

Annual Report 2021-2022



balletLORENT

balletLORENT is the North East of England's leading Dance Theatre

company, dedicated to creating ambitious, inclusive, high quality work, which tours to the UK's most prestigious theatres. A female-led company, our mission is to create world class, distinctive dance, for diverse family and adult audiences and participants of all ages, life experiences, cultures and backgrounds, with performances that refuse to be elitist or mystifying.

The enduring strength and longevity of **balletLORENT's** three decade lifespan is fuelled by Artistic Director Liv Lorent's (MBE) commitment to innovation, determination to create dance theatre **for people with limited access to arts and culture, and a passion to broaden opportunities** for the professional artists and diverse communities that we engage with.

Cover photograph: Brian Hartley; Cover dancer: Benedicta Valentina Mamuni

Opposite page photograph: Luke Waddington; Opposite page dancer: John Kendall



Welcome: An Introduction from Liv Lorent MBE, Artistic Director

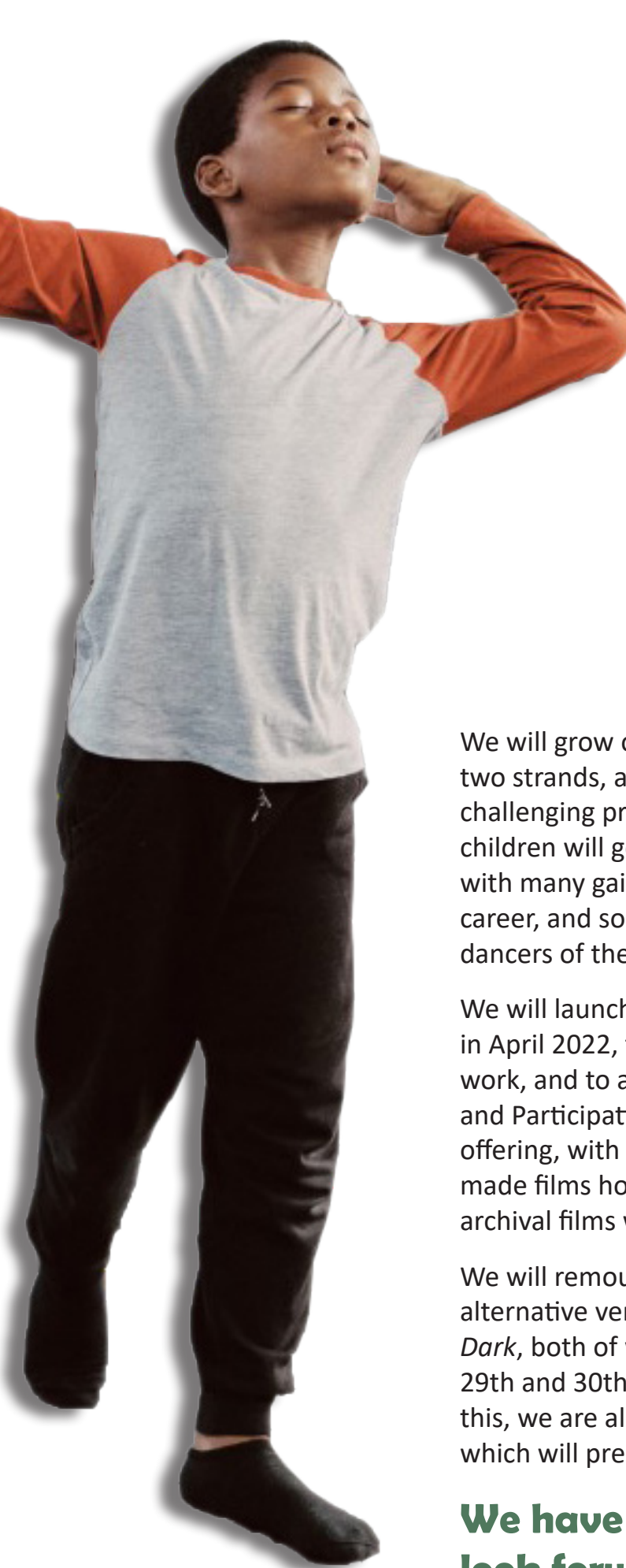
2021-2022

As the country continues to recover from the impacts that the pandemic had on all our lives, I look back with extreme pride at the way **balletLORENT** adapted and transformed our model in response to the uncertain and volatile circumstances. Through a shift in artistic and participatory programmes, we not only supported our valued freelance artists and dancers throughout, but also engaged in a wide range of adapted projects, taking us to even greater success.

