with local partners to ensure as many young people as possible can try a session for free.

Recent Creative Studio Achievements:

- Collaborative pilot performance with **balletLORENT** professional dancers, directed by Artistic Director Liv Lorent
- Showcase events at our studios, including created films, music, dance, costume, and computer games
- Masterclasses and talks with The Suggestibles (Newcastle Improvisation Comedy Company), Trish Mayes (Scenic Artist), Rupert Philbrick (Multi-Disciplinary Artist)
- Summer Intensive in collaboration with Northumberland Wildlife Trust, creating environmentally friendly inspired work



"Creativity I didn't know I had and an experience I won't forget. I got to be creative in a totally different way."

Participant

"Best thing about creative studio is the resources given to us to create our ideas rather than a fixed theme. From the stimulus we were given I came together with the others to think of ideas and we all shared it and it's been such a great experience." Participant

"Creative Studio has meant I have thought more about my work. It has given me new ideas and new friends. It has improved my communication skills. It's enjoyable!" Participant

Funders: Juniors:
Creative Studio: Newcastle Youth Fund & National Lottery Community Fund

Schools Workshops We continue to work closely with primary schools around our west end studios (Broadwood, St Bede's, Bridgewater, Excelsior), offering life-enhancing opportunities to watch and participate in dance theatre for free. With funding from Newcastle Culture Investment Fund, 205 children (yr3-4) took part in workshops in their primary schools, followed by watching a free open rehearsal of Snow White at our studios.

A further 193 children (reception-yr2) attended a performance of The Velveteen Rabbit.

"We thoroughly enjoyed the workshop today! Wish we could have that every week, if not every day!"

Teacher, Bridgewater

'The creative workshops have been amazing and the children have really enjoyed having the freedom to express themselves in the sessions. They have loved working with the dancers and I earning new skills.'

Teacher, Excelsior

We have delivered creative dance workshops, after school clubs, and demonstrations with 419 children and young people at:

- Westgate Hill Academy
- St Bede's Primary
- Collingwood School and Media Arts College
- Archibald First School
- Dinnington First School
- South Gosforth First School



Dinnington First School



Westgate Hill Academy

Professional Development

43 people took part in professional development, including placements for HE & FE students from across the region, a three-day professional dance residency, and free professional dance classes for local dance artists.

Work Based Placements

We are delighted to partner with Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds to offer students long-term work-based placements as part of their MA postgraduate studies. Over the year, three young artists have benefitted from this opportunity, and we are thrilled to have offered professional artist contracts to two who have already completed their studies.



Professional Development



Project A

Project A

15 young people from Newcastle Theatre Royal's Project A took part in an annual residency with our Creative Team.

Hull Deeper Engagement

206 children and young people from four primary schools and two youth community groups, and an adult dance group took part in dance activity in Hull through our Deeper Engagement programme, delivered in partnership with Hull Dance and Hull and East Yorkshire Children's University.

Funder: The Sir James Reckitt Charity

Darlington

As part of our work providing creative opportunities in Darlington, a priority area for Arts Council England, we delivered workshops with 150 year 6 children from three primary schools (Northwood, Corporation Road, Firthmoor primaries) as part of Darlington Hippodrome's In2 Transition Project. All the children will attend a performance of Snow White at Darlington Hippodrome in May 2025.

We have worked with Darlington College Film and Media Students, mentoring and supporting the creation of documentary style films following the Snow White young cast in Darlington.

"If I needed to use movement in a role or audition, I'd now feel more confident to do so."

Building Connections through Dance

1571 people have taken part in our regular dance and movement classes at John Marley Centre, enjoying a wide range of styles from ballet to yoga, and baby and parent classes to creative dance for 40+. Our weekly Knitters, Movers & Shakers for adults aged 60+ goes from strength to strength as participants knit-to-order the props, costumes and creative accessories for our sets, dance workshops and sensory spaces.

The inclusive nature of **balletLORENT** engagement programmes means that the impact is felt by all participants.

“I know how much my confidence and self-esteem has grown from coming to class. As well as learning new skills it has introduced me to new people who I feel I can trust and share with.” **Class Participant**



Grown Up Ballet Class

Taking part in dance improves mental and physical health of participants

“It’s one of my favourite times of the week! It does wonders for my mental health and anxiety, rediscovering one of my first loves. I suffer from an illness and when I’m not feeling great and can’t go it gets me super down.”

Class Participant

“There are so few opportunities for children to experience music and dance, and this space has improved my wellbeing.”

Class Participant with Grandchildren



Move It, Parent & Toddler Class

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Knitters, Movers & Shakers

Our group for adults aged 60+ meets weekly to knit, crochet, and catch up. They've made props and cushions for productions like *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *Snow White*, building friendships while working on creative projects. Each session also includes gentle movement to music, and the group regularly interacts with our dancers and collaborators, contributing ideas and materials under the direction of our costume designers.

