



SWISS
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Annual Review 2023

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Foreword

As diplomats, we are bridge-builders by profession – between different nationalities, social backgrounds and languages. And there is no more enriching, more elegant and more efficient way to bring people together than through art and culture.

The Swiss Cultural Fund UK (SCF) plays a valuable role in fostering the ties between Switzerland and the UK. The work of the charity not only allows established and emerging artists from Switzerland to benefit from international platforms in the UK, but also contributes to a mutually beneficial cultural exchange and helps to build a network of creatives between the two countries.

As Honorary Patron of the SCF, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the generous supporters of the SCF who make this work possible. I am proud to support the activities of the charity and grateful to the community of people contributing to the SCF with their resources, expertise and ideas. If you would like to contribute to promoting Swiss culture in the UK, please contact us directly (london.swissculturalfund@eda.admin.ch) or visit our website (swissculturalfund.org.uk).

Markus Leitner, Ambassador of Switzerland to the UK

Honorary Patron of the Swiss Cultural Fund UK

Introduction

In 2023, the SCF supported 18 cultural projects which took place in nine British cities in collaboration with 32 local partners. Presenting Switzerland's artistic and cultural scene in its diversity and quality to the United Kingdom is at the core of the SCF's activities.

The SCF showcases the best selection of artists and to facilitate collaborations with renowned institutions and partners throughout the UK to ensure the best possible exposure and a cultural exchange. The events and initiatives realised this year accomplished this mission brilliantly. This publication gathers them together.

Many of these projects addressed notions or questions of community – whether in bringing people together in a celebration, in sharing and exchanging expertise and, more generally, in creating spaces to meet, think and grow together.

The Barbican Artist Spotlight of violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja presented a prime example of a programme of exchange amongst professional and student musicians, whilst projects such as Body Intelligence Collective's dance and technology workshops for nurses joined disciplines to better understand empathy in care practices. Several solo exhibitions by emerging artists, such as those by Rhona Mühlebach at CCA Glasgow or Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi at Auto Italia in London, addressed timely topics and narratives that mark our social discourse today. Finally, perhaps one of the most significant impact is achieved in the context of a show opening or the lobby of a concert hall, where new connections are built and communities are expanded.

We invite you to discover the projects that took place this year and hope to see you during one of the upcoming supported events.

The Trustees of the Swiss Cultural Fund UK

Mission and Governance

The SCF supports all artistic genres, from music, the visual arts, theatre and dance to architecture and literature, enabling both emerging and established artists from Switzerland to collaborate with renowned partners and engage with audiences throughout the United Kingdom.

Our mission is to bring Swiss cultural excellence across many artistic fields to British audiences and to contribute to an intercultural dialogue between Switzerland and the United Kingdom, fostering enduring and mutually beneficial relationships between Swiss artists and cultural organisations in the United Kingdom.

Founded in 1990, the Swiss Cultural Fund UK Limited is registered as a British charity (803628) and as a company limited by guarantee (02474866). The SCF's Board of Trustees consists of established professionals from a wide range of creative fields, supported by Patrons who have made exceptional contributions to culture in their professional capacity or as benefactors of the arts.

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Ambassador Markus Leitner, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Kingdom

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Supported projects

Trio Koch, Kocher & Badrutt

at IKLECTIK, London, and The Bee's Mouth, Brighton, 12 – 13 January 2023

Trio Koch, Kocher & Badrutt consists of three major figures of the Swiss improvised music scene: Hans Koch on clarinet, Jonas Kocher on accordion and Gaudenz Badrutt on electronics. Their two concerts invited audiences in London and Brighton to discover their subtle electro-acoustic improvised music.

"This project grew from my stay in London as a recipient of the Landis & Gyr Foundation's composition residency. On one hand, these two concerts allowed me to present my practice as a member of established projects in Europe, and not only as a solo artist or collaborator with London-based musicians. This brought in my opinion a welcome continental influence to the UK music scene. On the other hand, performing in the UK is different from performing anywhere else: in a very positive way, it is less serious and at the same time there are very strong attitudes towards making art, which I sometimes miss in Switzerland."

– Gaudenz Badrutt



© Isabella Quaranta

Kosta Andrea Sekulic, Theaterübung

at LAMDA, as part of London International Mime Festival, London, 14 January 2023

Kosta Andrea Sekulic's *Theaterübung* training programme is inspired by J.S. Bach's term *Clavierübung* – piano exercises. His theatre version uses specially devised exercises and improvisation to enhance physical awareness and spatial presence, whilst developing a structural observation of human behaviour. Participants are simultaneously invited to play together, in life and on stage.