One of our most memorable moments of the last year was our return to touring, which saw us take *The Lost Happy Endings* to six large-scale theatres across England and Scotland. At a time when audiences were reluctant to return to theatres, we enthralled over 4000 people across 23 shows, as well as engaging 663 children in our related Creative Activity Pack project. On top of this, we created a site-specific work (*Parade*) at Cheeseburn Sculpture Gardens in Northumberland, plus three films.

In May, we moved into our new home at John Marley Centre in Newcastle's West End. This space will become a centre that has national significance for creative inclusion, and allow our own original work to flourish, expand our nationally recognised education programme, and give us a platform from which to engage local communities to offer cultural experiences that otherwise would not be open to them.

In September, we launched our pilot Youth Academy for exceptionally talented children from Newcastle who we have met through workshops in primary schools in areas of disadvantage. Many have performed in our middle scale fairytale productions alongside our professional company. Most wouldn't ordinarily have access to dance or creative activity, and this unique opportunity for children already benefits 20 members.



Photograph: Luke Waddington



The Future

Looking towards the future, I am very excited about **balletLORENT's** development and growth. We will establish John Marley as a fully accessible space by progressing a pioneering Capital Project, that when fully funded, will make our West End home a world class centre of excellence, with the ability to offer rehearsal, education, and performance space for **balletLORENT**, as well as other local community organisations. This development will enhance **balletLORENT's** status nationally as a company committed to inclusive opportunity and artistic programming, as we strengthen our position as advocates, changemakers, and leaders in inclusion.

We will grow our Youth Academy to full capacity with 40 children across two strands, an intermediate feeder programme, and a more technically challenging programme with further performance opportunities. These children will go on to obtain a keen and invested interest in the arts, with many gaining a firm footing to go forward into a professional artistic career, and some will almost certainly become core **balletLORENT** dancers of the future.

We will launch a new, bespoke digital platform **balletLORENT** at Home in April 2022, to showcase our broad and exciting range of filmed work, and to act as an interactive education portal for our Learning and Participation programmes. This will significantly expand our digital offering, with adaptations of our performances alongside custom-made films hosted on the distinctive platform. Many of our current and archival films will be shown at film festivals across the world this year.

We will remount our 2012 production *Rapunzel*, and create an alternative version of the same piece for our adult-oriented strand, *After Dark*, both of which will premiere at Northern Stage Newcastle on the 29th and 30th September 2022, and tour nationally in 2023. Alongside this, we are also developing a new, immersive work, titled *ANEMOIA*, which will premiere in January 2023.

We have a lot to be proud of, and much to look forward to, and we can't wait to share our future with you.

Photograph: Brian Hartley; dancer:
Benedicta Valentina Mamuini

***An ever-relevant tale of finding
happiness through adversity,
love through trauma, and peace
through compassion***

Performances: 23
Audience: 4419
Commissioned by Sadler's Wells and
co-produced by Northern Stage

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An original story by **Carol Ann Duffy DBE** retold as dance theatre for family, **The Lost Happy Endings** premiered at Northern Stage, Newcastle in 2019, with artistic contributions from a world-class star-studded and acclaimed team of collaborators, who helped to form a vivid backdrop in front of which our charismatic dancers performed a visual and theatrical feast, while emotionally connecting with our audiences. We were also delighted to **welcome Benedicta Valentina Mamuini into her first lead role** with the company, exquisitely dancing as Jub, the "six-fingered Deario". Benedicta was joined by a cast of nine professional dancers, ranging in ages from 20 to 57.

“Without meaning to lay too heavy a burden of expectation upon balletLORENT's endearing work, the show conjures a state of being from which the world at large might well benefit.

- Donald Hutera, arts writer

Resuming after a COVID-19-enforced break, **The Lost Happy Endings** toured with great **acclaim** to Edinburgh Festival Theatre, Hull New Theatre, The Lowry Salford, His Majesty's Theatre Aberdeen, Newcastle Theatre Royal, and Sadler's Wells London.

