

KINGS PLACE



Annual Review
2024

kingsplace.co.uk

INTRODUCTION



Sam McShane Artistic Director

At Kings Place we believe in the transformative power of the arts, and 2024 has been a testament to this vision. This year, we were proud to present **Scotland Unwrapped**, a deep dive into the rich musical heritage of Scotland, celebrating its vibrant folk traditions, contemporary classical compositions, and dynamic jazz scene.

In parallel, **Classically Black** with **Black Lives in Music** brought ground-breaking performances that redefined classical music, showcasing Black composers and artists as well as leading conversations around the power of diversity in our cultural landscape. This series is an essential step in our mission to foster inclusivity and highlight the richness of diverse musical legacies.

Accessibility and innovation continued to drive our programming with **Frozen Light**, a production designed for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The impact of these performances reaffirmed our commitment to creating spaces where all can experience the power of live performance.

Our annual **Podcast Festival** once again filled Kings Place with energy, curiosity, and conversation, reflecting our vision for Kings Place to be a place of joy, reflection, and learning.

As we look ahead, we remain dedicated to championing the past, present and future of the arts whilst serving our ever-important audience base. Thank you for being part of this journey—we couldn't do it without you.



DISH during the London Podcast Festival



Karine Polwart

Scotland Unwrapped

Scotland Unwrapped was the 16th edition of our year-long, award-winning Unwrapped series. Introducing it at the outset of the year, outgoing Executive and Artistic Director Helen Wallace said, “my musical experiences in Scotland are burnt into the memory like no others”.

The season launched with sold-out events from Mercury-nominated pianist Fergus McCreadie, Artist in Residence Karine Polwart, Duncan Chisholm’s new album *Black Cuillin*, Band of Burns, and The Sixteen’s presentation of the *Carver Choir Book*.

The ever-creative Scottish Ensemble collaborated with Jasdeep Singh Degun (4* review from *The Observer*) and presented an immersive concert introducing young people to music and its performers. Jazz group *corto.alto* performed to a packed-out standing crowd in Hall Two, and the next generation of poets discussed the future of Scottish spoken word art form.

We welcomed Suzi Digby’s *Ora Singers* for the first time, as they sung music celebrating the union of the Scottish and English crowns in 1603. Renowned ensemble *Blazin’ Fiddles* returned for another sell-out show in Hall One, showing Scottish folk musicianship at its best and the BBC Singers brought to life Judith Weir’s crowning work *Missa Del Cid*.

“Many, many thanks to everyone for such a great feeling behind such a wonderful musical resource. Scotland Unwrapped has brought much joy already and it’s only February.”

Audience member, Orkney Folk Festival, February 2024

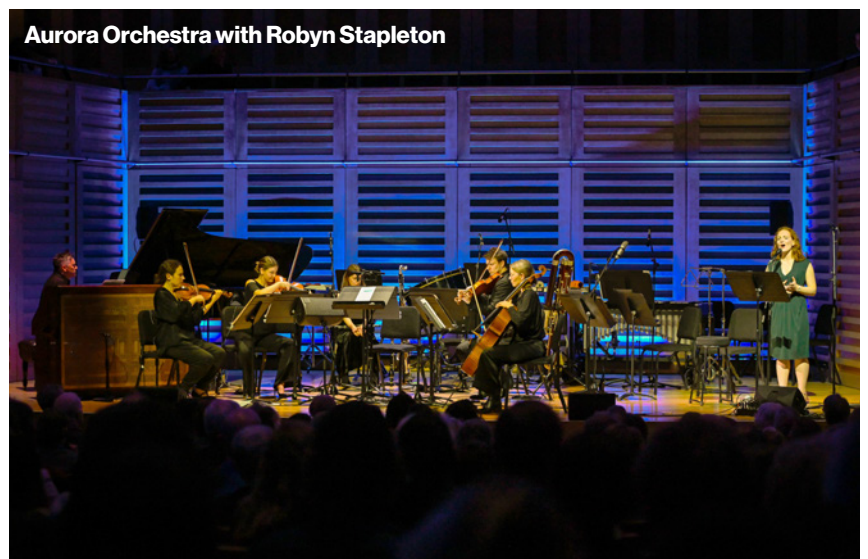
We also wanted to recognise the work of Scotland’s fantastic array of festivals, from St Magnus Festival and Orkney Folk Festival to the Cumnock Tryst in Ayrshire and HebCelt on the Isle of Lewis.