"Being invited by the London International Mime Festival was a great honour and has generated a lot of added interest in my work, with many enquiries from different drama schools or music conservatoires. I am very grateful that the Swiss Cultural Fund UK has recognised and supported my practice. It took me almost 30 years to get here – the sacrifices are enormous, patience was needed. I am already preparing another week-long workshop event in London. This project showed that there is a clear demand. My work now has a very clear unique selling point – which is the combination of creative theatre with the world of classical music."

– Kosta Andrea Sekulic



Image courtesy of Kosta Andrea Sekulic

Paulina Lenoir, Fool's Moon Winter Special

at Soho Theatre, London, 17 January 2023

Fool's Moon is a theatrical cabaret night, opening the doors to a surreal and magical world where anything and everything feels possible. Created and hosted by Paulina Lenoir, the show featured exciting and daring performers across clowning, music, dance, drag and live art.

"As host I feel I have a responsibility to make people feel welcome, supported and excited to be in the space I have created. I see part of the role as taking care of my 'guests', first and foremost the performers I invited and the people involved backstage, but also of course the audience members who come to experience the show.

For me the audience plays a very important role in the show and I like to involve them and dissolve the separation between us in a playful way. I enjoy crowd work the most because it is incredibly risky and therefore feels very alive. It allows me to get to know the audience throughout the night. Over the past few years I have been lucky to experience a wonderful community of returning audience members grow around *Fool's Moon* and I would like to see that continue and expand."

– Paulina Lenoir



© Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad

Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi, Sin City

at Auto Italia, London, 20 January – 19 March 2023

Sin City, the first UK solo exhibition by Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi, presented a newly commissioned body of site-specific sculptures, drawings and collages. The show continued Ghaznawi's investigations into the classist and racialised structures of hegemonic Western aesthetics, and sought to challenge dominant codes of institutional display and accepted ideas of craft and taste.



Sin City, 2023, Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi, Auto Italia, London, UK.
Courtesy of the artist. Photographer Henry Mills

RM, A Story Backwards

at Auto Italia, London, 29 September – 3 December 2023

A Story Backwards was a new site-specific installation and the first solo exhibition in the UK by the Geneva and Berlin-based artist collective RM. In this show, the artists employed narrative and staging structures that have been adopted from commedia dell'arte as a starting point for exploring how social archetypes are manufactured by dominant authorities in culture and society.

"Support from Swiss Cultural Fund UK was instrumental in enabling us to commission ambitious site-specific installations by Sitara Abuzar Ghaznawi and the artist group RM. The artists were able to take risks, explore new pathways and develop new motifs in their practice within an environment dedicated to risk-taking practice."

– Auto Italia



A Story Backwards, 2023, RM. Auto Italia, London, UK. Courtesy of the artists.
Photographer: Henry Mills

Lionel Baier, Continental Drift

at Alliance Française, Glasgow, Institut français, Edinburgh, in collaboration with the French Film Festival UK, 20 – 21 March 2023

Film director Lionel Baier came to Glasgow and Edinburgh to present his latest feature film, *Continental Drift* (*La Dérive des Continents (au sud)*, 2022). Lionel Baier's biting yet heartfelt film tackles the migrant crisis and personal failures of empathy with wit and intelligence. The French Film Festival UK organised these two screenings and Q&A as part of the Mois de la Francophonie. The events attracted a crowd of film students and film lovers and evoked the themes of the film as well as Swiss film-making.

"I started working on the screenplay in 2014, following the first great migrant crisis in the Mediterranean. I visited Italy and Greece to see how 'reception' operations on European soil actually unfolded. At the time, the character of Nathalie was a British woman working for the European Union. Then came Brexit, the closure of Italian ports and Covid! Between 2016 and 2021, my co-writer Laurent Larivière and I were constantly chasing after events, which are always one step ahead of fiction. If we shot the movie in 2022, we'd have to incorporate Putin's war. We decided to set the action in 2020, on the basis that it is a sufficiently iconic year for everybody to be able to cast their minds back to it."