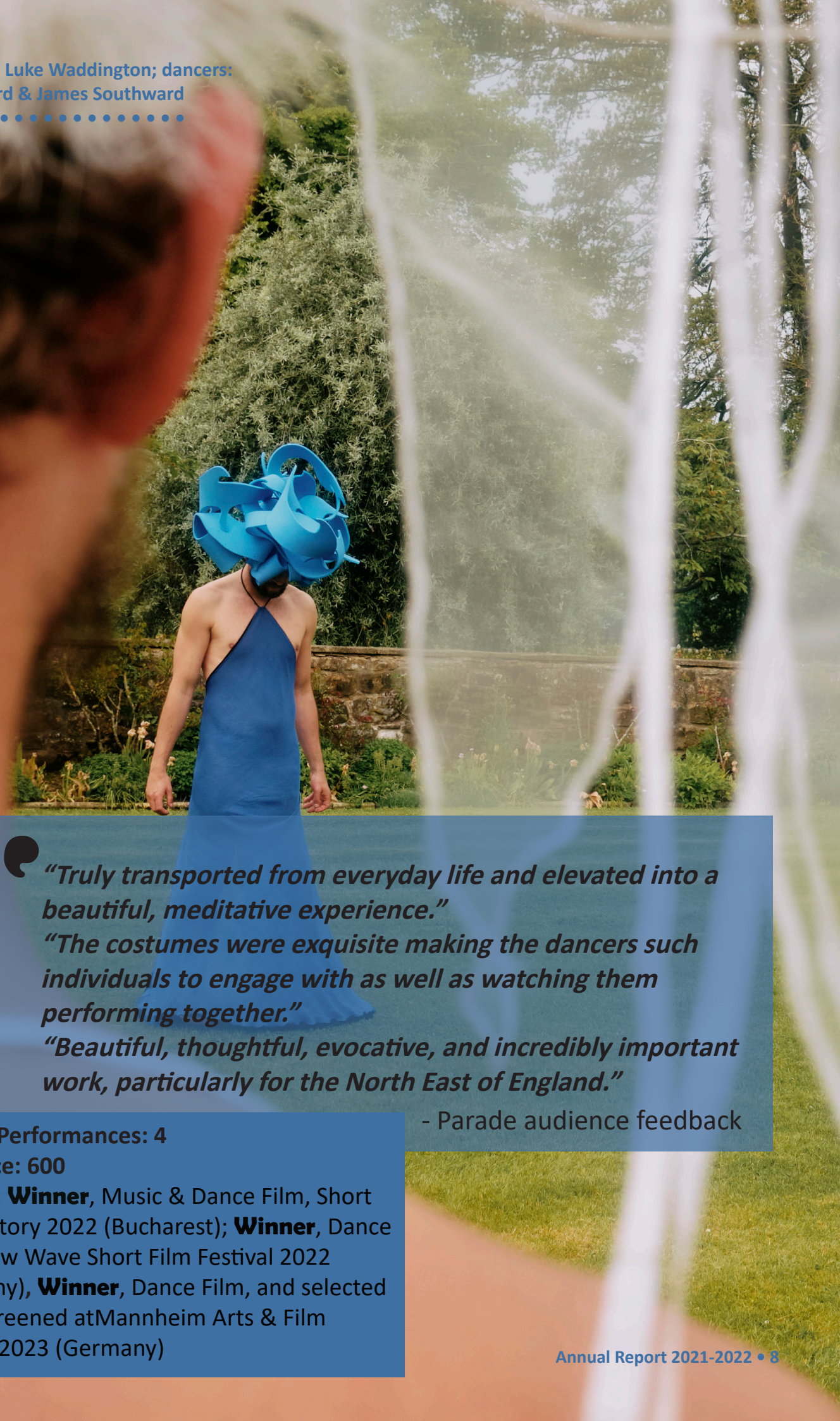
Collaborators: Former Poet Laureate **Carol Ann Duffy** (story), *It's A Sin* composer **Murray Gold**, *Absolutely Fabulous* star **Joanna Lumley DBE** (narration), *Game of Thrones*' **Ben Crompton** (dramaturg), Olivier Award-nominated **Neil Murray** (set design), WhatsOnStage and OBIE Awards-winner **Malcolm Rippeth** (lighting design), and *Mary Poppins Returns* contributor **Nasir Mazhar** (costume design).

A site-specific live performance at Cheeseburn Sculpture Gardens in Northumberland, **Parade** was an uplifting experience for audiences post lockdown and devised in the spirit of celebrating difference. *Parade* featured 12 dancers aged 22 to 57, with music composed and played by 13-year-old composer/musician Albie Crompton, and costumes designed and realised by Nasir Mazhar. **A film adaptation of Parade will be released on our new streaming site in April 2022.**

In December, we presented a **free one-act version of The Lost Happy Endings** at the John Marley Centre for 360 children from four local primary schools (Bridgewater, Excelsior, Broadwood, and St Bede's RC), and families from West End Foodbank, West End Women and Girls Centre, and West End Refugee Service. This opportunity **allowed children and families facing economic exclusion to experience dance within their local community**, many for the first time in their lives.

