

Chair's Statement

There is much to celebrate as we look back on the last 12 months. It was a year filled with strategic and organisational development, exciting new work and the celebration of an important anniversary.

The work begun in the previous year resulted in a new seven-year strategy with clarity around mission and vision, updated values and four strategic priorities with clearly defined key performance indicators. We are already seeing benefits from this renewed focus in terms of work, outreach, and grant and funding applications.

I am always humbled by the impact of our work both on those performing and those experiencing it. This year Mark Worth, Artistic Director, formalised the Highly Sprung methodology and it is now incorporated into artist training to ensure all work with children and young people, whether as performers, participants, creators or audiences delivers the impact that Highly Sprung is recognised for.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of Sprung Youth, a significant milestone that we celebrated with a Sprung Gala. The event was a resounding success, bringing together over 100 children and young people, including 15 alumni who returned to share their journeys, create a new piece of work and inspire the next generation.

Our commitment to making the arts accessible to all children and young people, especially those in areas of deprivation, has never been stronger. We delivered 40 school workshops, reaching 3,750 children across the UK, while Physical Fellowship Festival engaged over 400 young people from 11 schools.

A standout achievement has been our environmental performance, "Grow," set within an inflatable dome that toured leisure centres and Daimler Powerhouse. This initiative invited children from some of the most deprived areas of Coventry to experience performance for the first time, leading to remarkable feedback and a significant increase in engagement with the outdoors among our young audiences.

Sustainability remains at the heart of our operation. Having met the Basic standard of the Theatre Green Book we are working towards Intermediate. Wherever possible, performances use recycled costumes and set, underscoring our commitment to environmental responsibility. Inclusivity is also central to our mission, with almost 40% of Sprung Youth participants being neurodiverse and 18% from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Our financial strategy continues to deliver resilience and sustainability and, we finish the year in a positive financial position. However, the pressures on the sector and the broader economic challenges the UK faces, are having an impact on earned income and creating an increasingly competitive funding landscape. It is our intention to continue to maintain a balanced and flexible approach to funding as we face a challenging period.

Highly Sprung is fortunate to be supported by a talented and generous group of people; the Trustees would like to thank the artists, Youth Advisory Board, staff and management team for their continued hard work and dedication. I would like to thank my Trustee colleagues for their time and commitment and making my job as Chair a pure delight.

A Campbell

Chair of Trustees

Objectives and Activities

Our objectives and purpose:

For the public benefit, to promote, improve and advance education in, and appreciation of, the arts of dance, drama, and physical performance in particular, but not exclusively among children and young people through the facilitation and management of educational workshops, participatory arts projects, group work, residencies, and events.

About us

Highly Sprung is England's physical theatre company for and with children and young people.

Performances and participatory projects are produced with and for new audiences of children and young people to invite collaboration, contribution, and discovery. By working together, our inclusive approach creates a physical language that enables children and young people to tell stories and explore global themes, using accessible, gestural, high-energy, and often risk-taking dynamic movement.

These stories through movement speak of the world our children and young people will create their futures in.

Public Benefit

In shaping and delivering our strategy, objectives and activities, the Trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, including guidance on public benefit and fee charging.

Highly Sprung relies on public funding, private giving and income from fees and charges to cover all operating costs. In setting the level of fees, charges and concessions, the Trustees consider the accessibility of the charity's activities, especially for children and young people in areas of deprivation.

Summary of main activities

Activities delivered:

- 40 schools workshops for 3,750 children and young people across the UK
- Physical Fellowship Festival 2023, with the theme **Freedom**, working with over 400 young people from 11 schools and 70 Sprung Youth members
- **GROW** experience by 670 children aged 3-7 from areas of deprivation in Coventry through the summer and autumn
- 300 young people took part in international workshops through ISTA in Munich (in person), Thailand (online) & Jakarta (in person)
- Supporting 10 3rd year Stage Management students from Birmingham City University on their final project
- 360 young people took part in residencies in two secondary schools, Smith's Wood in Birmingham and Barr's Hill in Coventry
- **Facsimile** – created with Coventry University students
- Five **HAF** (Holiday Activities and Food) Programmes for 190 children and young people aged 7-16 years old
- **Give it a Go!** 2-day activity programme in Coventry at October half term for 55 young people aged 7-11
- 90 Participants at Play Day Lite held at as part of the West Midlands Combined Authority Mayor's Community Weekend
- Occupational Therapy and Play Practice film created for the Royal College of Occupational Therapists with Sprung Youth
- **Teach Make** delivered CPDL to teachers from four Nuneaton & Bedworth based schools
- 19 artists took part in Pro-Intensive workshops, professional artist training from Highly Sprung