– Lionel Baier, interview courtesy of Les Films du Losange



©French Film Festival UK

Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Barbican Artist Spotlight

at Barbican Centre, London, 15 February, 17 February and 16 April 2023

Violonist Patricia Kopatchinskaja was selected by the Barbican Centre as a recipient of an Artist Spotlight. The series of events included a masterclass with students of Guildhall School of Music; a recital with Joonas Ahonen, where she brought her fresh interpretations to Beethoven and 20th-century classics; and the presentation of the programme *Maria Mater Meretrix*, which explores the history of classical music and its depiction of women, which she performed with Ensemble Resonanz and Anna Prohaska.

"*Maria Mater Meretrix* is a journey through the female identities, character, visions of women – from the holy virginity, muse, motherhood to object of lust and many others. The central piece is *Maria Triptychon* by Frank Martin that we dearly wished to perform together. The programme travels through many centuries and is based on the duet between the wonderful and unique soprano Anna Prohaska and me as violinist. It's not easy at all to play without a conductor – but maybe that's why it's so much fun, because every musician bears their own responsibility and can shape and determine their own voice, listen carefully, and know the piece."

– Patricia Kopatchinskaja



Maria Mater Meretrix, 16 April 2023, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Barbican Hall, London, UK.
© Ash Knotek Barbican

Nik Bärtsch's Ronin

at Kings Place, London, 26 March 2023

With his quartet Ronin, pianist and composer Nik Bärtsch continues the work on his *Ritual Groove Music* series. He consistently follows the same aesthetic vision under various instrumental guises: creating maximum effect by minimal means whilst incorporating elements of disparate musical worlds, be they funk, new classical music or sounds from Japanese ritual music. The concert was opened by the Iranian-British band Phemo Quartet.

"The collaboration between Ronin and Phemo Quartet is rooted in the mutual influence and admiration between the two bands. Phemo Quartet, a highly talented group from London, draws significant inspiration from Nik Bärtsch and Ronin. In fact, their work impressed Nik to the extent that he chose to produce and release Phemo's debut album under his own record label. Recognizing this remarkable connection, we saw the opportunity to create an exceptional evening at Kings Place by bringing together this talented jazz ensemble from London and the revered Swiss jazz legends."

– Hesam Garshasbi, Vaak Records, producer.



© Vaak Records

Duo Urrestarazu-Lenzin, Basel Komponiert

at Swiss Church, London, 22 April 2023

Swiss pianist Cornelia Lenzin and Spanish saxophonist Elisa Urrestarazu performed *Basel Komponiert*, a multifaceted album with new music by Basel-based composers Jost Meier, Anita Mieze, Balz Trümpy, Jacques Wildberger and Marcelo Nisinman. The concert introduced the album to British audiences and was a UK première for many of the composers.

“All the composers in our programme have lived or are living in Basel. Some composers have international backgrounds and this reflects the multiculturalism of Basel, a city and region where immigrants make up 33% of the population. *Basel Komponiert* celebrates this wealth and we are proud to share our music abroad, honouring the works of composers such as Jost Meier and Jacques Wildberger, who have shaped Basel’s cultural life over many years.”

– Cornelia Lenzin.



Photography by JAG, Andrés Gálvez, Panovision. ©Cornelia Lenzin.

Silvan Schmid, Tom Wheatley and Eddie Prévost

at Cafe OTO, London, 28 May 2023

Created at the beginning of 2023, the Silvan Schmid, Tom Wheatley and Eddie Prévost trio brings together musicians from the London and Zurich experimental improvisation scene after their paths crossed multiple times in the UK and in Switzerland, through – amongst various other projects – Eddie’s long-running Friday night workshop at the Welsh Chapel in Southwark. Their drums, trumpet and bass conversed in a buoyant and elusive jazz driven by referential investigation.

“The project is basically a continuation of a longer relationship, which started in 2017, when I was holding an artist residency from Aargauer Kuratorium. At that time I was going regularly to Eddie Prévost’s Friday night workshops. The workshops had a strong impact on my further musical development; the idea about the way of improvising was a revelation for me. Later on, Eddie Prévost initiated this collaboration between Tom Wheatley, himself and me. Initially with a recording project that soon was tied to a concert. This is definitely a starting point for a new group and we are also discussing a research project around the work of Eddie Prévost.”

