
City portraits

AARHUS

Kathrine Hansen Kihm and Kirstine Lilleøre Christensen

History and general information

One of the oldest nations in Europe, the Kingdom of Denmark is today a constitutional monarchy as well as a modern Nordic welfare state. Aarhus is located in Central Denmark on the eastern side of the Jutland peninsula. Jutland is the only part of Denmark that is connected to the mainland of Europe as 41% of the country consists of 443 named islands. The capital Copenhagen is on the island Zealand (Sjælland in Danish), which is 157 km south-east of Aarhus measured in a straight line and 303 km when driving across the island Funen (Fyn in Danish). Aarhus has 242,914 inhabitants in the urban area (of 91 km²) and 306,650 in the municipal area (of 467 km²). Aarhus is the second largest city in Denmark not only measured in size, but also in the extent of trade, education, industry and cultural activities. The main employers of Aarhus are the Aarhus Municipality and the Aarhus University Hospital.

Aarhus originated in the 8th century from a Viking settlement, which was built around Aarhus River and still marks the centre of town and laid the foundation for the major industrial port that Aarhus has today. Many old buildings in the city have been preserved, for example, the Aarhus Custom House (Toldkammeret), the Aarhus Theatre (Aarhus Teater), Marselisborg Palace (Marselisborg Slot) and the Aarhus Cathedral, which represent historic landmarks across the city.

Aarhus is a pulsating city offering a broad range of educational institutions and a vibrant and active student life. One third of the population in the urban area are students, which means Aarhus is a “young” city with an average age of 37. The biggest educational institution is the university. Founded in 1928, it is the second oldest university in Denmark. There are in total 32,304 students, including 4,500 international students, divided among four faculties: Arts, Science and Technology, Health, and School of Business and Social Science. Aarhus also has other higher education institutions such as VIA University College, the School of Architecture, the Danish School of Media and Journalism and the Jutland Art Academy.

Cultural infrastructure

The museums in Aarhus can be divided into two categories – museums of art and museums of cultural heritage. There are 10 museums of cultural heritage, which include both museums of cultural or natural history. The most famous museums of cultural heritage are the Old Town (Den Gamle By) and Moesgaard Museum (MOMU). The Old Town was founded in 1909 and became one of the world’s first open-air

museums of urban history and culture. Moesgaard Museum has the archaeological responsibility for the local area around Aarhus, and also cooperates with Aarhus University on research and education. Other museums of cultural heritage include the Viking Museum (Vikingemuseet), the Women's Museum (Kvindemuseet) and the Occupation Museum (Besættelsesmuseet). The Natural History Museum Aarhus is the second largest in Denmark and contains exhibitions within the fields of botany, geology and zoology.

Situated in the heart of Aarhus lies the ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, which opened in 2004. ARoS contains national and international art from 1770 to today and is especially known for the spectacular *Your rainbow panorama* by Olafur Eliasson on the rooftop. Other art museums are the Danish Poster Museum, Museum Ovarfacci and Kunsthal Aarhus. Aarhus also contains several art galleries and associations of artists. In the educational field of art, Aarhus has the Jutland Art Academy, which is a five-year education programme. Denmark's biggest outdoor sculpture exhibition, called *Sculpture by the Sea*, was hosted by Aarhus for the first time in 2009.



Your rainbow panorama on the roof of ARoS Aarhus Art Museum. Photo: ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, used with permission.

Next to Aarhus City Hall is Musikhuset Aarhus, which is one of the most notable houses of music in the Nordic countries. Musikhuset is home to both the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, and the Danish National Opera (the largest touring opera company in Denmark) as well as the Royal Academy of Music. The latter has a classical, rhythmic and electronic study programme and hosts DIEM, Denmark's National Centre of Electronic Music. This makes Aarhus the residence of many professionals in many genres of music. It is also possible for children to practise music at Aarhus Music School (Aarhus

Musikskole), which engages children of all ages in a wide range of music instruments, singing, ensemble playing and choir. Aarhus hosts several music festivals of classical, jazz, rhythmic and electronic music. The most notable are Aarhus Jazz Festival, Aarhus Took It (a hip hop festival), and the newer NorthSide Festival and SPOT Festival, which focus on new music trends, especially within Nordic music.

In 2003 Filmby Aarhus was established, which is the regional film and media centre in western Denmark. Filmby Aarhus offers production facilities and a vast majority of offices for about 70 companies that mostly work with media and film. Filmby Aarhus also provides education in film and media for children and adults. Another film school is Station Next – for young people between the ages of 13 and 18, where students get to be in charge of their own productions under guidance from professional filmmakers. Each year in November the Aarhus Filmfestival takes place, presenting international short and documentary films. Aarhus has three large cinemas showing mainly mainstream movies to more than 1.2 million visitors every year. Since 1978, the cinema called Øst for Paradis, has shown quality films from all over the world. The two main TV-broadcasters in Denmark, DR and TV2, both have a regional production centre in Aarhus, and the media house Mediehus Aarhus produces local radio and TV. Aarhus also has a large base of knowledge in the field of media research, since Aarhus University has a Centre for Advanced Visualization and Interaction, Centre for Digital Urban Living and Digital Aesthetics Research Centre, all part of the School of Communication and Culture.

Theatre infrastructure

Aarhus has a variety of performing arts, which includes theatre, dance and experimental performance. Aarhus Teater is the main theatre in size, being the regional theatre with five stages as well as one of Denmark's three Schools of Acting and the Dramatist School, the only one of its kind in Denmark. It is also possible to study theatre academically in Aarhus University's bachelor's and master's degree programmes in dramaturgy. Aarhus has about 25 smaller theatres and independent theatre groups with 1,500 performances and 300,000 visits annually, which makes the performing arts an important part of the cultural environment in Aarhus. Several of the productions produced in Aarhus also go on tour nationally and occasionally internationally. Denmark as a whole has an abundant variety of theatre for children and even hosts the largest annual theatre festival for young audiences in the world. The focus on children is also evident in Aarhus, where three theatres, Gruppe 38, Filuren and Teater Refleksion (of which the latter uses puppets and animation), and a couple of theatre-groups are focused on young audiences. Two theatres, Opgang 2 and Gellerupscenen have a special focus on cultural and social diversity and integration. Aarhus also has a very active network of amateurs and semi-professionals, who arrange their own performances, happenings and an annual festival called QuongaFest. This means that there is a lot of flexibility and mutability in a free environment with a lot of new projects and collaboration. In

the field of dance, Aarhus also has a variety of companies, schools and networks. The professional companies also work internationally with co-productions and exchanges of both dancers and choreographers. There are five festivals for performing arts in Aarhus, of which the most well known are :Danish+ and ILT. :Danish+ is a biennial international showcase of the best Danish performing arts for children and young people. The ILT, International Living Theatre, also brings a selection of high quality contemporary international dance and performance to Aarhus every two years.