The figures:

55 performances including Storm, Grow, CastAway, The Honeyz, Paddling Light

Worked with 3750 young people

Almost **10,000** in person audiences

260 children and young people took part in Sprung Youth and 15 Sprung alumni returned to perform at the Sprung 20 Gala

Six Sprung Youth bursaries awarded

Achievements and Performance



Sprung 20 Gala. Photograph by Andrew Moore

2023/24 saw 20 years since Sprung Youth was formed with an aim to 'deliver transformative dance, drama, and physical theatre workshops to the children and young people of Coventry, Warwickshire, and the surrounding area'. Since then, over 7,000 children and young people have been through Sprung Youth's doors. To celebrate, Highly Sprung held its first **Sprung Gala**, designed and planned with the Youth Advisory Board. Over 100 children and young people took part including 15 Sprung alumni returning from across the UK. The event was attended by 225 parents, partners and funders and was also an important fundraiser for the charity.

The 20th anniversary presented an ideal opportunity to research our impact to be presented at the Gala. In summary participants described Highly Sprung as a safe space that enables exploration and experimentation whilst providing challenge and fun. Participants reported feeling completely accepted in a diverse and inclusive environment.

'...at the time that I was going to Highly Sprung I had been in a lot of trouble outside of school and some trouble in school as well, ... but going to Highly Sprung it kept me out of trouble big time, and it introduced me to new people, new situations, new experiences in my life and gave me a head start in so many ways more than I even knew.' – Sprung Youth Alumni

Grow, our indoor environmental themed performance for EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) children (aged 3 – 7) toured to local community spaces reaching 670 children across 14 performances. It focused on wards in Coventry where over 70% children in the area are affected by poverty or situations of deprivation, 33% of families in these areas are from the global majority. The themes of Grow resonated with the children beyond the performance, four weeks later, teachers observed that 74% continued to express a desire to find out more about outdoor, plants and nature.



Grow. Photograph by Andrew Moore

'We've got to care for our living things, our plants our trees, we've got to look after them.'
-Audience member, age 4

'All of the children were engaged including our SEND and EAL. Full of sensory opportunities' – Teacher, Grow

Another environmentally themed indoor performance, **Storm**, in partnership with Warwickshire Libraries, was a funny but thought-provoking piece of immersive story telling for children ages 7-11, encouraging them to learn about small changes with huge impacts.

CastAway continued to excite and move audiences, touring the UK, including for the first time – Newcastle and Chelsea & Kensington, extending audience reach with this outdoor touring spectacle



Paddling Light. Photograph by Andrew Moore

Experimenting with a new stage - **Paddling Light** was a research and development collaboration taking place on water. Working with digital art and technology company Ludic Rooms this light spectacular was performed on Coventry Canal.

We continued to work on longer term residencies with young people at three schools - Ridgeway Primary, Smith's Wood and Barr's Hill. Highly Sprung received a Commendation as part of the 2024 OFSTED inspection at Barrs Hill - credited for helping to raise the school's overall outcome to outstanding.

The relationship with ISTA continued to grow as Highly Sprung worked in person and online with students in Munich, Jakarta and Thailand.

'It is clear that they are true teaching artists, they not only know their craft inside and out, but they put pedagogical practice at the center [SIC] of their work. They listen to and see the students, meeting them where they are at, encouraging not only the students' creativity, but also helping them to make smart choices and become an ensemble.' – Teacher, Theatre Arts Munich International School

We also continued our work in higher education, working with students at both Coventry University (BA Acting for Stage and Screen) and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (BA Stage Management) on their final projects.

The **Physical Fellowship Festival**, running for over 15 years, is designed to give young people the opportunity to explore physical theatre and work with professional artists. 2023 involved 11 schools and over 400 students. Co-created with the participants it was a tribute to the journeys to freedom with the headline performance of *Enigma* by Sprung Advance Plus, exploring the life of Alan Turing.



Physical Fellowship workshops. Photograph by Hayley Salter



Enigma (Physical Fellowship). Photograph by Andrew Moore

'Very touching performance that definitely got the message across that being different is normal. Being different can give freedom. Thought provoking, emotional, sincere, innovative.' – Audience member

'I am proud to be part of this show that uses our own words and experiences. Creating Enigma has been so rewarding.' – Sprung Advance Plus

Highly Sprung delivered HAF workshops (Holiday & Food Activity programme) through Easter and Summer holidays. HAF is a free holiday programme for school-aged children and young people receiving benefits-related

free school meals, enabling them to enjoy physical theatre workshops and a nutritious meal. We also delivered similar workshops with the Coventry Cultural Education Partnership in October.