Ambient, deep-techno artist Lord of the Isles sold out Hall Two twice with a sensational set, incredible Scottish vocalist Hannah Rarity made her Kings Place debut, lauded trio Lau made a welcome return, with a sold-out show in Hall One and support from Juliette Lemone and Chris Amer.

Our Resident Ensemble, Aurora Orchestra delivered both a spellbinding performance of Mendelssohn’s *Scottish Symphony* and a wonderful collaboration with American singer Sam Amidon and Scottish vocalist Robyn Stapleton featuring music from their respective countries encapsulating historical migration stories.



Jasdeep Singh Degun with Scottish Ensemble



Aurora Orchestra with Robyn Stapleton

Scotland Unwrapped

Later in the year we were proud to host the launch of *May Day*, the long-awaited new collection from Jackie Kay, former Makar (Scottish Poet Laureate) and a Guest Curator for Scotland Unwrapped. As the title suggests, these poems cast an eye over several decades of political activism, from the international solidarity of the Glasgow of Kay's childhood, through the feminist, LGBTQ+ and anti-racist movements of the Eighties and Nineties, up to a global pandemic intersecting with the urgency of Black Lives Matter.

“What a range of contemporary and traditional riches [Scotland Unwrapped] is proving to be.”

Bachtrack on BBC Singers, February 2024

Jackie Kay



Aidan O'Rourke with Brighde Chaimbeul, Bashir Saade, Graeme Stephen and Kathleen MacInnes

Our other Guest Curator for the year was fiddler and composer Aidan O'Rourke. For long a key figure on the folk scene, O'Rourke is always pushing at the boundaries, bringing in new collaborators and going back to the source to make things new. In September he reunited with a group of five musicians who had first assembled in a deserted concert hall during the Covid-19 pandemic. With a line-up including piper Brighde Chaimbeul, ney player Bashir Saade, guitarist Graeme Stephen, and singer-songwriter Rachel Sermanni, the group harnessed a rare synergy between players, sat in a wide circle, eyes closed, passing the music between them, celebrating the grit, calibre and charisma of Edinburgh's grassroots music-making. And in December O'Rourke came together with acclaimed guitarist Sean Shibe for a programme of collaboration and new work.

Classically Black

The groundbreaking organisation Black Lives in Music has been resident at Kings Place since 2023, and in November 2024 we were proud to partner with the team to present Classically Black. A full day exploring the current triumphs and challenges around racial equity in classical music, the event featured music by Jason Yarde, Ayanna Witter-Johnson, Pete Letanka and Julian Joseph. Alongside this were deep dives on the UK's emerging talent and a panel discussion shedding light on the historic struggle for racial justice in classical music.

*“Fantastic performances...
I found the whole day inspiring”*

Audience member at Classically Black

MiSST - Music in Secondary Schools Trust. Led by Jonathan Gibson.



Fire Songs

Frozen Light

Fire Songs is a magical, sensory production created by Frozen Light, which brings audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) together at Kings Place with a choir of volunteers to enjoy live performance. Created to provide audiences with PMLD an opportunity to experience high-quality live art, in August 2024 we supported the Frozen Light team, in collaboration with Kings Cross Summer Sounds Festival, to bring back Fire Songs for a second year. Generously supported by donors through the Big Give Arts for Impact campaign, we provided free use of our accessible venue and staffing resources. We were thrilled to support the six performances in Hall Two and look forward to welcoming Frozen Light back again in 2025.

*“I absolutely loved the Fire Songs show...
it was beautiful and incredibly moving”*

Audience member at Fire Songs

London Podcast Festival

We marked our 9th edition of the London Podcast Festival with an impressive array of live podcast recordings, interviews and workshops offering audiences the opportunity to engage with their favourite podcasters. Highlight events include I Weigh with Jameela Jamil, Dish from Waitrose hosted by Nick Grimshaw and Michelin-starred chef Angela Hartnett and Three Bean Salad hosted by comedians Mike Wozniak, Henry Paker and Benjamin Partridge. The festival also ran the Podcast Maker Weekend, providing aspiring podcasters with classes and workshops to hone their skills. For those unable to attend in person, a selection of live shows were streamed via KPlayer, our digital streaming platform.