Funders: Newcastle Culture Investment Fund (NCIF)



Sustainability & Green Credentials

Throughout 24 - 25 we have continued our commitment to embedding environmental and sustainable practices into the work that we do, both in our venue at the John Marley Centre and whilst on tour.

We made specific reductions in our Project

Materials and Waste by 10%, our website emissions were down by 5% and also freight travel was halved. Recycling and repurposing of sets, costumes and materials is also high on the agenda as the development of a new work has begun.

Changing our in-house lighting rig for performances and rehearsals to LED has significantly decreased our carbon output and we are focusing on becoming carbon neutral

over the coming years with our Theatre Green Book initiatives. The investment in environmentally improved facilities also reduces the transportation outputs needed when previously hiring equipment for the venue.

As part of a project planned for 2025–26, and in partnership with Scotswood Community Garden, we are enhancing our green space through the installation of a rain garden—a sustainable drainage system. This initiative will improve the functionality of balletLORENT's outdoor areas while supporting biodiversity and promoting wellbeing for our team and visitors.

Our **balletLORENT** Knitters, Movers & Shakers group has been creating bespoke knitted props for use in our productions and school workshops. We've prioritised the use of natural and sustainable materials wherever possible, while also celebrating the creativity and craftsmanship of the community groups we collaborate with.

Going forward we are formalising our Green Committee, will continue our decarbonisation initiatives and have ambitions to become net zero in the near future.



Special thanks to sponsors, donors, collaborators, staff, and volunteers

We are grateful to all our funders and supporters, whose generosity has made it possible to deliver work with impact for audiences and communities across the UK:

Newby Trust, Hays Travel, Gylling, Three Monkeys, Wavendon Foundation, Garrick Charitable Trust, Community Foundation, Backstage Trust, Newcastle Youth Fund, Newcastle Culture Investment Fund, Sir James Reckitt, Hull & East Riding Trust, Garfield Weston, Hadrian Trust, Didymus, Greatham Hospital Trust, Charities Aid Foundation, John Ellerman, Catherine Cookson Trust, Sport England, and Morrisons Foundation.



Awards

RAPUNZEL RED - Winner Best Dance Film Beyond the Curve International Film Festival 2024.

THE BECOMING - Winner, Best Direction, WILDsound Virtual Festival, March 2024, Ontario

THE BECOMING - Winner the Audience Award for Best Long Form Short Film at the Experimental Film & Music Video Festival, 2024, Ontario

Nominations & Selections

THE BECOMING - Selected for the Covent Garden Film Festival 2024

ANIMALIA - Selected for the International Diversity Film Festival 2024, California

NORTH EAST CULTURE AWARDS - Nominated for best performance for The Velveteen Rabbit

NORTH EAST CULTURE AWARDS - Nominated for best performer Natalie MacGillivray

Reviews

Snow White at Northern Stage

Snow White: The Sacrifice at Northern Stage

The Velveteen Rabbit at Sadlers Wells

The Becoming at John Marley Centre

Dancers: Gavin Coward, Toby Fitzgibbons

Our Year In Numbers

37
Performances

9
Venues

4
Films Created

5528
Tickets Sold

6579
Learning & Participation
Engagements

Attendances of
Community Classes
1571

Unique Website Visits
109,902

Social Media Reach
534,053

Exciting Plans for 2025-2026

This is going to be a big touring year for **balletLORENT** as we take *Snow White* and *Snow White: The Sacrifice* out on tour Nationally to venues across England and Scotland. We are visiting some venues who are well known to us and we look forward to re-engaging with audiences in Darlington, Hull, Derby, Doncaster, Dundee, Kirkcaldy, Leeds and Salford. We are also really excited to be touring to 3 new venues: Worthing Connaught Theatre, Glasgow Tramway and the brand new Sadlers Wells East theatre in London.

We continue to develop our partnerships and are proud to welcome our local community to regular weekly classes. We have exciting plans to develop a sensory space at our studios at John Marley Centre and with continued funding we are able to offer exciting arts based training to children and young people.

We are grateful to our funders, sponsors, friends and partners. If you would like to support us, please get in touch.

Kylie Lloyd, Executive Director



Dancers: Caroline Reece,
Virginia Scudeletti
Photograph: Bill Cooper

balletLORENT

COMPANY:

Artistic Director & CEO - Liv Lorent
Executive Director - Kylie Lloyd
Creative Partners - Gavin Coward, Geoff Hopson
& Debbi Purtill
Education & Projects Manager - James MacGillivray
Marketing & Communications Manager - Jane Coney
General Manager - Hannah Moreno
Production Manager - Callum Graham
Dance Practitioner & Administrator - Alys North
Filmmaker - Alex Ayre
Support Workers - Jo Simpson, Victoria Forshaw,
Emily Santana, Chloe Ribbens

TRUSTEES:

Philip Bernays OBE
Janet Archer
Neville Campbell
Alex Croft
Paul Jackson
Mark Dunphy
Dr Catherine El-Zerbi

Dancers: Montaine Ponceau,
Ruby Gregory
Photo: The Twins



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