Community projects are an important part of the charity's work. We were successful in securing funding from the National Lottery for Play Day Lite, as part of the Mayor of the West Midlands Community weekend. 88% of attendees tried something new and 78% made connections with new people as part of the event. We worked with partners from Coventry and Warwickshire Mind, Grapevine, Coventry Speech and Language Centre and Sprung Youth.

'Great for exploration and being able to use imagination, as well as trying new things and some more skills being developed' – Play Day attendee

Highly Sprung was commissioned by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) to create a film to launch new guidelines on the use of Play as part of therapy and assessment of children and young people with additional needs. Play is a Highly Sprung value so we were delighted to work on this project. The film was delivered by Sprung Youth and presented at the RCOT annual conference.



RCOT Film. Photograph by Highly Sprung

Finally, our Big Give 'Arts for Impact' campaign at the end of the financial year raised £5,800 from the public and match funding to support a second tour of Grow.

Talent Development/Training

The development of the artists we work with is a key part of our strategy and in the year, Highly Sprung ran training days to integrate new team members and give existing ones a creative refresh. ACE funded an additional three days of intensive training for the associate artists, during which time they were introduced to the new Highly Sprung methodology and strategy. The training was an important investment to increase artists' confidence and responsibility in delivering work for young people independently as associates.



Pro Intensive Training. Photograph by Hayley Salter

Highly Sprung delivered pro-intensive training days including aerial practices. For the first time, participants paid a fee which proved the value of Highly Sprung training within the market.

We continued as lead partners on the Paul Hamlyn funded Teach Make project, which launched to a new cohort of primary teachers as part of an 18-month long programme of teacher development work.

Sprung Youth

Last year, we took the difficult decision to close the youngest Sprung Youth groups. We are delighted that there has been no negative impact and that the additional capacity has resulted in Sprung Advance Plus and Sprung Advance both being near or at capacity whilst providing space for more children in the younger age groups. The research from Sprung 20 gala found that 15% of Sprung Youth first encountered Highly Sprung through community or school projects and were inspired to join Sprung Youth.

Accessibility and inclusion are part of our DNA, and more formally our strategy, and the Sprung Youth Bursaries continued with six bursaries awarded to enable young people to attend Sprung Youth.

*'I have always found that describing Highly Sprung to family and friends somewhat tricky. Yes, it's theatre. Yes, it's acting. But it's also so much more than that. It's a community. People from different backgrounds coming together to create unique, creative performances. **Wherever Highly Sprung goes, the community and energy will follow.**'* – YAB & Sprung Youth member

"It means that I can be myself and I'm allowed to experience life as I want to. It's so nice to be able to feel that way with such an amazing group of people" – on Sprung Youth

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Funding Strategy and Pricing Policy

All Highly Sprung's funding is generated primarily on a project basis through a variety of income streams providing resilience and categorised for ease into two areas Earned Income (64%) and Public Funding (36%). We have consistently demonstrated the ability to be flexible to adapt to economic changes, finding new ways to drive income in order to maintain the quality of our delivery. This experience and approach are ever more important in light of sectoral and wider economic headwinds

Our pricing policy is designed to provide as wide access as possible – a long-standing objective for the charity and a critical part of the 2030 strategy. We work closely with partners to maintain cost-effectiveness. Incorporating environmentally sustainable practices such as recycling supports financial sustainability. Funding is sought to support projects fully so that our work can be accessed at zero cost to participants or with considerable subsidies.

Whilst our model is to keep prices low, it is also to keep quality high and pay artists fairly, so our professional fees are based on the Independent Theatre Council's recommended rates of pay.

Reserves:

The Reserves at the beginning of the year were £60,617 reducing to £59,115 by the year end (the £1500 was restricted project expenditure held temporarily in Reserves)

The Trustees have reviewed the Reserves Policy and decided that Designated Reserves should include 3 months operating expenditure (not including restricted project expenditure) calculated at £52,332. The Trustees have also considered the worst-case scenario of closure and consider that the maximum cash reserve required to meet closure costs is £98,000 for the financial year 2024/25. This comprises Statutory Redundancy costs, Bounce Back Loan Repayment and office space rental. This is not currently covered by General Reserves

Reserves Policy

The Charity needs reserves to provide funds for:

- **Contingency**

Unexpected expenditure in the event of an emergency or unexpected expenses.

