

# Annual Report 2024-25

25

Z  
arts

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# Welcome



**2024-25 was a record year for Z-arts, as we welcomed more people to our events and activities than ever before.**

New(ish) offers like our children's library became very embedded in our offer, with more families visiting for free early years sessions, and the Facilitate Training programme for early career facilitators, not only offering important first-rung work for young people, but helping us grow the number of children we can take in our classes. We were able to welcome back old favourites like Z-access, rebuilding and improving our offer for families with additional needs (thanks to Children in Need). Ongoing support from our regular funders, ACE, MCC and GMCA meant we could continue to provide the high quality service for even more families to enjoy, both at Z-arts, but also across the region through the Big Imaginations network.

**Liz O'Neill, CEO**



**2024-25 was a record-breaking year for Z-arts, welcoming more families and young people to experience creativity, play, and learning.**

We continue to grow from strength to strength, delivering inspiring activities for children, schools, emerging artists, and wider community networks. While we celebrate achieving and exceeding targets, the true impact lies in the difference we make - supporting audiences, nurturing creativity, and collaborating across partners and venues. Highlights such as the Z-arts Library and library-themed Escape Room showcase our innovative approach, providing exciting foundations for ambitious plans in 2025-26. Z-arts remains a trailblazing, valued hub of magic and inspiration.

**Lizi Ransome & Nazma Noor, Co-Chairs of the Board**



***"Everyone in our family loves Z-arts. A welcoming and engaging venue with the loveliest staff. The programming and facilities are excellent."***  
Audience Feedback

# Mission & Vision

Z-arts is the UK's only dedicated arts centre for children and families, a centre of excellence for child-centred creative participation, rich and diverse theatre for young audiences and immersive play experiences.

## Our Mission:

To use creativity to inspire, enrich and enable generations of children, young people and their families in Manchester and beyond, to help maximise their potential.

## Our Vision:

To provide an artistic programme that reflects and stimulates the diverse modern family.

*"We've been coming to Z-arts for over 11 years, and it just gets better and better. The family feel is strong, and we love it!"*

Family Feedback

## Our Values

welcoming

forward-thinking

inclusive

engaging

vibrant

fun



# 2024/2025

## The year in numbers

In 2024/2025 we out-performed many of our targets by between 22% - 54% and achieved our highest ever 'interactions' figure.

**100,939**  
interactions in total

**84,180**  
visitors to Z-arts

**29,175**  
performance engagements

**45,959**  
participation engagements

**2,069**  
creative & community  
engagements

*"Three generations of our family and we all loved it! Such an immersive, fun experience in a beautiful building."*  
Audience Feedback

# 2024/2025 Financial Report

## Total Income

Grants & Donations	£674,855	48%
Earned Income	£573,774	41%
Trading Company	£127,157	9%
Bank Interest	£14,410	1%



## Total Expenditure

Activity Costs	£576,803	38%
Staff Costs	£539,614	36%
Overheads	£254,725	17%
Trading Costs	£91,148	6%
Direct Costs	£48,121	3%



*The Snowy Day*  
Steve Gregson

In Focus:

# Terri and the Time Machine

An ambitious multi-year project, using arts-based learning to teach the Year 3 Science curriculum, developed by Z-arts and One Tenth Human and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

As of August 2024, Terri and the Time Machine has:

- Reached 538 children in inner-city Manchester schools
- Been delivered to 6 schools (13 classes)
- Had a total of 33 sessions (12 of which were live)
- Given interactions with 10 scientists from a variety of industries.
- Increased engagement and attainment



***"I used to think that scientists just have white clothes and have crazy hair."***

Year 4 student

In Focus:

# Christmas Lights

Created by Filskit Theatre, Christmas Lights was a co-commission programmed in partnership with Z-arts and Wonder Arts, funded by Arts Council England.

Christmas Lights was Z-arts' Christmas show for ages 1 - 4 in December 2024.