In addition to all these cultural organisations and activities Aarhus has the festival Aarhus Festuge, which gathers all art forms. Aarhus Festuge is one of northern Europe's largest cultural festivals and is recognised both in Denmark and abroad. Since September 1965, Aarhus has transformed streets, clubs, stages, galleries and museums into festival venues for ten days in August–September with over 1,000 events divided across more than 100 different stages and locations.

BERN

Mathias Bremgartner, Andreas Kotte, Frank Gerber and Beate Schappach

History and general information

Located in the centre of the country, Bern is the seat of the Swiss government and de facto capital of Switzerland, and also the principal town of the Canton of Bern. Despite its relatively small population (133,656 inhabitants in 2011), Bern features a cultural life rich in variety and numerous leisure amenities such as twenty museums, a concert hall for classical music, sixteen cinemas with 37 screens, two major sport stadiums as well as a vast number of galleries. However, the city of Bern stands out due to an enormous range of theatre venues, theatrical performances and a unique concentration of four branches: drama, opera, ballet, symphony orchestra, all under the name Konzert Theater Bern), a lively *Freie Szene* ("free scene") consisting of various independent companies and venues, the international theatre festival AUAWIRLEBEN, the Hochschule der Künste Bern (university of the arts, including acting and singing education), amateur and folk theatre, commercial theatre, the Schweizerische Theatersammlung (Swiss theatre museum and archive), as well as the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Bern, the only academic institute of theatre studies in Switzerland.

Bern was founded in 1191 – one hundred years before the formation of Switzerland – on a headland surrounded on three sides by the Aare River. In 1353, the *freie Reichsstadt* Bern joined the Swiss Confederation. Since the successful civil revolution of 1848 that led to the foundation of the modern Swiss state, Bern is de facto capital – de facto because the federation does not foresee a de jure capital (*Bundesstadt*, not *Hauptstadt*).



Bern's Old City. Photo: Bern Tourismus, used with permission.

The city's 2011 population equals 1.56% of the country's population (8 million) and makes Bern the fourth largest city in Switzerland, after Zurich, Geneva and Basel. But it is a Swiss peculiarity that even the closest suburbs and outskirts do not belong to the same municipality as the town itself, which requires for their inhabitants to be counted separately. The core agglomeration of Bern equals about 250,000 people. With 2,436 inhabitants per km² within the administrative district of the town, the capital of Switzerland is a relatively dense city. Its centre is the old town, belonging to the UNESCO World Heritage List and located within a loop of the river.

Bern is said to be one of the greenest capitals of Europe; it is surrounded by the agricultural countryside of the Canton of Bern. The city and most of the canton belong to the German speaking part of Switzerland and lie in the immediate vicinity of the French speaking part of the country. Switzerland namely features four languages and cultures: German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic. Because Bern is centrally located, all other major Swiss cities (Zurich, Basel, Lucerne and Lausanne, with the exception of Geneva) can be reached within approximately one hour by train. In difference to Zurich (banking sector), Basel (pharmaceutical industry) and Geneva (international organisations and watch industry), Bern does not have a constitutive sector of commerce. Instead, the capital of Switzerland is characterised by administration. Most federal ministries, departments and institutions as well as embassies and the headquarters of public services such as Swiss Post and Swiss Federal Railways are based in Bern. The biggest employer is the Federal Administration.

Cultural infrastructure

Bern is the cultural centre of the entire canton and features five main cultural institutions – the Stadttheater, the Symphony Orchestra, the Zentrum Paul Klee (museum of modern art), the Kunstmuseum (museum of art) and the Historisches Museum (museum of history). Of these five institutions, the Zentrum Paul Klee, which was opened in 2005 and predominantly exhibits modern and contemporary art, is the cultural flagship of the city on a national and international scale. Nearly all of these major cultural institutions and most of the smaller cultural venues are located in the city centre. However, a substantial part of users of the cultural offer live in the surrounding municipalities and the entire canton of Bern. In addition to its permanent cultural institutions, Bern has five annual cultural festivals with international outreach: TANZ.IN Bern (contemporary dance), BONE Performance Art Festival Bern (performance art), Buskers Bern (summer street music festival), SHNIT (short film festival) and AUAWIRLEBEN Theatre Festival (mainly independent theatre companies). The latter has been presenting international groups and new theatrical aesthetics since 1982 and functioning as an important point of reference in the theatre life of the city. Moreover, the city also features the Biennale Bern (art and performance festival) and the Musikfestival Bern, which are held every two years alternating with each other. All of these main Bernese cultural institutions and festivals are subsidised primarily by the city and the canton with an approximately equal figure. In total, the city of Bern spends EUR 11,555,000 on theatre every year.¹ This equals EUR 86 per capita.

Theatre infrastructure

Theatre in Bern is characterised by the diversity of theatrical forms and, compared to the size of the city, its enormous theatrical output, which is even more astonishing since numerous theatres in the other Swiss cultural centres – Zurich, Basel, Lausanne and Lucerne – all lie very close. Moreover, in a radius of 50 km, there are further large theatre venues in smaller cities such as Biel, Solothurn, Langenthal, Burgdorf, Thun, Fribourg and Interlaken.

In Bern, no other cultural activity (museums, concerts, etc.) attracts as many people as theatre. This fact is supported by the audience figures throughout Switzerland. In 2008 (the latest figures available), 42% of all people living in Switzerland over 15 years old (almost 3 million people) saw at least one theatre performance in this particular year. A theatre ticket in Bern costs EUR 35 on average, which equals 0.62% of an average monthly salary. In comparison, a regular-priced cinema ticket costs EUR 14.50.

Being one of the five main cultural institutions, the Stadttheater plays an important role in the cultural life of Bern. Maintaining two permanent venues and a steady ensemble of actors and dancers as well as a choir, the Stadttheater engaged 342 staff members

¹ The currency in Switzerland is Swiss Francs. The currency rate in 2010/11 was approx. EUR 1 = CHF 1.20.

and hired 188 guest employees in 2010/11. It produces about 30 new performances per year of four theatre genres (drama, dance, opera and musical). The performances on the repertoire as well as a small amount of guest performances are shown on four different stages in two venues. The Stadttheater building itself, situated in the heart of the old town, features the main stage (740 seats) and a small Studiobühne (50 seats). The second venue, located in the former industrial hall Vidmar situated on the outskirts of the city, features two stages, with 320 and 120 seats respectively.

The *Freie Szene* is the biggest and most heterogeneous theatre form in Bern. It includes a variety of venues of various sizes and equipment and a persistently changing number of permanent and ad hoc theatre companies. At the same time, the *Freie Szene* features a wide range of theatrical types and genres: spoken theatre, devised theatre, *Kleinkunst*, puppet and object theatre, children's and youth theatre and performance art.