I Weigh with Jameela Jamil





Alice Zawadzki

EFG London Jazz Festival

Kings Place is always proud to be a cornerstone venue for one of Europe's most vibrant jazz festivals, and 2024 was no different. With a wide array of artists spanning the full spectrum of jazz from both the UK and afar – from Nu Civilisation Orchestra's take on Duke Ellington to the experimentalism of أحمد [Ahmed] and Elaine Mitchener, with homegrown talents like Alice Zawadzki and Fergus McCreadie alongside international stars like South Africa's Nduduzo Makhathini – there was truly something for everyone.

“Nduduzo Makhathini’s trio performed a glorious set to a hugely appreciative house at Kings Place”

The Arts Desk, November 2024

Songlines Encounters Festival

In May we were proud to continue our partnership with Songlines, one of the world's leading global music magazines. For Songlines Encounters Festival we presented Malian singer and guitarist Vieux Farka Toure and his quartet, Sudanese four-piece The Scorpions, Mongolian singer Enji, and Argentine folk/experimental artist Soema Montenegro.



Vieux Farka



Iceboy Violet + Gaia Dj

d&b Soundscape

Through 2024 we continued to work with world-leading audio company d&b audiotechnik, whose innovative Soundscape system is installed in our Hall 2. A revolution in the live sound experience, d&b Soundscape is an alternative to the traditional left and right stereo system, using up to 39 loudspeakers to open up a plethora of creative possibilities for artists to reinforce their sound. During the year our creative partnership saw 14 artists benefit from the Soundscape system, presenting truly immersive 360-degree sound experiences for our audiences.

Community Club

We announced the launch of our Community Club, a new initiative to offer free access to our work for local residents across Islington and Camden. Designed to break down the financial barriers for those who wouldn't otherwise be able to participate in our programme, money raised through our campaign has supported the giveaway of tickets to Community Club Members including Black Women's Wellness Group, British Library, WE RESTART and YMCA Central. Giving away free tickets is part of a wider plan for the Community Club and we can't wait to offer even more engagement opportunities in the next few years.



“The partnership with the Community Club ensures that barriers such as cost or accessibility do not stand in the way of participation, which is an incredible gift to those who need it most.”

WE RESTART, Community Club Member



Leszek Mozdzier - London Piano Festival

Other Programme Highlights

2024 also saw fresh editions of many of our well-established seasons and festivals. **Future Folk**, our series showcasing emerging artists reshaping music inspired by folk traditions, featured Tarren's modular hooks and minimalist forms, the “extraordinary” Frankie Archer (Jools Holland), and kora player Jali Bakary Konteh, the latest torchbearer for his family's kora legacy on the world stage. We also welcomed back **Jewish Book Week**, the UK's leading platform for Jewish writing and ideas and one of the world's longest-running annual literary festivals.

In our classical programme, series such as **London Piano Festival**, **Piatti Quartet: Soundbites**, and **Bach, the Universe and Everything**, continued to bring world-class performance to Hall One while surfacing neglected composers and exciting new performers.



Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment - Bach, the Universe and Everything



FAUZIA - Luminare

2024 IN NUMBERS

438

public ticketed performances

81,500

people enjoyed performances at Kings Place

2200+

concession and under 30's tickets sold

11

organisations supported with free space in our venue

52,233

followers across our socials

27,000

new bookers

100

free tickets made available to underserved local residents through our Community Club

10

festivals and series, including Scotland Unwrapped, EFG London Jazz Festival and Book Week

20

premieres performed across our two Halls

14

d&b audiotechnik events as part of our Soundscape partnership

7

Residents and Artistic Associates



THANK YOU

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported our work.

It would not have been possible to have achieved all that we did without the generous contributions from individuals, trusts and foundations and statutory funders:

Arts Council England

Creative Scotland

Islington Council

Parabola Foundation

Royal Philharmonic Society

The Hinrichsen Foundation

And all our Friends, Good Friends and Patrons of Kings Place

We would also like to thank our artistic partners including Alan Bearman Music, Aurora Orchestra, Cryptic, d&b audiotechnik, Jewish Literary Foundation, London Chamber Music Society, London Sinfonietta, MARSM, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Piatti Quartet and Songlines.

Support Kings Place Music Foundation

If you love our work, please consider supporting us today to help create unforgettable experiences for everyone.

To find out more, you can visit kingsplace.co.uk/support-us



From all of us here, thank you so much for your support and we look forward to welcoming you to Kings Place soon.

Kings Place Music Foundation is a registered charity (no. 1107839) based in The Music Base, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London, N1 9AG.

Photography credit: Monika J. Jakubowska and Daniel Oluwatobi (Classically Black)