



Red Note Ensemble Annual Report 2024-25

RED NOTE

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I’m delighted to present Red Note’s Annual Report for the financial year April 2024 - March 2025. The year has seen Red Note building across all of its established strands of activity: Performance and Commissioning, Developing Talent, and Working with Communities, as well as International Development. We have seen new ideas and projects emerge, new partnerships develop, and wonderful new music created in our communities, across Scotland and internationally.

For this, as always, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank my endlessly-patient and highly-resourceful colleagues at Red Note, our wonderful musicians, our highly- engaged Board Members, and all of our funders and partner organisations for making this, once again, an excellent year!

John Harris, CEO

Objects and activities

Purposes

The objects and principal activities of the company are to advance both the arts and culture, and the education of the public through the promotion, understanding, appreciation and development of music and music theatre, including in particular (but without limitation) music composed since 1900, such to be undertaken primarily, but not exclusively, within Scotland.

Activities

Red Note performs the established classics of contemporary music, commissions new music, develops the work of new and emerging composers from around the world, and finds new spaces and new ways of performing contemporary music to attract new audiences.

Red Note's Core Mission and Purpose

“New music enriches the life of Scotland, and creating, developing and performing new music contributes directly to the growth and development of a diverse, dynamic, innovative and inclusive Scottish culture”. This has been, and remains, Red Note’s mission since 2009 and we lead by example as Scotland’s, and one of Europe’s, premier contemporary music ensembles.

At the heart of Red Note is our performing ensemble. We nurture and develop our core group of professional freelance instrumentalists, each of whom successfully pursues their own international solo or orchestral career when not engaged by Red Note, and all of whom choose to perform with us because of the quality, variety and challenge of the work and the respect, opportunities and fulfillment we offer.

The core group of 6 players can be increased to as many as 20 depending upon the project, with all performers drawn from a wide “fixing” pool of professional musicians. Red Note’s commitment to the development of our workforce within Scotland and to Fair Work principles includes our extensive integrated Developing Talent programme, which aims to grow the strength and scope of the talent pool of the country within which we are based.

Music is by its very nature a social artform – it is made with, for and by the society in which it takes place – and this inevitably means that Red Note has both an artistic and a social mission. Red Note brings composers, performers and audiences closer together through three established and interlinked programme strands:

1. Performance and Commissioning
2. Developing Talent
3. Working with Communities

We are very aware of longstanding barriers to engagement and participation in new music for people in Scotland, in particular for people and communities experiencing discrimination and lack of opportunity due to the following specific protected characteristics:

- **Age (younger than 25, and older than 65, with a special focus on people affected by dementia)**
- **Socio-economic deprivation**
- **Disability (with a particular focus on people with multiple disabilities)**
- **Gender**
- **Race/ethnicity**

All of our work is focused, planned and developed to reduce and remove barriers to participation and engagement for people with these characteristics, increasing the diversity and number of people participating and engaging meaningfully with the work of Red Note, and growing and developing the diversity and inclusivity of a dynamic and innovative Scottish culture.

Red Note is fully aware of the climate emergency, of the role we play in reducing our own impact upon climate change, and of the opportunities we have for highlighting and developing new ways of doing so both artistically and operationally. We are a founding member of the Scottish Classical Sustainability Group, and Red Note has committed to Net Zero across all of its operations, including internationally, by 2030.



Programme Of Work Undertaken In 2024/25

1. Performance And Commissioning

During the year Red Note undertook an extensive programme of commissioning, development, performance, touring, broadcasting and recording of new music during the year. There is significant overlap between this strand of work, Developing Talent, and Working with Communities.



An Easterhouse Children's Manifesto

The year finished on a high, with Brian Irvine's A Children's Guide to Anarchy (An Easterhouse Children's Manifesto), co-commissioned by Dumbworld and Red Note, winning Best Community and Participation Composition at the Ivor Novellos. The award was presented by Brian to his collaborators, Oakwood Primary School, in honour of their achievement.

The film/ poster version (on 7 screens) returned to its origins in Easterhouse, being displayed in Platform throughout the Easter holidays in 2024. This attracted high visitor numbers and brought attention in the form of a motion of congratulations at the Scottish Parliament!

Jane Stanley CD: Cerulean Orbits

Red Note celebrated the release of Scottish / Australian composer Jane Stanley's CD on Delphian Records in summer 2024 with a concert at Glasgow University of her works. This also highlighted the release of Jane's Coursera open composition course, on which Red Note collaborated with Jane and recorded video examples in 2023/24.