There are three essential venues of the *Freie Szene* in Bern:

- Schlachthaus Theater, specialised in devised theatre and children's and youth theatre;
- Dampfzentrale, mainly serving as a platform for contemporary dance and performance; and
- Tojo Theater, featuring performances of all theatre forms and showing also productions of lesser known companies.

In autumn, the Dampfzentrale hosts the renowned international dance festival TANZ.IN Bern and in spring it serves as a venue for the international theatre festival AUAWIRLEBEN – as does Schlachthaus Theater. Both venues are subsidised primarily by the city of Bern and to a much lesser extent by the canton of Bern and some private foundations. In addition to these venues, Tojo Theater is the third important venue of the *Freie Szene*. It is situated in the Kulturzentrum Reitschule close to the train station. Tojo Theater is also subsidised by the city of Bern, but the theatre does not have the financial means to pay the performing groups. It is an architectural specialty of the old town of Bern that the houses have cellars with entrances over stairs directly from the streets. Unique to Bern, some of these cellars have been transformed into theatres – the first one in 1949.

Amateur and folk theatre are found predominantly outside the city and are very common in the canton of Bern. However, some of the amateur and folk theatre companies show their productions in the city. Das Theater an der Effingerstrasse, finally, equipped with 200 seats, creates about eight new plays every season, which are also shown in succession (*ensuite*). It is owned by a private person but is still subsidised with EUR 250,000 per year by the city of Bern.

DEBRECEN

Magdolna Balkány

History and general information

Debrecen is situated in the Eastern part of Hungary on the Great Plain. It is the second largest city (207,308 inhabitants in 2010) after Budapest (1,776,000 inhabitants, including the outskirts, 3,300,000), in a country of 10 million people. The territory of the city comprises 461.65 km², with a population density of 443/km². Debrecen is the capital city of the Hajdú-Bihar County but because of its university, monuments of historic significance, hospitals and international airport, it is the regional centre in the fields of science, technology, culture, health and transport. There are three other cities of historic and cultural importance in the region with their own city theatres: Nyíregyháza (119,000 inhabitants) 50 km away, Miskolc (165,321 inhabitants) 100 km away and Eger (56,330 inhabitants) 120 km away. We have to mention Oradea in Romania as well, with its Hungarian-speaking population, Hungarian-speaking university and theatre. It is now easily accessible from Debrecen (70 km, 1 hour), which is important because of the vivid industrial, tourist and cultural (among them theatrical) relations between the two cities and countries.

Budapest, the capital of Hungary, residence of all major administrative and cultural institutions, is 230 km to the West and can be reached in 2.5 hours both by train and car. It is not a rare phenomenon for the people in the Debrecen region to travel to the metropolitan city to attend its cultural programme, especially musical and theatre events.

The city and its region were already inhabited by various ethnic groups in ancient times as well as at the arrival of the conquering Hungarian tribes in the 9th century. The name of the city occurred first in 1235 as Debrezun. By the early 16th century, Debrecen was an important market town, serving trade between Poland and Transylvania; its merchants traded in wine, wheat, cattle and horses both to the west (Germany) and to the east (Russia).

During the Ottoman period in Hungary (1541–1693), Debrecen, located close to the border and without city walls, often found itself in difficult situations. It was under the rule of either the Ottoman Empire or the Catholic Habsburgs or the principals of Transylvania. This made its citizens open-minded and Debrecen embraced the Protestant Reformation quite early. The city has been called the “Calvinist Rome” because of the Reformed College founded here in 1538 and because for centuries it has been the most eastern headquarters of the Reformation. The citizens of the town were Hungarian Calvinists, called *cívís*, possessing strong puritan ethics and mentality. (The Roman Catholic Church was only offered permission to return to Debrecen in 1715.)

Debrecen has been declared the capital of the country twice in history – first during the Revolution and War of Independence of 1848/49 and again at the end of World War II in 1944. In 1849, the Hungarian revolutionary government moved from the Pest-Buda area to Debrecen. In 1857, the railway line between Budapest and Debrecen was completed. New schools, hospitals, churches, factories, mills were built, banks and insurance companies settled in the city. Debrecen began to look like a modern city. As a successor to the Reformed College, the new Hungarian Royal University was founded in Debrecen 1912.



The Main Square of Debrecen with the Great Calvinist Church. Photo: Csonka Zoltán, used with permission.

After World War I, Hungary lost two-thirds of its former territory and regional centres, and Debrecen once again found itself situated close to the border of the country. However, tourism offered a chance for development. Hortobágy, the largest natural grassland of Europe, owned by the city, became a tourist attraction.

During World War II, Debrecen was almost completely destroyed. After 1944, the new Communist government of Hungary nationalised the institutions and real estate of the city and private properties were also taken into the public domain. Half of the territory of Debrecen was annexed to nearby towns; the city also lost its rights over Hortobágy. In the 1960s and 1970s, the city began to develop again and since the political and economic changes in 1990, Debrecen has made serious and successful attempts to become a regional centre for international projects of science, innovation and technology, sport events, creating links between east and west.

Education has been a decisive factor in the history of Debrecen. There are more than ten high schools in the city, the Debrecen Reformed Theological Academy at the Reformed College and the University of Debrecen with seventeen faculties has 32,000 students out of which 3,500 come from all over the world. The city now has an international atmosphere. Many students keep staying on after having gained their degree. The university and the training hospitals employ approximately 7,000 high-qualified workers, but many find jobs at multinational companies settled in the city. And many people find jobs in the service industry.

Cultural infrastructure

The Great Calvinist Church (Nagytemplom) and the Reformed College (Debreceni Református Kollégium) are not only symbols of the city but stand at its very centre in terms of location, architecture, history and culture. The church and the main square also function as cultural sites, giving room for social events, concerts, high-profile dance and theatre performances, and street festivals. The Reformed College is a historic landmark, but serves as a cultural centre, too. It is the home of the theological academy, a high school and a museum possessing a collection of 17,000 items from the history of the Reformed Church and the College. Its library owns distinctive book rarities and is an important archives of the history of the city.

As one of the intellectual hubs of Hungary, Debrecen has established a network of cultural institutions that host all sorts of activities and organise thousands of programmes annually. All forms of art (music, fine arts, theatre and film) are well represented in the city. There are two key institutions at the core of activities: the Főnix Event Organizing NPO (Főnix rendezvényszervező közhasznú nonprofit kft.) and the Debrecen Community Centre (Debreceni Művelődési Központ).