- **Continuity**

To bridge any possible delays in receiving promised grants or managing payment in arrears contracts; continue to deliver against objectives if there is a major shortfall in income or loss of a major source of funding.

- **Commitment (Planned Maintenance)**

Occasional significant expenditure which cannot be covered by the annual income, to allow investment in/replacement of assets e.g. major items of maintenance of the fabric of assets, such as the van or flying rigs.

- **Dissolution (Orderly Closure)**

Where Highly Sprung Performance becomes financially unsustainable and must be wound up. This fund provides for the costs of dissolution should the charity be unable to continue. It is only to be used in the event of the Trustees' deciding the charity should cease to exist. It will be used to pay any debts, notice periods, redundancies, outstanding holiday pay and the expenses of running Highly Sprung Performance until closure of the organisation.

Risk Management:

An annual risk review is carried out by the Trustees, led by the Chair with participation from the management team. It is reviewed and updated throughout the year by the management team and any significant changes advised to the Trustees quarterly. Mitigation is put in place to reduce and manage those risks by the management team, and this mitigation is reviewed by the Trustees.

Governance - Less effective board, destabilisation of charity, lack of representation, not representative of audience, charity objectives are not met, lack of growth, inability to effectively reflect on and support objectives, lack of understanding of stakeholder needs.

- Inability to retain and/or recruit and retain Trustees
- Management capabilities fail to evolve with charity
- Lack of diversity executive and trustee level
- Inconsistent and uneven involvement and active contribution of Trustees
- Lack of knowledge and understanding in Trustees
- Conflict of Interest
- Ineffective reporting to Trustees

Financial- Loss of core staff, premises, infrastructure, Inability to meet charity objectives, Loss of projects, Reduction in activity and staff, inability to take on new work/commissions

- Unable to secure funding for core costs.
- Loss of income
- Increased costs
- Climate Adaptation – loss of income (events)
- Fundraising
- Compliance with donor-imposed restriction
- Budgetary control and financial reporting
- Reserves policies

Operations- Unable to grow, reputational impact, reduction in activity or inability to deliver activity, Injury- serious & minor, lack of appropriate storage, no workspace, loss of key information, financial, reporting & data, lack of EDI understanding, failure to represent our audiences or meet funders needs.

- Executive team capacity
- Staffing – loss of key staff
- Staffing – inability to retain/recruit talent
- Staffing -Diversity – lack of representation across projects
- Property appropriate to needs
- IT – Equipment
- IT – Security – disaster recover planning
- ESG – costs, lack of ESG plan
- Security of assets

Legal- Serious safeguarding implications, inability to deliver activity, fines, loss of charitable status, threat from other organisations to steal or copy our work, reputational impact, competition.

- Non-compliance with legislation
- Safeguarding insufficient policy and procedure in place
- Regulatory reporting requirements
- IP Protection

External- Loss of income, increased competition, lack of opportunity for funding, reputational impact, compromised delivery of objectives, loss of key members of staff due to absence, less freelance talent, less opportunity to deliver in schools.

- Climate Adaptation – project cancellation or adaptation
- Government policies
- Economy
- Pandemic
- Competition

Reputation- Loss of staff, lack of staff, inability to deliver activity, loss of key and new partnerships, Reputation/Quality- Impact in funding and retaining and recruiting talent, lose charitable status, charitable objectives not met.

- Health & Safety issue
- Relationship with funders
- Employment issues
- Customer satisfaction

Structure, Governance and Management

Highly Sprung is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

The board of Trustees, which can have up to 8 members, administers the charity. The board meets quarterly and coordinates interim calls or additional meetings where deemed necessary. An Executive Director is appointed by the Trustees to manage the day-to-day operations of the charity. To facilitate effective operations the executive and management team have delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the Trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment, artistic performance, and administrative activity. There is a trustee with specific responsibility for safeguarding.

Appointment of Trustees:

As set out in the constitution, a trustee is appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity Trustees. They may be eligible for further terms of three years up to a maximum of three terms. Trustees are selected following a fair and transparent recruitment process which seeks to reach under-represented communities, and which is aimed at ensuring that the board of Trustees has a broad range of skills and viewpoints necessary for the proper running of the Charity.