Laura Bowler: Deconstructing Pierrot

The world premiere at Sound Festival Aberdeen of Red Note's co-commission for composer / vocalist Laura Bowler, with Sound Scotland, Music on Main (Vancouver) and Offspring (Australia), taking inspiration from, and deconstructing, Schoenberg's famous chamber work Pierrot Lunaire. This will be revived as a fully-staged touring production in 2025/26

Northern Connection:

For the first time all three Northern Connection works – from Finland, Norway and Scotland – were performed by their commissioning ensembles (DeFun Ensemble (Finland), Temporum (Norway) and Red Note (Scotland)) in the same concert, at Sound Festival Aberdeen. This was the second performance of Red Note's commission Flaskepost by Norwegian composer Tine Surel Lange.

New commissions

Confirmation of Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding 2025-2028 at the end of January, at a significantly increased level following standstill RFO funding from 2018, meant that new commissions for Tom Butler (development 2025/26, premiere 2026/27), Tansy Davies (premiere 2025) and Bekah Simms (premiere 2026) could be confirmed.



International Development

FLOCK showcase: Classical Next, Berlin

FLOCK was chosen for a film showcase at the Classical Next Conference in Berlin, with John Harris presenting to a packed house. A high level of interest was generated for the project, with many touring and promoter contacts made.

A Children's Guide to Anarchy, Istanbul

John and Louise were invited to ATTA Children's Festival in Istanbul to undertake songwriting workshops with local children exploring the themes of An Easterhouse Children's Manifesto, and to develop working methods and contacts for developing an Istanbul version of the project in future years.

Nordic Music Days

Red Note presented James Dillon Tanz/haus and Tine Surel Lange Flaskepost in the programme of Nordic Music Days, being held in Scotland for the first time. Louise Martin, our Easterhouse Community Co-ordinator Natalie Dobbs, and researcher Jill Morgan presented at the Nordic Music Days on the subject of community, education, and co-creation.

2. Developing Talent

Developing Talent was established as a formal strand of Red Note's work in 2022/23. There is significant overlap between this strand of work, Performance and Commissioning, and Working with Communities. In 2024/25 the following programme was undertaken:

Programme Of Work



RCS Solos

Following workshops in 2023/24, 5 new works by RCS undergraduate and postgraduate composers were performed by trumpeter Mark O’Keeffe in a concert at the Scottish Music Centre. The project, aimed at developing student composers’ in-depth understanding and knowledge of particular instruments, is being repeated in 2024/25 with bassoonist Cerys Ambrose-Evans.

Red Note Factory

A new initiative for 2024, to be repeated in 2025, the Red Note Factory offered a weekend’s fully-funded new music-making in Glasgow to a group of 14 aspiring contemporary music performers at undergraduate, postgraduate and early-professional level. The weekend covered both artistic- and professional-development topics and workshops, including improvisation, working on new compositions, performance of complex rhythms, working in ensemble, and discussions on topics including finding a place in the profession, developing a socially-engaged practise, and starting a new music ensemble.

Go Compose!

The long-running course for young composers ages 14-19 once again took place at Sound, culminating in a performance at the festival of the works by the young participants.

Spotlight Gig for Emerging Composers

The world premiere at Sound of new works by Scottish-based composers Lucy Callen, Kristain Rasmussen, Craig Morrison, Naomi McGillivray and Vishak Ramaprasad, resulting from a three-month composer development opportunity supported by composer Deirdre McKay.

University of Aberdeen Workshops and Performance

Workshops, rehearsals and performance of new works by doctoral-level participants in the University of Aberdeen-led British Forum for Musicology Conference.

University of Glasgow Workshops and Recordings

Workshops and rehearsals for new works by undergraduate composers at the University of Glasgow, with recordings for their course-requirement composition portfolios.

3. Working With Communities

Working with Communities (previously Access, Engagement and Participation) has been a major strand of Red Note's activity since the company's formation in 2009. There is significant overlap with the other two strands (Performance and Commissioning and Developing Talent). Our work in this strand focuses on the communities of Easterhouse and Methil, where we have been building relationships and developing long-term projects since 2015 and 2017 respectively.



In Easterhouse, long-term relationship building has led to the outstanding success and legacy of A Children's Guide to Anarchy, and of FLOCK, both of which were developed with the collaboration of the children of Oakwood Primary School, and of the wider community. In Methil, we are in the process of developing projects and practices on multiple fronts, in particular in the areas of intergenerational working, and of developing musical confidence and skills in young people and across different community groups. This will lead to major projects within 2026/27 and 2027/28.

A Children's Guide to Anarchy ("An Easterhouse Children's Manifesto"):

Created with the children of Oakwood primary alongside community groups from Easterhouse, with Red Note Ensemble and Dumbworld, "A Children's Guide to Anarchy", is a child-led, musical guide to living in the 21st Century. The finished product was presented to the Easterhouse Community as an installation over the Easter Holidays March-April 2024 in Platform, and then re-presented at the CCA during Nordic Music Days, where it was continuously screened. The work also won a highly-prestigious Ivor Novello Award in November 2024, winning Best Community and Participation Composition.