The Főnix, in charge of the major cultural events and festivals of the city, is based at the Kölcsey Conference Center (Kölcsey Központ), one of the largest in the country, which was opened in 2006. Its large expandable conference/music hall hosts 750 to 1,100 people. It has presented a great number of national and international stars during the years in the fields of music, theatre and professional exhibitions. The Főnix Hall (Főnix Csarnok), opened in 2002, with a capacity of 8,500 seats, is a venue for national and international sports games as well as large scale theatre and dance performances and music concerts. The Főnix is also responsible for organising various large scale outdoor programmes and local and international festivals such as the famous Flower Parade (Debreceni Virágkarnevál), the International Festival of Military Bands (Nemzetközi Katonazenekari Fesztivál Debrecen), the Béla Bartók International Choir Competition and Folklore Festival (Bartók Béla Nemzetközi Kórusverseny és Folklórfesztivál), the Debrecen Jazz Days (Debreceni Jazznapok), the Poetry Festival (Költészeti Fesztivál) and the Days of Literature (Debreceni Irodalmi Napok). A spectacular venue for music and theatre performances is the renowned Open-Air Theatre at the heart of the Great Park (Nagyerdei Szabadtéri Színpad).

The Debrecen Community Centre can be found in six branches and a youth house in various neighbourhoods in the city. It also has a special enterprise the House of Traditional Handcrafts (Timárház – Kézművesek Háza). The multifunctional buildings of the Debrecen Community Centre are usually equipped with theatre halls (100–200 seats), libraries, exhibition spaces, movies as well as rooms for leisure clubs, family programmes and various other activities. Their basic function is to strengthen the communities.

In the field of visual arts, the Déri Museum (Déri Múzeum) has almost a hundred years of history. The museum also presents evenings of literature and theatre performances in its main hall (120 seats). In a separate building, there is the Ferenc Medgyessy Memorial Museum (Medgyessy Ferenc Emlékmúzeum), where the works of one of the most important Hungarian sculptors of the 20th century as well as temporary individual and collective exhibitions of local artists are on display. MODEM (Modern és Kortárs Művészeti Központ), an art gallery and centre of modern and contemporary fine art renowned not only in Hungary but in Central and Eastern Europe, was opened in 2006. It has a space of 3000 m² on three levels for exhibitions of thematic shows. MODEM also functions as a cultural centre, hosting and organising concerts, screenings of films, alternative theatre performances as well as seminars, conferences and courses of museum pedagogy. Its smaller branch, Múterem Galéria, hosts exhibitions mostly of local artists in a beautifully renovated old civic house.

Another key organisation of the city, the Debrecen Kodály Philharmonics (Kodály Filharmónia Debrecen), consists of two professional ensembles: the Debrecen Philharmonic Orchestra (Kodály Filharmonikusok Debrecen) and the Debrecen Kodály Choir (Kodály Kórus Debrecen). Both perform regularly in Debrecen, in other cities in Hungary and abroad. Let us mention some of the most popular musical venues in Debrecen. Bartók Hall (Bartók terem) is a marvelous place for classical concerts at the very centre of the city (500 seats). The main hall of the university (400 seats) and the Liszt Hall (Liszt terem) of the Faculty of Music (220 seats) also serve as sites for classical music concerts. Concerts also take place at the protestant Great Church (2000 seats) and the Catholic Szent Anna Church (Szent Anna Székesegyház, 200 seats). There are some outdoor places for music like the Main Square, Déri Square, the City Hall and the Open-Air Stage in the Great Park.

Theatre infrastructure

If asked about the theatre, most inhabitants of Debrecen would automatically mention the Csokonai National Theatre (Csokonai Nemzeti Színház), named after the first important poet and playwright of the Modern Age, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773–1805), who was born and lived in Debrecen. Its main building in romantic style, built by the city in its very centre in 1865, is the embodiment of the notion of “theatre” for many. Its permanent company with artists, popular in the city, is featured in an average of 350 performances annually, attended mostly by intellectuals at least 4–6 times a

year. Families with small children would mention the Vojtina Puppet Theatre, too. And indeed, these theatres, the Csokonai and the Vojtina – the so-called official theatres of the city (subsidised jointly by the central and the local governments and operated and supervised by the municipality) – are at the core of the theatre field.

GRONINGEN

Hans van Maanen and Antine Zijlstra

History and general information

Groningen is the capital city of the Province of Groningen, situated in the north of the Netherlands. Speaking of this “north” a set of three provinces is meant: Friesland, Drenthe and Groningen. The three provinces together take up 27% of the surface of the country and represent a bit more than 10% of the Dutch population (which is about 16 million in total). The region is a relatively rural area in the highly urbanised Netherlands.

With 190,000 inhabitants (2010/11), the City of Groningen is by far the biggest city in the northern area. It is a relatively small and dense city with 2,500 inhabitants per km². Sixty kilometres to the West, Leeuwarden, the capital of the province of Friesland has about 98,000 inhabitants and 30 kilometres to the South, the capital of Drenthe, Assen, about 65,000. Almost as a consequence, the city of Groningen has become the cultural centre of the northern part of the Netherlands.

Groningen is one of rather many typical Dutch cities that experienced their most flowering time in the 17th century (the Dutch golden age), a period that can still be recognised in the canals around the inner city, the old houses of merchants, a number of almshouses the ruling patricians established and some big protestant (or made protestant) churches. As all Dutch cities north of the River Rhine, Groningen became a protestant city after the reformation, where the preachers were in power and consequently playing or watching theatre was forbidden till the mid-18th century. During several centuries all trade from the province of Groningen, especially in agricultural products, had to be done via the city, mentioned for this reason as a Stapelplaats (Stacking place).

The first written evidence of Groningen is to be found in 1040, when king Hendrik III gave the land and villa Gruoninga (Groningen) to the church. It gained a dominant central function for the region, in both economic and political sense. After 1500 Groningen lost its position as a city-state, but it grew seriously in the seventeenth century through trade in agricultural and livestock-products, as well as peat. In 1795 the old Republic of Dutch Provinces ended, to become a part of the French empire till 1814. From then on

the Netherlands started to become a kingdom (till 1830 with Flanders as a part of it); trade and welfare started growing again, but the city of Groningen did not expand again till 1850, when Groningen profited from industrialisation.

Besides its economic position, the city of Groningen had also an important function as the cultural centre in the north of the Netherlands. In 1614 the university was founded (as the second one after Leiden, 1575). More than half of the professors were German, thereby making clear the close relations between Groningen and the north-western part of Germany. In the following centuries schools for visual arts (established in 1798) and music (established in 1966) got a place in the cultural infrastructure of the city.

In the first half of the 20th century, Groningen kept growing again: the number of residents doubled from 66,500 in 1900 to 150,000 in the 1960s. At the beginning of the new millennium, during a new wave of urbanisation the population approached the 200,000. Also the number of students at the university grew strong, from 2,000 around 1950 to more than 25,000 nowadays.

Cultural infrastructure

Whoever arrives in Groningen by train cannot miss the Groninger Museum, designed by Alessandro Mendini particularly to exhibit contemporary art, because it forms the entrance to the south of the inner city. Before entering the city, however, going half a mile eastward the big concert hall the Oosterpoort, built in the 1970s, can be found. And whoever goes from there to the north, following the old city canals that enclose the inner city, arrives at the main theatre hall, the Stadsschouwburg, built at the end of the nineteenth century (1891).