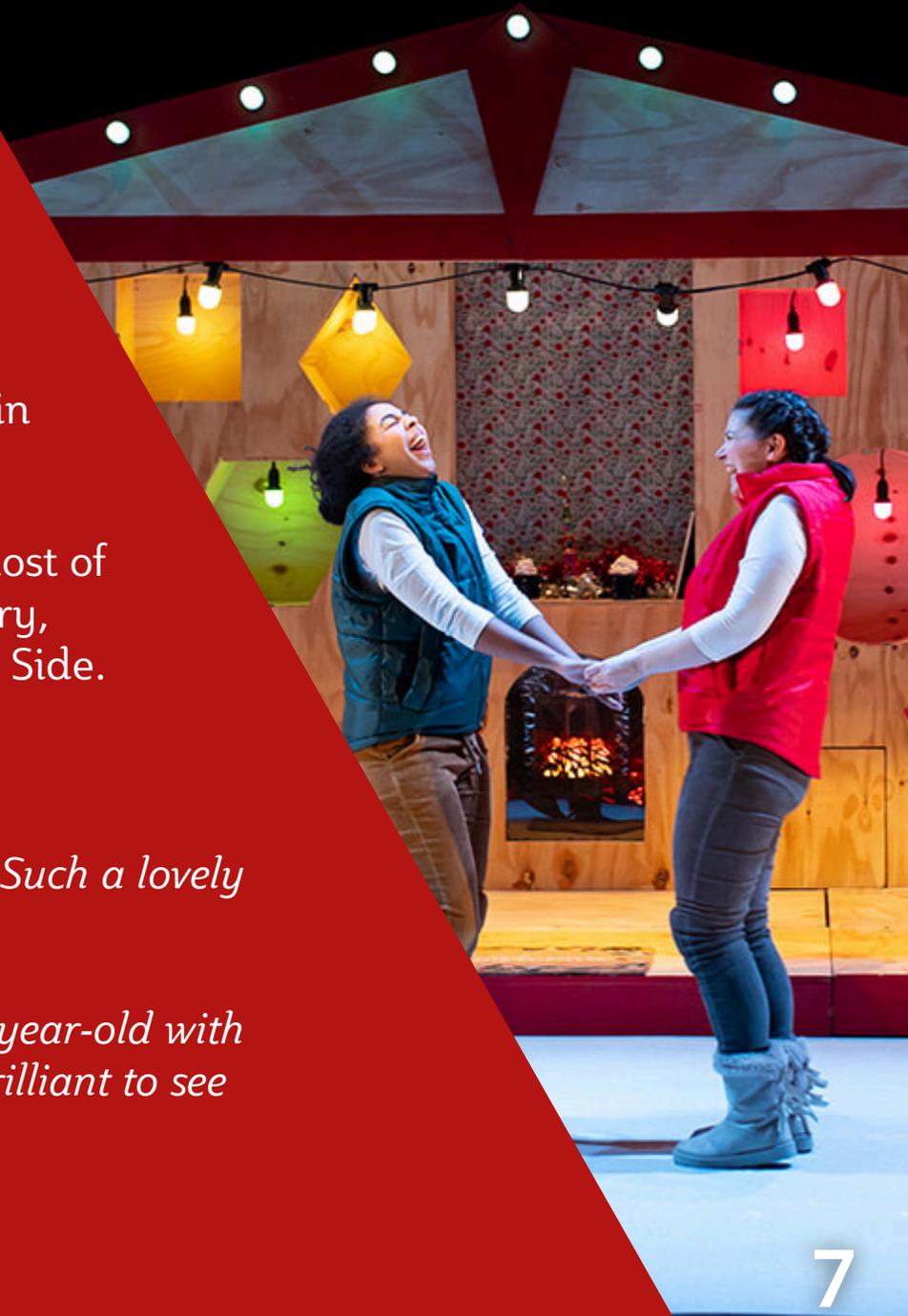
Across 38 performances we welcomed over 600 families, most of whom came from local areas including Withington, Didsbury, Chorlton, Firwood, Old Trafford, Whalley Range and Moss Side.

## Audience Feedback

*"Thank you for such a wonderful show, it was just gorgeous. Such a lovely day out with my grandson."*

*"The show was really accessible for my 2-year-old and my 6-year-old with additional needs. The fact they had integrated signing was brilliant to see and made it even more welcoming to my son who signs."*

*"The production was wonderful."*



# Strategic Plan 2026 – 2031

*Making magical memories for families.*

## Strategic Ambitions 2026 - 2031

We will be nationally recognised for the quality, imagination and relevance of our creative experiences for children and families.

We will continue to be a welcoming creative home for families and communities, rooted in Hulme and connected across Greater Manchester and the wider region.

We will be a leading centre for developing creative talent in children's arts.

We will remain a financially stable, environmentally responsible and well-governed organisation.

We will be a confident, influential voice for children, families and creativity at a local, regional and national level.

# Welcoming. Playful. Vibrant.



# Testimonials

*“Z-arts is just the absolute best, and most welcoming place as both an audience member and an artist.”*

*“As a parent of a neurodivergent child, I can honestly say that the impact Z-arts has on our life as a family is huge – it’s the one cultural building we all feel safe and welcomed into as a family... To us, it’s the most important resource in the city!”*

*“Exceptional experience as always! The attention to detail and thought/effort put into the experience really is unmatched. We’ve never seen or experienced anything like it anywhere else in the country.”*

*“The drama sessions... have been a highlight... We’ve seen significant growth in their confidence, willingness to try new things, and ability to navigate the Z-arts space independently.”*

*“Honestly, I can’t say I have felt more looked after during an R&D by any building ever... it makes a difference in the making of the work, when you feel surrounded with support.”*



# Our Supporters

We're incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported Z-arts over the years. A huge shoutout to our key funders – your generosity helps us keep creativity, arts, and theatre alive and accessible for all children and families.

## Public Funders:

Arts Council England  
Manchester City Council  
Greater Manchester Combined Authority  
The National Lottery Community Fund

## Corporate Funders:

Cargill Cares  
Torevell & Partners

## Trusts & Foundations:

Garfield Weston Foundation  
The Clothworkers' Foundation  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
BBC Children in Need



*“We are so lucky to have  
this space in Manchester.”*  
Audience Feedback



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**



Garfield Weston  
 FOUNDATION



**MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**

**GMCA**

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

**z-arts.org**

Z-arts is a charity registered in England & Wales under charity number 1093556.