John and Louise were invited to ATTA Children's Festival in Istanbul to undertake songwriting workshops with local children exploring the themes of An Easterhouse Children's Manifesto, and to develop working methods and contacts for developing an Istanbul version of the project.

Community Summer Tour

Our regular June tour bringing new music to venues and destinations in the communities we work with, including Aultmore Park Primary School, Newhill and Lochend High Schools, Levenmouth Academy and Methil Primary School.

Intergenerational working in Methilhaven

Methilhaven Care Home and Nursery is a unique asset within the Methil community, a council-funded facility that brings together a residential care home with a nursery for children. In 2024 we spent 3 days in Methilhaven with Red Note performers and intergenerational specialist Hugh Nankivell, developing new work with both care home residents and nursery children, and bringing them together for workshops, performances and fun sessions. This was both a chance to develop new practises and also to train musicians in new working methodologies, and was being undertaken with a view to commissioning a second 'audience-specific' work (following on from the success of FLOCK) for people with dementia and their families, in 2025/26 onwards.

YMI: Methil Makes Music

Red Note secured funding to commence a "composing club" for young people in Methil, supported by YMI. This will begin in 2025, informed through consultation with the young people themselves.

Other Activities

Red Note is not only interested in creating new music, but also in understanding the impact of new music on the people we make it with, and the challenges and opportunities that exist. To do this, we undertake a great deal of research, including into our own projects, in partnership with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Research Department. Research projects reporting in 2024/25 included:



Evaluation and Research

The impact of New Music Makers

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, conducted by Dr. Jill Morgan (RCS).

The impact of An Easterhouse Children's Manifesto

Conducted by Dr. Jill Morgan (RCS).

Emerging Composer Research (in partnership with New Music Scotland)

Dr. Jill Morgan, "Exploring the potential barriers for emerging composers to constructing and maintaining a career in the field of composition in Scotland", was published in the British Journal of Music Education (BJME).

Copies of all reports can be accessed [HERE](#)

Red Note is an active member of the Scottish Classical Sustainability Group, which launched a UK-wide survey on international travel for musicians in October 2024.

Our Creative Voice Feature

The Easterhouse Children's Manifesto was featured in an in-depth case study by Our Creative Voice. You can read it [HERE](#)

Other Activities



Carbon Management

In line with our 2024/25 Environmental Strategy and Plan, our ambition is to achieve Net Zero across all our operations by 2030.

During 2024/25, we continued to reduce the environmental impact of our travel, progressing towards a mainland UK flight ban by increasing our train travel threshold to six hours. We prioritised train travel over flying and driving, and explored practical solutions for longer journeys where rail travel is more challenging, such as adding overnight stays mid-way or using sleeper trains. We also introduced a cycling mileage rate and improved our travel carbon emissions tracking system.

We are also developing projects with an environmental focus through commissioning four new works as an Almanac of natural phenomena in Scotland. These will be developed in 2025/26 with premieres 2026-28. We have commissioned four new works by Tom Butler that will form part of an Almanac, showcasing four different natural phenomenon in Scotland. These works will be developed in 2025/26 and premiered between 2026 and 2028.

Board

Following a recruitment process which again attracted a significant number of applicants, we were delighted to welcome Danae Eggen and Peter Nicholson as Board Members in January 2025. In July 2025 we also welcomed Luke Harris and Mareike Ohl. This confirmed Mareike as a full member of the Board, as she was previously Red Note's first "Trustee in Training".

Other Activities



Summary Financial Information

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total income	£320,349	£278,144	£300,250	£319,886	£262,252
Total expenditures	£269,226	£227,814	£363,687	£355,391	£246,595

Published accounts for all years can be found on the website of Companies House.



Administrative information

Administration Team 2024/25

John Harris Chief Executive
Louise Martin Director of Working with Communities
Flore Ducasse General Manager
Natalie Dobbs Community Co-ordinator (Easterhouse)
Nicola Edwards Marketing and Administration Co-ordinator
Red Note Ensemble Ltd is a Living Wage Employer

Directors

John Harris
Ian Smith, Chair
Stefaan Coninx
Daniel Lewis
Isla Macleod
David Sinclair
Lynn Sweeney
Peter Nicholson
Danae Eggen
Luke Harris
Mareike Ohl

Registered Company Number: SC355726

Registered Charity Number: SC045030

Registered Office and Principal Operating Address

Room 136, Artist Block
Summerhall
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Edinburgh EH9 1PL

Funders





With thanks to our brilliant players, composers, collaborators, funders, students, and partners — and to our audiences, whose curiosity and openness make this work possible. Your support allows Red Note to keep experimenting, taking risks, and imagining new futures for music.