Besides these three cultural bastions, in the very centre of the city the main building of the university (Neo-renaissance from 1906) and its library (1980s) are located opposite each other in the Academy Square (Academieplein). And directly around the corner the central city library can be found. Some miles further, more or less on the outskirts of the city, Martiniplaza is situated, a big congress, sports, event and theatre hall.

In the field of music, two venues already mentioned are important, Martiniplaza, which host in its 1,500-seat hall musicals and big popular shows, and the Oosterpoort which is the home base of the Noord Nederland Orkest (Northern Dutch Orchestra) the only full symphony orchestra in the North and host of other classical as well as pop concerts in its two halls (1,500 and 450 seats) on a day-to-day basis.

The Oosterpoort is, as said, available for pop music, particularly for the bigger acts. Smaller, newer or more underground bands have two other stages at their disposal: Simplon and Vera, the latter situated in an old mansion in the very centre of the city, the first one in an old factory, about a ten-minute walk from the central market place.

Besides a music school for children and adults, there is the academy of music (Prins Claus Conservatory) for vocational training. Finally two festivals for pop music take place (Noorderslag/Eurosonic and Bevrijdingsfestival), as well as one for classical music (Peter de Grote Festival), all on a yearly basis.

In the field of museums and visual art, besides the Groninger Museum, three other institutions can be found in the city: Het Grafisch Museum (Graphic Museum); Noordelijk Scheepvaartmuseum (Northern Maritime Museum) and Het Nederlands Stripmuseum (Dutch Comic Book Museum). Two other major institutions still need to be mentioned: the Minerva Art Academy with its master's education department the Frank Mohr Institute as well as the (inter)nationally known Noorderlicht photo exhibition that is presented every second year in the city of Groningen (the years in between the exhibitions take place in the province of Friesland).



The central square of Groningen, *Grote Markt*, with the Grand Theatre. Photo: Grand Theatre, used with permission.

Theatre infrastructure

The city theatre company for the north is the Noord Nederlands Toneel (NNT, Dutch Northern Theatre), which is based in Groningen. The company has its own building De Machinefabriek, with offices, workplaces, rehearsing rooms and a hall for 170 visitors. The large productions of the NNT, however, always première in the Stadsschouwburg, the city theatre hall, and have a run of about 10 performances in this venue before they start touring for another 20 to 40 performances.

Besides the NNT, three other organisations based in Groningen are financed on the national level: 1) the Citadel, a theatre company for children that shows a part of its performances at its own small venue (70 seats), but mostly plays at schools; 2) the Northern Dutch Dance Theatre (NND) that premières its productions in the Stadsschouwburg, but mostly tours around the country; 3) the Grand Theatre, which

is a venue subsidised by the city, but also a production house and international laboratory.² Finally, a second dance company, Guy & Roni, is indirectly subsidised on the state level, namely through the Netherlands Funds for the Stage Arts. These are the full professional companies that are based in Groningen, but play, with the exception of the Citadel, 60% (NNT) to 90% of their performances elsewhere.

The leading stage in Groningen is the Stadsschouwburg, a city theatre hall of 650 seats, built in 1891, just at the outside of the old inner city. Yearly, the Stadsschouwburg sells 70,000 tickets for 160 theatre performances of about 100 different productions. About twenty of those performances are played by the NNT, based on two or three different productions. The backdoor of the Stadsschouwburg, leads to the Kruithuis, a 100-seat venue with a flat floor, where yearly 9,000 visits are paid to 90 performances.

On the outskirts of the city there is a big venue, Martiniplaza, coupled with a conference centre and basketball hall, where commercial shows are presented, varying from children musicals to magic shows and from Eastern European opera to Ice dancing, in total a 60 theatre performances per year, based on 20 different productions. Martiniplaza, which is more entertainment-oriented and has a hall with 1,500 seats, and sells for only 60 performances the same number of tickets as the Stadsschouwburg for 160.

In the very centre of the city, on the Grote Markt ("the big market") a theatre venue now exists after the empty Grand Theatre, a cinema built in 1929, was squatted in the beginning of the 1980s and rebuilt into a theatre with two halls, one with a flat floor and 170 seats and one with semi-flat floor with 125 seats. Till 2013 it was subsidised by the local government for its functioning as a stage and by the ministry for its functioning as a production house. In the domain of theatre, the Grand Theatre programmes yearly 80 new and renewing small scale performances, for which about 8,000 tickets are sold. In the hall of the NNT, the Machinefabriek, 75 performances are played for 4,000 visitors a year. Another 200 semi-professional performances take place in a variety of smaller, often incidental, venues for 20,000 visitors.

In Groningen, six theatre festivals take place every year. Four of them can be considered small-scale, one middle-scale and one large-scale.

While the middle-scale Jonge Harten Festival, for young people up to 28 years of age, is bigger than most of the others with more than 50 performances in several venues in the city, the summer festival, Noorderzon (Noorderzon Performing Arts Festival), taking place in a park on the edge of the inner city (and making use of some of the regular venues as well) during the last two weeks of August every year, is the biggest theatre festival in the city. The main programme, consisting of 90 theatre performances of 25 different shows, attracts 12,000 visitors a year. There is also a rich side programme of hundreds of small acts on the festival grounds.

² All three organisations lost their national subsidy in January 2013, after a serious cut in cultural subsidisation by the State.

MARIBOR

Ksenija Repina Kramberger

History and general information

With 110,000 inhabitants, Maribor is the second largest city in Slovenia. It is situated on the crossroads of the routes from Central to South-Eastern Europe and from western Central Europe to the Pannonia Basin. It is a university town, and the industrial, financial, administrative, educational, cultural, trade and tourist centre of north-eastern Slovenia. The area of the municipality of Maribor is 147.5 km². Prior to Slovenian independence, Maribor was economically very developed – particularly in the industrial sector, but the disintegration of the unified Yugoslav market, the loss of the Eastern European market and the transition to the market economy after 1991 were, with a wave of bankruptcies, too big of a shock. The erstwhile large companies mostly stopped working or were sometimes transformed. A complete social and economic restructuring did not take place. Unemployment in Maribor is consistently well above the Slovenian average (for example, in July 2012 at 17.2%, Slovenia 12%). At the moment, most of the city's revenue comes from services. In the last few years, commerce has particularly developed (new shopping centres), as has the banking-financial sector. Tourism is increasingly important.

Archeological sites from the Neolithic era, urn graves, Celtic findings and the Roman Villa Rustica are the oldest traces of the settlement in the territory of present-day Maribor. In 1164, the Carinthian Duke Bernhard Speinheim had the first stronghold built on the Piramida Hill and called it a Castle in the March, or Burg in der Mark. The settlement that appeared at the foot of the hill was called Markburg. In 1254, Maribor is mentioned as a town with city rights. Following the victory of Rudolph of Habsburg over Ottokar II in 1278, Maribor started to develop. At the end of the 17th century, the plague killed a third of the population.

