

Contact details:
Angela Dixon, CEO
angela.dixon@saffronhall.com
Tel: 01799 588545

Address:
Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
CB11 4ER

Saffron Hall



Saffron Hall Trust Briefing Paper

Saffron Hall Trust
Registered No. 08534643
Charity No. 1153685



1. Introduction

Saffron Hall Trust (SHT) is an arts and education charity based at Saffron Hall, bringing exceptional musical performances to local and regional audiences, raising aspirations among young people and promoting well-being in the community.

Saffron Hall, a venue on the site of Saffron Walden County High School (SWCHS), lies at the heart of a unique partnership between Saffron Hall Trust, Yellow Car Charitable Trust (YCCT) and Saffron Academy Trust (SAT) a family of schools who aspire to provide state education of exceptional quality for their communities.



2. Background & Context

Saffron Hall opened in 2013 with a season of just twelve classical concerts. Eleven years later it boasts a world-class music programme that includes two Resident Orchestras, opera, jazz, folk and world music. Musical Theatre, dance, spoken word, swing and big band have since been added to the programme. To date, we have presented over 500 events and 198 local amateur concerts, and sold over 330,000 tickets to more than 45,000 bookers on our database.

Since 2015, our schools and community programmes have engaged with over 45,000 participants. The Saffron Hall team now comprises 16 permanent full-time and part-time office staff, over 40 freelance staff and 95 volunteers. It has become one of the largest arts organisations in East Anglia.

The hall was built by one anonymous local philanthropist, a parent at the school; the money was donated through Yellow Car Charitable Trust. The philanthropist's motivations were:

- Provision of world-class art in a community outside London
- Associated musical educational benefits for the school and schools in the surrounding area
- Key infrastructure to strengthen amateur music in the area
- To encourage philanthropy to state schools



3. Saffron Hall

The hall is extremely flexible, it has 740 seats, a bank of sunken seats that can be easily turned into a large orchestra pit and a retractable seating bank. When the seats are retracted and the sunken seats covered over, the hall is completely flat floor. There are tormentors that can be pulled out at the side of the stage and a header that can be lowered to create a proscenium arch. There are acoustic doors positioned around the top of the hall that can be quickly opened or closed, changing the reverberation time in the hall from 2.8 seconds down to 0.5



4. The Financial Model

Saffron Hall cost £13,000,000 to build and included a new sixth form centre. The philanthropist contributed £11,000,000 and the school £2,000,000. It was a condition of the YCCT grant to the school that the hall be made available for public performance at the weekends and during school holidays for a minimum of 70 years. Saffron Hall Trust was the charity founded to provide the provision of public concerts and schools and community work. The original donor supported the trust for a few years, but experienced his own financial difficulties in 2016 and the trust has received no money from him since then, the loss of income was sudden and the board and executive have worked hard to stabilise the trust. It has made a loss for the last few years, but is predicting a small surplus in the 2024/25 season. SHT has never received any regular funding from Arts Council England, Uttlesford District Council or Essex County Council. UDC do, however, provide free office space for SHT as space on the school site is limited.

The school owns the hall and they are responsible for the upkeep of the fabric of the building. SHT pay the school for utilities used; the upkeep of technical equipment and interiors is paid for jointly. It is an extremely efficient financial model benefitting both parties.

Saffron Hall Trust's turnover is over £2,000,000. Net ticket sales are around £775,000 and the fundraising target is £925,000. Over 90% of this will come from individuals. Artistic hires, including use of the space for recordings, and bar income also generate modest income streams.

Saffron Hall is in the only hall of its size with a high-quality music programme that receives no regular public or private funding. Because of the dual use model and the joint financial responsibility, more of the money raised can be spent on activity and the staff to deliver it, and less on the upkeep of the building.