“My favourite thing about the play is how so much people popped out of nowhere”
 “The thing that surprised me was I liked it more than I thought I would”
 Have you been to see a performance at a theatre before? “Yes. But don't tell anyone... yours was the best”
 - Children's feedback

Photograph: Luke Waddington; dancers: Gavin Coward & James Southward



“Truly transported from everyday life and elevated into a beautiful, meditative experience.”
 “The costumes were exquisite making the dancers such individuals to engage with as well as watching them performing together.”
 “Beautiful, thoughtful, evocative, and incredibly important work, particularly for the North East of England.”

- Parade audience feedback

Parade Performances: 4
Audience: 600
Awards: **Winner**, Music & Dance Film, Short Film Factory 2022 (Bucharest); **Winner**, Dance Film, New Wave Short Film Festival 2022 (Germany), **Winner**, Dance Film, and selected to be screened at Mannheim Arts & Film Festival 2023 (Germany)

Ahead of launching our new, bespoke digital platform, to showcase our broad and exciting range of work, we continue to expand our collection of dance for film, creating several new pieces over the course of the last year.

Our feature length films continue to be enjoyed by UK and international audiences alike, as they are streamed through Marquee TV and Sky Arts. Our **filmed version of The Lost Happy Endings**, created in October 2020, is exclusive to Marquee TV, and has been viewed by 1,746 people to date. **Rumpelstiltskin** (2017) has achieved 2,926 views through Marquee TV, and is also available via Sky Arts.

To recognise **International Men's Day 2021**, we created a short film **Breaking Grey**, filmed, and edited by Albie Crompton (13 years old), and featuring two of balletLORENT's long-term male dance artists, Gavin Coward and Toby Fitzgibbons.

To celebrate **International Women's Day 2022**, Liv Lorent worked with long-term balletLORENT dance artist Caroline Reece (58) to create **Fantaisie**, a short film celebrating the beauty of an ageing female body.



Photograph: Emily Crozier;
dancer: Caroline Reece

Fantaisie
Released: March 2022
Views: 1,751 (as of April 2022)

“*The qualities of sensuality, charisma and elegance stay with a woman, whatever her age. I don't see many representations of women as vital and sexually relevant post the age of 50. The sophistication and physical nuance and understanding of one's body is often celebrated in men, but I think it is underrepresented in women, and I don't understand why.*

- Liv Lorent



Breaking Grey
Released: November 2021
Views: 1,196 (as of April 2022)

Photograph: Albie Crompton; dancers:
Gavin Coward and Toby Fitzgibbons

“*Too often men can feel they need to repress their emotions, be stoical, keep quiet, but here we see that male friendship is powerful, and the encouragement to express those repressed emotions can save lives. There can be laughter, energy, and silliness after darkness.*

- Liv Lorent

After years of nomadic studio hopping, we are thrilled to begin relocating to a **new combined rehearsal, education, and administrative base at the John Marley Centre**, Scotswood, in the West End of Newcastle. Within the grade two listed former school, we will establish a safe, fully accessible and inclusive creative and learning environment, including a sensory zone, for all participants of our classes, and audiences.

We relish the opportunity to build and expand partnerships in and around our new home, and look forward to working with, and being inspired by, the children, young and older people, and families who are welcoming us to their community.

The full potential of this space, location and the local communities is driving balletLORENT's drive to make it **a world class centre of excellence**, offering rehearsal, education, and performance opportunities.

Photograph: Breeze Creatives

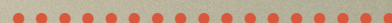


This will be a safe and adaptive space of local belonging, respecting and welcoming of a broad and diverse community to participate, learn and enjoy as viewers - a place where creativity begins, and is carried through nationally.

- Liv Lorent



Photograph: Luke Waddington



*My favourite thing
about the Academy is
I am able to express
myself better and just
go with the flow when
trying out new ideas*

- Youth Academy member

As an Arts Award Centre, balletLORENT offers children the opportunity to achieve through their participation in our programmes, and we continue to celebrate high numbers of children across the country receiving awards.

500 children from nine primary schools across the UK have achieved Arts Award Discover through their participation in our Creative Activity Pack project.

We have been named an Arts Award Trinity Champion Centre for 2022-23, in recognition of our commitment and achievement, and for inspiring a future generation of artists and leaders to discover more about the arts around them.

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Everyone is welcome to enjoy dancing with balletLORENT!

We know through decades of working at grassroots level that talent is abundant, but opportunity is not. Our learning and participation programmes go the extra mile to remove barriers to engagement, **giving meaningful cultural opportunities** to children, young people, and older people, those who are from underprivileged communities, refugees, those who are neurodivergent, and those living in poverty.