In the 18th century, the city slowly completed and upgraded its qualities – in 1758 the Jesuits established a grammar school, in 1782 Maribor got its main school, and in 1795 the first printing house. The first home for theatre in Maribor, intended for the local amateur and visiting professional thespians, was established in 1785. A more permanent solution was found in 1805.

The city was significantly marked by the construction of the Southern Railway from Vienna to Trieste in 1846. The railway accelerated the development of industry. With the construction of additional traffic infrastructure (roads and bridges), the city lost its mediaeval layout, particularly the part of town known as Lent, where a 400-year-old vine is still growing – the oldest in the world.

In 1859, the bishop Anton Martin Slomšek transferred the seat of the Lavantine diocese from St Andrä in Carinthia to Maribor, and with the theological seminary, the city got its first post-secondary school. In 1852, a theatre building was constructed (for plays in German), and in 1899, the Slovenians built Narodni dom, the centre of their political, economic and cultural life. The establishment of the Maribor Drama Society in 1909 represents the beginning of the permanent Slovenian professional theatre.

After World War I, Maribor experienced excellent development in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. It became an important administrative centre of north-eastern Slovenia and established itself particularly with a strong textile industry. In the years following World War I, a Slovenian administration was formed, and Slovenian was introduced into school and became the official language.

The Nazi army attacked Yugoslavia in 1941 and occupied Maribor. Slovenian schools, cultural and educational institutions were abolished, the development and industry stopped. The Slovenian economy was destroyed, as was the city itself as a consequence of attacks and bombardments. The liberation of Maribor on 9 May 1945 was followed by years of reconstruction and eventually the consequences of the war were removed. The companies in the period of self-managing socialism employed people mostly according to social criteria and thus created the working class of the new era. In 1975, the University of Maribor was founded.

For a long part of the 20th century, Maribor was at the top of the Yugoslav industrial production. But this didn't work in its favour, because it only developed in the industrial sense. The consequences of this one-sided development were sorely seen at the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the loss of the important Yugoslav market. In the 1990s, the city thus found itself in distress. The decline of once enormous factories, unemployment and migration of the inhabitants contributed to the fact that the pulse of the city practically stopped for a while. As the table below shows, the population of Maribor is steadily declining.

Year	1991	1996	2002	2004	2007	2009	2011	2012
No. of inhabitants	119828	116147	110668	112558	119071	112640	111730	110946

Cultural infrastructure

Given its geographical size, Maribor is culturally active, but not flourishing. The city has a number of different cultural institutions. Because the city is small, all the cultural institutions are at "an arm's length", but it is interesting that despite the smallness, no particular surplus in co-operation and association of institutions is observed and nor did it occur even during the time of the Maribor – European Capital of Culture (2012).

Among the most important museums and galleries in the city are: Maribor Castle, which houses the Maribor Regional Museum with its collections on archaeology, ethnology and the wider cultural history of the Maribor region and its surroundings; the UGM Maribor Art Gallery, established in 1954, and the Museum of National Liberation



View of Lent – the old part of Maribor – today. Photo: Luka Cajnkar, used with permission.

Maribor, where we can find rich museum collections with more than 10,000 items from World War II. In addition, Maribor has the Betnava Mansion – the museum of the Maribor Archdiocese with a permanent exposition of its religious, social and cultural heritage.

Theatre infrastructure

There are three public institutions in Maribor that cover most of its theatrical activity: the Slovene National Theatre (SNG) Maribor, the Narodni dom Maribor and the Puppet Theatre Maribor. They have their own premises, while the private companies usually do not. Their performances are thus created in collaboration with the SNG, the Narodni dom and other venues.

SNG Maribor is the largest public cultural institution in Maribor and in Slovenia. It is the only theatre house in Slovenia with drama, opera and ballet as well as a symphony orchestra. The Maribor Theatre Festival (Slovenian name: Festival Borštnikovo srečanje – FBS, usually held in October) is also a part of the SNG Maribor. It is a national festival, competitive in its concept. At the end, awards are conferred for the best performances, director, actors, music and other artistic achievements. Every year, the Borštnik Ring Award is given to honour the lifetime acting achievement of an actor or an actress. The SNG Maribor is also the most important venue in Maribor for classical music.

The 1974/75 season is considered as the first professional season of the Puppet Theatre Maribor, established with the objective to regularly prepare and perform puppet shows

for children (and adults) at the home theatre as well as all over Slovenia and abroad. In the 2010/2011 season, they played 20 different productions (266 performances). The Puppet Theatre Maribor also organises Summer Puppet Pier (Poletni lutkovni pristan), an international puppet festival whose slogan is “filled with playfulness and sensitivity”.

The Narodni dom Maribor cultural centre is a public institution founded in September 1992 by the Municipality of Maribor. It first started working in the historic building of the Rotovž (City Hall), but later moved to the premises of the Narodni dom (built in 1899). It offers a varied cultural programme for all ages and tastes: classical concerts, contemporary music events, theatre programme for children, youth and adults, and in particular, “light” forms of entertainment (stand-up comedy, etc.). The Narodni dom also organises the Lent Festival. The international multi-cultural festival takes place at the beginning of summer and offers a varied selection of events: jazz, rock, pop, classical and world music concerts, evenings with singers-songwriters, spoken theatre, puppet and dance performances, creative workshops for children, etc.

TARTU

Hedi-Liis Toome

History and general information

Situated in the southern part of the Estonia, Tartu, with approximately 100,000 inhabitants, is the second biggest city in a country of 1.29 million inhabitants. With the biggest and oldest university in Estonia, the University of Tartu (about 20,000 students), as well as with several other higher education institutions, Tartu is the centre of educational life of Estonia. It is also the cultural centre of the southern part of the country and most important in offering services and commercial facilities in the region. The slogan of Tartu is “the city of good thoughts” which points to the university and the large amount of young people who bring new and fresh ideas and to a city that offers a peaceful and youthful living environment.

Tartu is 187 km away from the capital city Tallinn (population 450,000) and 245 km from Riga, the capital of Latvia. There has always been some joking between the two biggest Estonian cities. The people living in Tallinn find Tartu small and boring, the people living in Tartu find the capital too busy and stressful.

Tartu was first mentioned in 1030 after Jaroslav the Wise conquered it; already in 1061 the locals, that is, The people living in this area conquered Tartu back. From the 13th century until 1918, the city was occupied by the German Order, Kings of Poland, Kings of Sweden and Russian tsars. During the so-called “good old Swedish time” of the 17th century, the University of Tartu was founded in 1632 by the Swedish King Gustav

II Adolf. The university has been one the landmarks of Tartu ever since. During the Swedish-Russian war the university was moved away from Tartu and was also closed down for some time, but it was reopened as a German-speaking university in 1802. Tartu became an important science centre of the Russian Empire – the new observatory was built as well as the medical clinic, library and botanical garden. Tartu was dubbed the Athens of Emajõgi (after the river going through Tartu); in the 19th century, Tartu was the centre of intellectual life in Estonia.