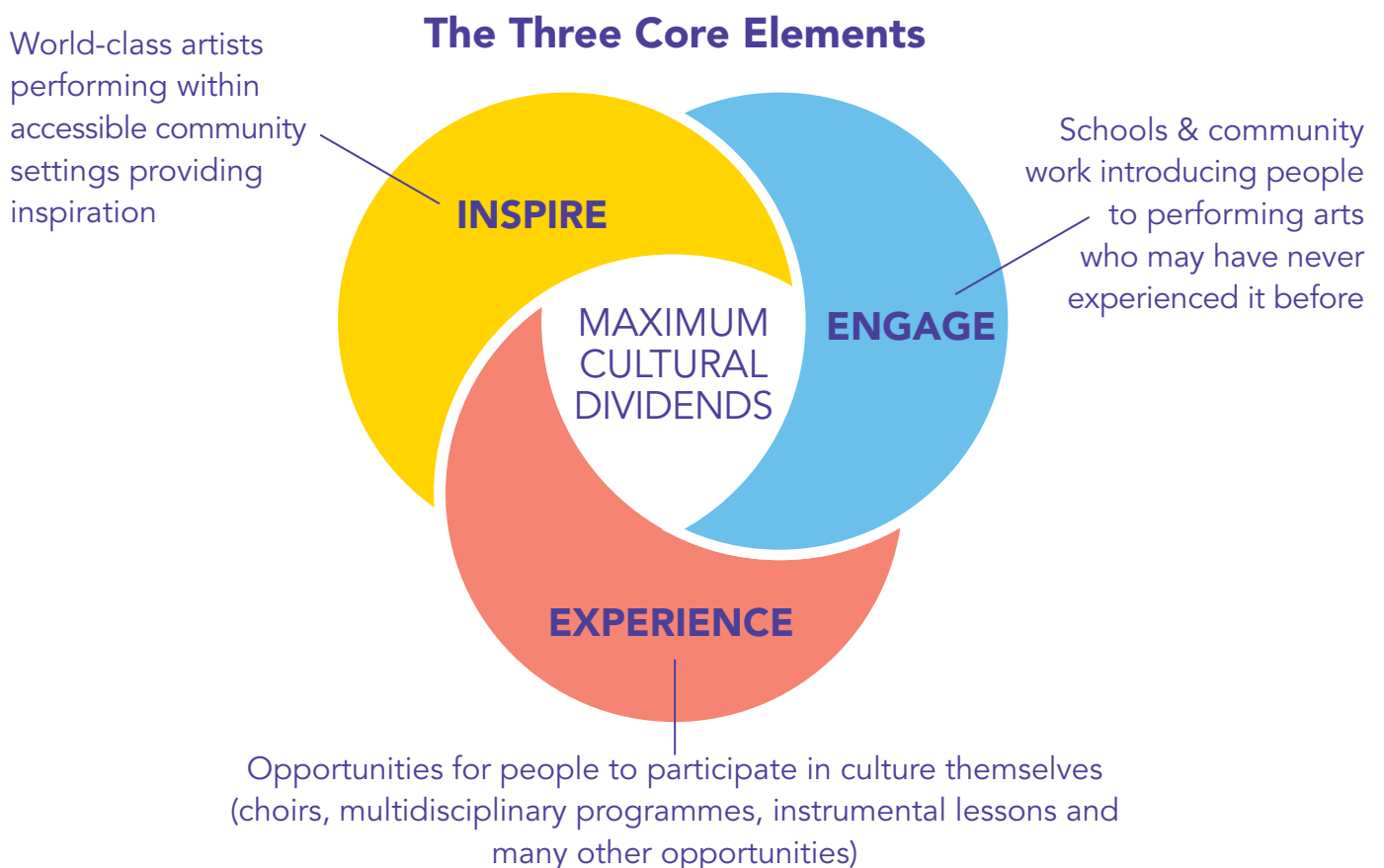
5. At the Heart of a Creative Community

Our approach to providing high-quality and successful cultural provision within communities is based on eleven years of experience in Saffron Walden and our understanding of the place-based system all areas should aim to have in place for creativity to thrive and for everyone to have opportunities to take part. We call this the 'Three Core Elements',

1. INSPIRE: World-class artists performing within accessible community settings providing inspiration.

2. ENGAGE: Schools and community work introducing people to the performing arts who may have never experienced it before.

3. EXPERIENCE: Opportunities for people to participate in culture themselves (choirs, multidisciplinary programmes, instrumental and dance lessons and many other opportunities).



Putting this theory into practice, in Saffron Walden and surrounding area leads to:

INSPIRE: The high quality programme presented at Saffron Hall

ENGAGE: Schools and community programmes – outlined more fully below

EXPERIENCE: the establishment of Saffron Centre for Young Musicians, delivering high quality opportunities for ensemble playing and musical tuition and the support of numerous amateur music groups.

Building on the experience of establishing and testing the above model, Saffron Hall Trust is exploring ways in which it can support organisations across other parts of Essex to apply these principles in their own geographies, with SHT potentially taking on a catalyst/partner/ delivery role depending on the local context. We recently completed an Arts Council England-funded scoping project in six areas of Essex and new programme will be rolled out in some of those places next year.

In scoping this new role, we have learnt that many communities in Essex have one or even two of our three elements, but very few have them all. The context in these areas will be different from that in Saffron Walden and lead to different responses/ interventions. The guiding principle for this role across Essex is to offer sustained engagement with communities to build on what exists, to support local organisations and to leverage our own partnerships to make Essex one of the culturally richest counties in the country. Our partners include Greater Essex Music Hub; Anglia Ruskin University and the Cambridge Institute of Music Therapy Research; Britten Sinfonia; the London Philharmonic Orchestra; the National Youth Orchestra; the National Youth Jazz Orchestra.; Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

From September 2024, Saffron Hall has been tasked by the Greater Essex Music Hub to commission and deliver live music for all of the 600 schools in Essex.