Trustee induction and training:

All new Trustees undergo a formal board induction to brief them on their legal obligations under charity laws, Charity Commission guidance on public benefit, the charity's constitution, committee and decision-making process, the business plan and recent financial performance. They also receive a pack of appropriate information including policies, procedures and are invited to an induction day to meet Highly Sprung staff. All new Trustees are also offered the opportunity to observe a Board meeting prior to their formal appointment and a face-to-face meeting with the Chair.

Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training events and are updated by the Secretary of any relevant developments in Charity or other appropriate regulation or best practice.

Governance

Good Governance is a key part of how we operate, and our compliance is regularly reviewed by the Board of Trustees and the Management team. Financial reporting and control is an important part of this and our performance against Budgets and Forecasts is reviewed and presented to the Trustees. Our Risk Register plays a vital part in how the business of the Charity is monitored, and risks are categorised according to their severity, and mitigating action is taken wherever possible.

The previous year saw a significant amount of change in the trustee board, this financial year was therefore a year of consolidation. The focus for the majority of the year was on the creation of the new 2030 strategy.

A piece of work that resulted from the new strategy was a request that the charity formalise its methodology. The Highly Sprung methodology places children and young people at the heart of its work as performers, participants, creators, and audiences, anchored by four foundational pillars: Storytelling, Movement that Speaks, Big Issues, and Accessibility. This methodology has been visualised in an easy-to-understand manner and been shared and taught to all artists working with the organisation.

This was the second year of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) but due to the term dates, we worked with two YABs, as each cohort runs from September to July. In total 17 young people volunteered their time and talent. across a variety of areas including:

- Input into creation of Highly Sprung's new strategy
- Electing the theme for Physical Fellowship 2024
- Part of the steering committee for Play days
- Youth Voice opinions and recommendations on building trust (part of engagement strand)
- Sprung Youth 20 Gala –supporting planning, hosting the VIP reception and as speakers

'We help shape the work made by tailoring ideas to the aims of Highly Sprung. Our inputs help influence decisions, allowing us to create more diverse and inclusive art that remains relevant in society today.' – YAB Member

'Being a part of Highly Sprung's Youth Advisory Board gives me a voice to influence decisions within this organisation and speak out about what would be most beneficial for young people at the moment. In doing this we can contribute to positive difference and help address important challenges.' – YAB Member

Sustainability, both in terms of environment and social, have been a key part of Highly Sprung's DNA since inception. This is realised through the work created, themes selected as well as operationally. In the year the following has been achieved:

- All productions meet the Theatre Green Book basic standard, now working towards Intermediate standard.
- Accelerate, Enigma and GROW all feature reused, recycled or second-hand equipment, props and costumers
- Creating environmentally themed work - Accelerate – a new outdoor touring show about Energy; Castaway tackling the 'throw away' culture and river and canal pollution and GROW
- GROW also reached audiences in city wards in Coventry that are in the top percentile for deprivation, where over 70% children in the area are affected by poverty or situations of deprivation, increasing awareness where sustainability may not be a priority.
- 38% of Sprung Youth participants are neurodivergent (UK population estimate 15-20% of CYP) 7% have prescribed mental health plans.
- 18% of Sprung Youth are from families from lower social economic backgrounds (in line with Coventry census 2021)
- Highly Sprung is a female led organisation.

'All of the children enjoyed the performance. They had not had the opportunity to see a dance performance before' – Teacher, Grow

Remuneration

At the end of each financial year a remuneration fund will be defined based on the financial performance of the charity. All salary adjustments will be made from this fund. The remuneration fund will be proposed by the executive team, reviewed by the Appraisal and Remuneration Committee and agreed by the board. The salaries that are to be paid to executives and employees at all levels of the charity shall be compatible with internal balances, strategic targets, and market conditions.

Safeguarding

There were no safeguarding incidents or concerns reported this year.

Training and Safeguarding Actions:

- In January, the Body of Persons Exemption for Sprung Youth was renewed.
- In October, all Associate Artists and volunteers received their annual safeguarding training.
- All new Associate Artists underwent DBS checks.
- Sprung Youth Advance Plus members were licensed for performances at the Physical Fellowship and were appropriately chaperoned.
- The NSPCC Audit was conducted, and the resulting actions were implemented across this and the following financial year.

Trustees' Responsibilities in relation to the financial statements:

The charity Trustees are responsible for preparing a Trustees' report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial period which give a true and fair view of the situation of the CIO and its income resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP (FRS 102).
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the CIO will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the CIO's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the CIO and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the CIO and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by order of the members of the board of Trustees on 9th December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

A CAMPBELL
Chair of Trustees