– Silvan Schmid



©Lena Schmid

Therese Theurillat, Stepping into Shakespeare

Online, Podcast Launch at Swiss Church, London, 27 May 2023

Podcast hosts and actors Therese Theurillat and Sarah Lynn Dawson go behind the scenes of *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*. They share their Swiss and British experiences of Shakespeare's work and interview their fellow actors on their roles in *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*. The podcast series includes a live reading of each play and a follow-up interview with the actors. By sharing the actors' thoughts, they want to make Shakespeare more accessible to a wider audience. For the podcast launch, they performed a short extract of *Twelfth Night* in the Swiss Church in London.

"In the plays of Shakespeare you find the description of human nature, of relationships, and of reactions to difficult and or surprising circumstances. All Shakespeare plays ignite the audience's imagination. The fascination of these plays lies in witnessing human reactions and the audience get a chance to reflect and to grow in the understanding and empathy for other people. That makes Shakespeare's work timeless, the characters modern and their content crucial for today's world."

– Therese Theurillat



© Michael Legge

Blomfelt & Narby, Several Decent Days Together

at Four Quarters, London, 26 August 2023

Blomfelt & Narby invited London audiences to discover and dance on their latest EP *Several Decent Days Together*. The concert was also a festive opportunity to mix the Swiss and English electronic music scenes and the Swiss duo shared the stage with London duo Kassian and the Swiss DJ Kerzn. Blomfelt & Narby's toolset includes laptops, old pianos and cassette recorders and with these, they create brain-soothing sounds and emotive musical landscapes.

"This project allowed us to establish ourselves within the live electronic scene and reach a new audience. Bringing together our Swiss roots and the London local dance scene felt empowering. Meeting DJ Kerzn, whose music is influenced by UK genres, but lives in Switzerland, and getting to see her perform in London was especially rewarding."

– Blomfelt & Narby



© Mikael Blomfelt

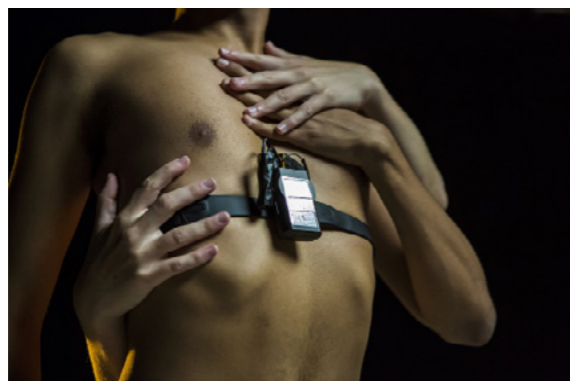
Body Intelligence Collective, Digital Umbilical Workshops

In collaboration with the Royal College of Nursing in Bournemouth, Dudley, Ipswich, London, Newcastle and Scunthorpe, 1 May – 31 August 2023

Bringing dance and technology together, Body Intelligence Collective ran a series of workshops with nurses and health professionals across the UK. The workshops helped to highlight the emotional skills inherent to nursing, and facilitate better understanding of the support that is needed to enable the emotional aspects of care. Body Intelligence Collective studied the concept of empathy and measured the physiological reactions to human connection. The series was closed by a public sharing. The learnings acquired during this workshop series will serve to create a new performative work in 2024.

“During our project, we were able to engage in fruitful conversations with healthcare professionals to discuss the notion of empathy and care, central to our work. The idea was to find commonalities in both the relationship between patients and nurses and between audience members and performers in order to create a performative space where empathy could be felt and explored and offer nurses a place of artistic exploration and relief. Our research led to new approaches to the way we are considering the space and the situation between both audience members and performers, and led to a renewed interest from current and potential partners.”

– Body Intelligence Collective



Adam Said Tahir ©Maria Lax

Deborah-Joyce Holman, Queen For A Day

Published by Book Works and Luma Wesbau, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 15 September 2023

Queen for a Day is Deborah-Joyce Holman's debut book publication, staging a conversation between their films *Moment and Moment 2* (2022), and the work of cinema vérité which they take as primary material: Shirley Clarke's film *Portrait of Jason* (1967). The publication includes a conversation between Holman and Cédric Fauq and newly commissioned essays by Olamiju Fajemisin, Noémi Michel and Francis Whorrall-Campbell. These essays offer a close analysis of *Moment and Moment 2* and open up diverse ways of understanding Holman's aesthetic strategies and politics of representation via film history and decolonial and queer theory.