6. A Unique Partnership

On 5th September 2024 the Fabian Society published a pamphlet called ARTS FOR US ALL: PUTTING CULTURE AND CREATIVITY AT THE HEART OF NATIONAL RENEWAL In chapter 1 the authors talk about TWINNING For many children, the main way of accessing the arts is through school. There is therefore an opportunity to enhance a child's engagement with the arts via schools 'twinning' with local arts organisations. Engaging with arts professionals as well as subject teachers inspires young people – it shows children what is possible and provides them with all-important mentors.

Whilst Saffron Hall is on the site of Saffron Walden County High School (SWCHS), SWCHS role as the lead school of Saffron Academy Trust means that SHT aims to be a strategic partner to schools across Saffron Academy Trust. SAT includes 3 other secondary schools (2 in the Braintree district and 1 in Uttlesford) and 3 primary schools (2 in Uttlesford, 1 in Braintree),

Saffron Hall's relationship with Saffron Academy Trust has yielded the following:

- Regular schools concerts for each key stage from early years through to GCSE/A'Level in Saffron Hall, providing high quality and inspirational musical experiences, accessible to all students in the seven SAT schools and more than 60 others in the region. Where possible these are supported by teacher training sessions enabling teachers to take the ideas/ learning back to classrooms. Local relationships have often enabled SHT to leverage funding for transport for visiting schools – one of the most commonly faced barriers to access.
- Often the above events (particularly for primary schools) have cross curricular links – e.g. music and maths. Further opportunities regularly emerge beyond the music programme, for example Saffron Hall's talks programme has hosted poets, thinkers and writers who have also delivered schools talks on their visit including Robert Winston, Baron Winston and Poet Laureate Simon Armitage.
- Rich opportunities for school ensembles to appear in Saffron Hall main season concerts, often performing side by side with established professionals.
- Meaningful encounters between young musicians from the schools and the musicians performing at the hall including 'lighter touch' Q and A sessions, to ensemble coaching and solo masterclasses.

6. A Unique Partnership

- SHT stage and technical team support SWCHS events, including school concerts and productions. This includes working with the SWCHS students, providing them with hands on experience and mentoring. The quality and scale of equipment and facilities installed by way of Saffron Hall operating as a professional venue outstrips that found in most other schools – enabling student concerts and productions to be presented to a very a high standard.
- SWCHS engage SHT to deliver a sixth form drama elective focussing on stage and technical production. This element of the programme being delivered by a professional working in the industry helps ensure both students and school teaching staff have up to date real world knowledge of this fast-changing sector.
- Arts based learning projects delivered by SHT using music and the arts to support objectives around employability skills such as team working, confidence, communication as well as a particular focus on engaging students at risk of disengaging or facing other challenging circumstances. SHT has been successful in unlocking funding to enrich this offer, including, this year, taking some of these models to other SAT secondary schools. Our ambition is to raise funds to expand across Essex in the next 18 months.
- Support with Careers information with a particular focus on the creative industries (not just music) drawing on the real-world experience and career pathways of SHT employees and those of partners (such as orchestra, conservatoires and other arts/music organisations).
- Work experience offers to SAT students giving an insight into all areas of the Trust’s operations. Where possible this has been enriched by additional offers from partners, including the BBC.
- Engagement with students on SHTs wider community programme – including our music therapy work for people living with dementia and their carers. This has included links to Citizenship in SAT primary schools with a dementia awareness programme, as well as young people performing at sessions and sharing events.
- Ticket access to Saffron Hall concerts for specialist music students and other groups of students where appropriate.

7. The Future

In November 2023 Saffron Hall celebrated its first decade and all that has been achieved. Our objectives for the next decade are clear. We will use our place-based principles and our knowledge of the arts dividends to expand across Essex, benefitting the musical ecosystem where we can. This will involve starting new professional programmes with local promoters and venues and building audiences. This in turn will attract world-class performers to the area, feeding a high-quality schools and community offer, inspiring people of all ages to reap the benefits of participating in musical activity. Sustainability is at the heart of our model and must remain so.

Our aim is not to persuade every child to seek a career as a professional musician, however, we do believe that every child should have the opportunity to do so. Instead, we are using the power of music to heal and bind communities and inspire individuals to use music in their own personal development.

In the next twelve months our more regional approach will necessitate a name-change and we will shortly be changing from Saffron Hall Trust to SAFFRON MUSIC TRUST. We believe that our model is one that can be replicated in other parts of the country, establishing a base outside major cities to support communities whilst also supporting the beleaguered UK music scene. We are actively seeking a partnership for the next Saffron Hall.





Saffron Hall
Audley End Road
Saffron Walden
CB11 4UH
United Kingdom
Registered Charity No. 1153685

Admin office 01799 588 545
info@saffronhall.com
www.saffronhall.com