We launched our **Youth Academy** (one year pilot) in August to offer 20 exceptionally talented local children (aged 7-13) the opportunity to develop their creative talents formally and consistently. Children meet weekly to advance their movement and choreographic abilities, working closely with our artistic team and guest collaborators. We recognise their breadth of talent, respond to their needs as individuals, and are delivering a programme to train them in movement, design, and music elements, and increase their creativity in making shows.

Most participants are from the 30% most deprived areas of the city, training is free, and children are fed and chaperoned during their time with us.

Devised in response to COVID-19 restrictions, our **Creative Activity Packs** allowed children to explore a wide range of activities based on *The Lost Happy Endings* in school or at home, and share their artistic creations with friends, families, and our team. We were overwhelmed by the children's enthusiasm, achievements, and wonderful creativity. Children have been able to find **expressive freedom, gain confidence in their creative abilities, articulate ideas** and opinions about their own artistic choices, and participate in physical and creative activity, all for free.

“*The arts and crafts were fantastic. Children of all ages, abilities and languages were able to access these. Turning the box into a stage was a great idea!*

- Teacher, Westgate Hill Primary

“*I enjoyed being creative and I can't wait to do another one.”; “This is the best day ever!”; “Really can we keep them?”*

“*It gave them an opportunity to be creative, be successful and share their work. Finding out about all the people involved in making the production, has inspired many children to look into this as a future career. It was a once in a lifetime experience that they will never forget.*

- Teacher, Whitehouse Primary

Creative Activity Packs Project

423 children from six schools in Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, and Kirkcaldy watched a screening of *The Lost Happy Endings* film in school, participated in creative dance sessions and took part in a celebration event where they could share the activities they had completed. In Hull, **237 children from four primary schools** attended a performance of *The Lost Happy Endings* at Hull New Theatre before participating in the project.

balletLORENT also delivered several **bespoke projects tailored to the needs of schools and communities across the North East and Yorkshire**, including:

- A six-week creative dance residency for year three children from Westgate Hill Primary School Newcastle, and South Gosforth First School
- Project A, a one-year actor training course at Newcastle Theatre Royal (weeklong residency)
- Family Workshops at Scotswood Community Gardens, Newcastle commissioned by Arts Connect
- Residency with students from the Darlington Centre for Advanced Training (CAT)
- Online Classes – Dance Fit, Pilates, Creative Dance Theatre for Children
- A deeper Engagement Programme for schools and communities in Hull, in partnership with Hull Dance
- Creative dance workshops and career talks for year 70 pupils (aged 7-16) at Collingwood School and Media Arts College, Morpeth

In 2021-22, **our team engaged with 2809 children, young people and adults from all over the country**. This is an exceptional number of people to have benefitted from our work, especially given the continuing restrictions to activity that COVID-19 recovery required.

Photograph: Luke Waddington



Our Year In Numbers



Awards & Nominations

Nevertheless, She Persisted (2019) - Honourable Mention, Gender, Equality Issues & Rights category, Mannheim Arts & Film Festival 2022 (Germany); Selected for WPRN Women's International Festival 2022 (USA)

She Weathers the Change (2020) – Nominee, International Dance Film, and selected to be screened at Multiplè Dance Film Festival 2022 (Norway); Semi-Finalist, Short Narrative Film, Dumbo Film Festival 2022 (U.S.A.); **Winner**, Gender, Equality Issues & Rights category, Mannheim Arts & Film Festival 2022 (Germany); Selected for WPRN Women's International Festival 2022 (USA)

The Things That Wait (2020) – Nominee, Short Fiction Film, Feel the Reel International Film Festival 2021 (U.K.); Nominee, Best Short Film, and selected to be screened at Mannheim Arts & Film Festival 2022 (Germany)

ANIMALIA (2021) - **Winner**, Best Horror Short, Cotswold International Film Festival 2021 (U.K.); Nominee, Best Short Film category, and selected to be screened, Mannheim Arts & Film Festival 2022 (Germany); Nominee, Best Experimental Short, Luminous Frames 2022 (Denmark); Selected for WPRN Women's International Festival 2022 (USA)

Parade (2022) – **Winner**, Music & Dance Film, Short Film Factory 2022 (Bucharest); Nominee, Short Narrative Film, and selected to be screened, New York Lift-Off Film Festival 2022 (U.S.A.); **Winner**, Dance Film, New Wave Short Film Festival 2022 (Germany); Nominee, Best Dance Film, Beyond the Curve International Film Festival 2022 (France); **Winner**, Dance Film, and selected to be screened at Mannheim Arts & Film Festival 2023 (Germany); Selected for the Swedish Film Festival (2022)

LORENT ballet



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Photograph: Brian Hartley;
Ensemble: *The Lost Happy Endings*