“The support from the Swiss Cultural Fund UK enabled me to realise my first publication, which expands on two of my recent artist films. The project facilitated me to critically engage with writers, scholars and curators through commissioned texts and an interview, as well as with graphic designer Rosen Eveleigh, with whom I worked closely and extensively to translate core concerns of the films into a book. I'm hoping the publication will now invite a wider public to approach my work, to engage with ideas around the politics of representation and to generate more discourse.”

– Deborah-Joyce Holman



Queen For A Day, ©Deborah-Joyce Holman, 2023

Rhona Mühlebach, *Ditch Me*

at Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, 23 September – 2 December 2023

With *Ditch Me*, Rhona Mühlebach presents a major solo show. Her multi-screen video installation draws on the evolution of the landscape of the Antonine Wall, transposing historical aspects into a fictional universe. A variety of characters and stories populate her film: Roman and medieval soldiers, a barber, two lovers, lice, some slime mould and a thief, among others. In the spirit of world-building, this tapestry of anecdotal events is linked through the ditch-world, suggesting a series of multi-dimensional slices of time.

"I stumbled over the ditch, a huge bruise across the landscape.

Built as part of the Antonine Wall, the ditch started its life as a defensive boundary, a demonstration of power. Now, nearly two thousand years later, the ditch is a wildlife corridor connecting green spaces. This slow, but dramatic transformation in the narrative of a border is drawn out in *Ditch Me*, where I explored the fluidity of narrative and the many elements that reconfigure it."

– Rhona Mühlebach



Ditch Me, ©Rhona Mühlebach

Behind the Books, an exhibition of the Most Beautiful Swiss Books

at Reference Point, London, 3 – 11 November 2023

Behind the Books brought the publications awarded in *The Most Beautiful Swiss Books* to London through an exhibition and a talk. The Swiss Federal Office of Culture organises this competition on an annual basis. Its purpose is recognising excellence in the field of book design and production, as well as drawing attention to the array of remarkable and contemporary books by Swiss designers, printers and publishers. The exhibition was hosted by designer Mathias Clottu and design historian Jonas Berthod with scenography by Livia Lauber.

"*Behind the Books* has become an annual tradition which unites designers based in London with a strong interest in book design and typography. More than an exhibition and an evening of talks, it is both a knowledge sharing event for professionals and students as well as a rare and prized networking opportunity for designers, artists and professionals."

– Jonas Berthod



©Lewis Ronald

Company MEK, *Father Politics*

at The Coronet Theatre, London, 23 – 24 November 2023

Hip-hop and contemporary dance collective Company MEK presented *Father Politics*, a piece unmasking the polarisation of politics and the manipulation of truth in the media to influence younger generations. Performed by an emerging, multinational, diverse ensemble led by Muhammed Kalkut, this dance piece explores the feeling of powerlessness from a personal perspective.

“Performing here in the UK is an immense honour for us - connecting and exchange with the local scene have been truly enriching. The journey, the experiences and the atmosphere have left an indelible mark on us. Entertaining the UK audience and receiving such positive feedback is a dream come true, for which we are deeply grateful.”

– Muhammed Kalkut



©Laura Gauch

Upcoming

The SCF selects projects for funding on a quarterly basis. At the time of publication of our 2023 annual review, we were proud to be supporting the following projects:

Priya Ragu, *UK Tour 2024*, concerts, Gorilla Manchester, Thekla Bristol, KOKO London, 24 – 26 April 2024.

Max Hoehn, *Sonata for Broken Fingers, A Chamber Opera by Joe Cutler and Max Hoehn*, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Centre. Concert on 14 July 2024 and album release late 2024.

Tamara Alegre, *MX Fumio*, performance, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, August 2024

Support Swiss culture in the UK

Donations made to the Swiss Cultural Fund UK directly benefit artists and audiences. The SCF relies entirely on private funding and its Honorary Patron, the Ambassador of Switzerland to the United Kingdom, is actively engaged in supporting its fundraising activities.

The SCF's donor circle brings together people sharing a passion for the arts and cultural exchange. Nurturing relationships between Switzerland and the United Kingdom, the SCF opens access to the cultural projects supported, but also leads to high-level invitations from the Ambassador to cultural, economic and political events initiated by the Embassy. Flexible and agile in operation, the SCF welcomes your insights and would be happy to discuss how best to realise your own funding objectives.

If you would like to support the SCF in fostering a space of discovery, creation, encounter and reflection, please contact us.

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Ditch Me, 2023, Rhona Mühlebach

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Tanguy Bertocchi, Embassy of Switzerland in the UK

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