In 1918 the Republic of Estonia was announced. It lasted until 1940, when Estonia was occupied by Russia. During the Soviet Occupation, Tartu was a closed city because of the aerodrome for Russian bombers at the outskirts of the city, which also inhibited the development of the city.



Tartu's Old Town. Photo: Jaak Nilson, used with permission.

Cultural infrastructure

The main cultural organisations located in Tartu are the Estonian National Museum (Eesti rahva muuseum), the Vanemuine Concert Hall (the biggest in the southern part of the country), the AHHA Science Centre and the Vanemuine Theatre. There are also other museums, several theatre venues, nightclubs and discos, more alternative clubs for small live music concerts and cinemas for both mainstream movies and arthouse films.

Almost all the cultural venues (also many of the university buildings as well as working offices) and most of other entertainment facilities (bars, pubs, restaurants) are located in the centre or around it, so the streets are always lively, full of small cafés and bars for eating during the day and for having a drink in the evening, creating a lively and youthful atmosphere in the city.

Being the centre of the southern part of the country, Tartu offers all types of cultural activities. In the years 2009–2010 the people living in the Tartu county were the most active in going to the theatre, opera and ballet in the entire country.

The table below shows the participation in cultural activities in Tartu. Cinema has become the most visited art form because of its reasonable ticket price (average EUR 4.10) and the variety of the film genres (from Hollywood to European art house). There is also a high number of visits to the museums, also due to the fact that the Estonian National Museum is located in Tartu and visited by people from all over Estonia as well as tourists. There is hardly any data on the events in the popular art field (pop music concerts, etc.).

The cultural supply and demand of Tartu in 2011

Artistic activities	Number of providers	Visits
Theatre visits (professional and amateur)	8 organisations (10 venues)	159,113**
Classical music concerts	1 organisation* (4 venues)	60,2
Museums	18	170,627
Galleries	4	46,756
Libraries	4	2,454,850 books borrowed
Cinemas	4 organisations (9 halls)	497,665

Notes. *There is no data on popular music concerts or other organisations that produce classical music concerts.
**Only visits to professional theatre are included.

The high attendance of cultural events could be seen as a result of Tartu as a relatively youthful city with lot of students and highly educated people.

Theatre infrastructure

Tartu is the cradle of Estonian theatre, both amateur and professional. The première of *Saaremaa onupoeg* [Cousin from Saaremaa], the first play performed in Estonian by amateurs in 1870 is considered the birth of Estonian national theatre. Beforehand,

theatre had mostly been performed in German. Likewise, the first professional theatre in Estonia – Vanemuine – was founded in 1906. For this reason, Tartu and Vanemuine have always been important factors in the theatre life of Estonia. During the Soviet occupation, Vanemuine was the only theatre in the Soviet Union to keep performing three types of theatre (spoken, musical, dance) and is still the only three-type theatre in Estonia. At the end of 1960s, theatre innovation took place in Vanemuine.

Tartu is a home for three professional theatres: 1) Vanemuine: as stated, the only theatre in Estonia that produces music, dance and spoken theatre and is the most subsidised theatre after the National Opera in Tallinn, the only national theatre in Estonia; 2) Tartu New Theatre (TNT), a small private project theatre with its own venue but without a permanent troupe; Emajõe Summer Theatre (ESM), a project theatre without a troupe or a venue which produces sporadically, mainly summer performances in open air. There are also two amateur theatres, which do not have their own venue. They are mainly supported by the municipality and apply for project-based funds to produce performances.

The city also supports the annual national theatre festival DRAAMA because this is considered as one of the image building events of Tartu. Whereas the state supports the theatres in general, the municipality only subsidises local theatrical events that have direct economic value for the city.

The theatres in Tartu mainly use guest directors – even Vanemuine, which has permanent troupes for three theatre types but only two official directors (both for spoken theatre). The relationship between the theatres is co-operational, which is also possible because Vanemuine, having the leading position, does not see the others as competitors.

TYNESIDE

Natalie Querol

Tyneside sits within the county of Tyne & Wear in the north-east of England. It comprises four local authority areas bordering the River Tyne: Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside to the north, and Gateshead and South Tyneside to the south. With a total population of 829,300 (in the 2011 census), Tyneside accounts for 80% of the population of Tyne & Wear. Tyneside has been considered as a whole for this study because its four urban areas are continuous and form a single conurbation. Across the Tyne, Newcastle and Gateshead are connected by ten bridges, eight of which are nestled along a one-mile stretch of river. North Tyneside and South Tyneside are connected by a traffic tunnel, a pedestrian tunnel and a ferry.

History and general information on Tyneside and its cultural infrastructure

Much of what is now Tyneside was first recorded as settlements during the Roman occupation in the 2nd century AD. The area marked the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire, with Hadrian's Wall running from Wallsend (literally the wall's end) in North Tyneside and stretching for 73 miles.

Because of its strategic position, Robert Curthose, son of William the Conqueror, built a castle high above the banks of the Tyne in 1080 from which Newcastle took its name. The city remained England's northern fortress throughout the middle ages with high stone walls erected to defend it from Scottish invaders.

From the 14th century, coal dug from mines across Tyneside was exported from the port of Newcastle and over the following centuries industry flourished with coal fuelling the development of the steel industry, the railways and ship building. At its peak the Tyneside shipyards were one of the largest centres of shipbuilding in the world. During the 1970s and 1980s there was major decline in the industries upon which Tyneside's success had been based and high unemployment rates led to social unrest with strikes and rioting in depressed areas. The 1990s saw Tyneside embark on a dramatic period of culture-led regeneration. Perhaps most notable was the development of Newcastle and Gateshead's industrial quaysides into a bustling visitor destination packed with bars, restaurants and major cultural attractions including Live Theatre, the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and Sage Gateshead. Visible in much of present-day Tyneside's cultural production are both the memory of the area's industrial power and decline, and the world class ambitions of its contemporary infrastructure.

Sport is an important part of life in Tyneside. The Premier League football club Newcastle United is supported by the "Toon Army" and regularly attracts 50,000 people to home games at their ground St James's Park. Gateshead International Stadium regularly hosts international athletics meetings including European Championships and since 1981 the Great North Run, now one of the largest half marathons in the world, has been held in Tyneside. It is accompanied year-round by the Great North Run Cultural Programme with visual art, film and live performances.

Tyneside is host to a multitude of festivals many of which have been supported by the NewcastleGateshead Initiative, a destination marketing agency. Major festivals that include significant artistic content include Mouth of the Tyne Festival, VAMOS, the Late Shows, Juice, Enchanted Parks and GIFT.

A notable development since the recession began in 2008 has been the transformation of empty office buildings into artist-led spaces. Whilst there have been temporary examples of this happening across the area it has been most successful in Newcastle with organisations such as White Box Projects, the New Bridge Project and Breeze Creatives each providing space for hundreds of artists. In addition since 2013 a fringe theatre scene, previously virtually non-existent in the north-east, has started to emerge.

Theatre infrastructure in Tyneside

The main venues in Tyneside host and produce a variety of performance work, including new writing, classic plays, visual theatre, musicals, dance and opera. These



The River Tyne and Gateshead Millennium Bridge connecting Gateshead and Newcastle. Photo: Maja Šorli, used with permission.

performances are presented by commercial touring companies, subsidised touring companies, subsidised producing venues and independent companies, local emerging artists and amateur companies. Audiences that attend theatre and dance performances in Tyneside tend to visit more than one venue. The Theatre Royal, in Newcastle, functions as a fulcrum of local theatrical activity. Regular ticket prices range from £5 for work by emerging artists to £42 for top price tickets to musicals at the Theatre Royal. This compares with an average price for a top-priced seat for a show in London's West End of £70, and a regular cinema ticket price in Tyneside of £7.95.

The commercial and subsidised theatre ecologies in Tyneside (and across the UK) are relatively porous in that subsidised shows can be found in commercial venues and vice versa, performers and technicians often work across both sectors, and it is feasible for a production to begin its life with a subsidised production process and tour before going on to commercial success. By contrast, the divide between professional (commercial and subsidised) theatre and amateur theatre is relatively impermeable with the main exception being that amateur companies that do not have their own venues will often hire professionally run venues for their performances. Some subsidised venues make a point in marketing materials of explaining that these amateur performances are hires and not part of their artistic programme.

Receiving houses

The established receiving houses in Tyneside are Dance City, the Customs House, Newcastle Theatre Royal, the Tyne Theatre and Opera House and the Playhouse, Whitley Bay. Of these, Dance City and Customs House are unusual. Dance City is unique in that it programmes only contemporary dance, has only 225 seats, is heavily subsidised (receiving amongst other subsidy £553,857 per annum from Arts Council England)³ and, in addition to presenting national and international companies on tour, has a commitment to presenting work by local artists whom it also supports with commissions and rehearsal space. The Customs House is the only professionally-run theatre in South Tyneside and it has three performance spaces: the mainhouse (441 seats), the studio (120 capacity) and the Community Room. The venue also includes a cinema and a gallery. The venue receives no subsidy from Arts Council England and therefore runs the main house on a commercial basis, however, it also presents work by local artists in the smaller spaces. Whilst primarily a receiving house, the Customs House does produce its own panto each Christmas (pantomime, a traditional British form of broadly comic family theatre) as well as occasional other productions.

The other three are commercial venues with capacities of 1294, 1100 and 638, respectively, and none of them is in receipt of core funding from Arts Council England. The Theatre Royal primarily presents large scale touring productions often coming out of London's National Theatre and West End. These include spoken theatre, musicals, opera and large-scale dance. A significant proportion of these productions whilst touring on a commercial basis were made originally with public subsidy.

Tyne Theatre and Opera House and the Playhouse, Whitley Bay present more varied programmes including stand-up comedy from artists familiar from TV, concerts by both original artists and tribute bands, dance, straight plays and musicals. The Playhouse, Whitley Bay has an arrangement with its landlords, North Tyneside Council, which requires that they occasionally host performances programmed by the council that might not otherwise appear in the programme, such as choreographer Jasmin Vardimon's *Freedom*.

Producing houses

Northern Stage is the largest producing house in Tyneside and receives public subsidy including £1,562,496 per annum from Arts Council England. It has three performance spaces: Stage One (447 capacity); Stage Two (180 capacity), now used predominantly as a rehearsal space; and Stage Three (80 capacity), used for occasional small scale performances on tour or by local artists. The theatre produces a number of new shows each year, two of which are Christmas shows, one for children aged six and under and

³ All funding figures refer to annual funding agreed for the period 2015–2018. The currency in United Kingdom is British Pound. The currency rate in 2014 was approx. EUR 1 = £0.81.

one for the whole family. In addition to in-house productions and co-productions, Northern Stage include performances by visiting companies throughout the year on their programme.

Live Theatre is based in an old bonded warehouse on Newcastle's Quayside. It receives £626,723 per annum from Arts Council England and has two performance spaces: a main house with a capacity of 160, including a combination of cabaret and fixed seating, and a flexible 60-seat studio. The company produces several new productions each year, some of which transfer to other UK venues. In addition, it hosts a year-round programme of performances by visiting companies.

Both Northern Stage and Live Theatre have placed significant emphasis on artist development in recent years.

Festivals and fringe theatre

Whilst there are many cultural festivals in Tyneside that include theatrical elements, only one is specifically dedicated to theatre. The Gateshead International Festival of Theatre (GIFT) is an annual event that celebrates contemporary theatre practices. The programme includes work by local, national and international artists and takes place in venues and site-specific spaces across Gateshead. GIFT requires subsidy but currently has no regular funding so is dependent upon the success of funding applications each year.

There have long been alternative spaces that independent artists have used for ad hoc theatrical performances, particularly in Newcastle: the Cumberland Arms, the Bridge Hotel and the Literary and Philosophical Society have all seen numerous performances over the years. In recent times, however, the fringe theatre scene has been growing rapidly and there is now a dedicated fringe venue – Alphabetti Theatre.

Independent theatre companies

Historically, there were very few independent theatre companies based in Tyneside, but a significant increase in support for artists from agencies and venues across the region over the last few years has led to more and more companies starting up in and moving into the area. There are three Tyneside-based companies dedicated primarily to creating and touring theatre and dance that are in receipt of revenue funding from Arts Council England (ACE). Zende specialise in new writing combined with physical elements and receive £100,678 annually; Open Clasp work with women's groups in the community to make work that reflects their experiences and receive £100,000 annually; Ballet Lorent make dance performances sometimes for adults, sometimes for children and tour to mid scale venues across the UK, their ACE funding is £239,567 annually.

It is more difficult to quantify the unfunded companies in the area as they are constantly changing but a conservative estimate would put the number of companies at about thirty. Most companies, in keeping with the programmes of the main theatres, specialise in either new writing or dance with relatively few exploring physical or visual theatre, puppetry or musicals.

Amateur theatres and theatre companies

There is a thriving amateur theatre scene in Tyneside with a host of amateur theatre, musical and operatic societies, several of which have their own venues. Of these, the People's Theatre is the largest. Based in Heaton just outside Newcastle, the People's Theatre stages up to twelve productions each year in their 500-seat auditorium and a further three in their 90-seat studio. Other dedicated amateur venues include the Westovian Theatre in South Tyneside, the Little Theatre Gateshead and Tynemouth Priory Theatre in North Tyneside. The programmes of these amateur theatres are made up almost entirely of existing plays and musicals.