
Pay it forward

Emotional connection fuels donations

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“During our 2016/2017 pantomime we raised £10,000 from bucket collections to enable disadvantaged groups to attend our 2017/2018 pantomime.”

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Tron Theatre



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Pay it Forward

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The Tron Theatre is one of Scotland's leading mid-scale producing and presenting theatres, set in the heart of Glasgow's Merchant City.

Our pantomime is one of the highlights of our calendar. It sells at over 90% capacity, which leaves little scope for audience development. As it is such an accessible event, we wanted to use it as an opportunity to widen our audience demographic and meet some of our equalities, diversity and inclusion ambitions so in 2016 we launched a Pay it Forward campaign.

During our 2016/2017 pantomime we raised £10,000 from bucket collections to enable disadvantaged groups to attend our 2017/2018 pantomime. This year we have two full performances set aside for disadvantaged groups, paid for by last year's audience.



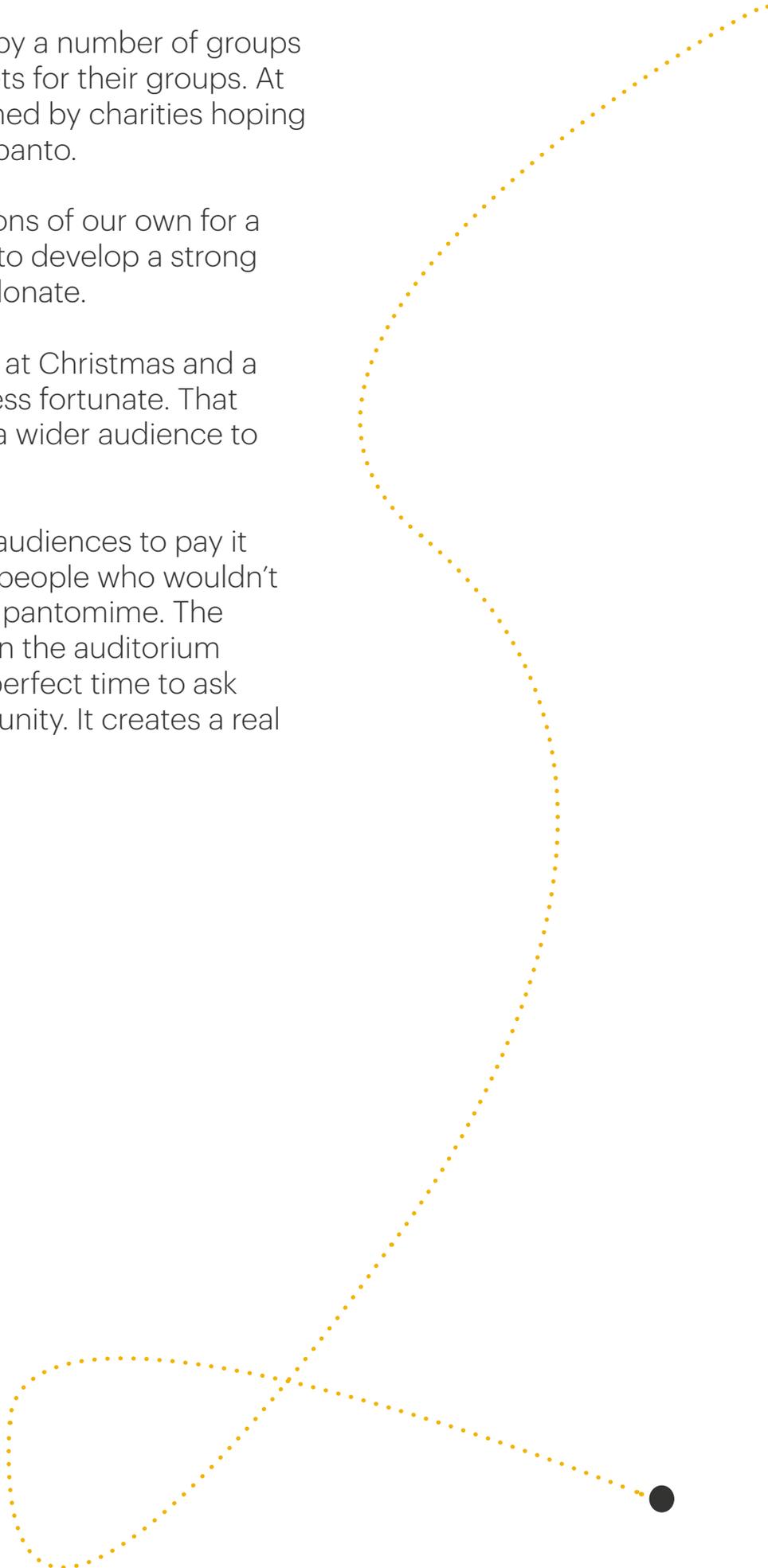
Developing the campaign

Every year, we are approached by a number of groups looking for complimentary tickets for their groups. At the same time, we are approached by charities hoping to do bucket collections at our panto.

We hadn't done bucket collections of our own for a number of years so we wanted to develop a strong message to compel people to donate.

There's a real sense of good will at Christmas and a desire to help people who are less fortunate. That fitted with our desire to enable a wider audience to enjoy the pantomime.

We decided to ask pantomime audiences to pay it forward and donate to support people who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend the pantomime. The moment when the audience is in the auditorium enjoying the experience is the perfect time to ask them to give others that opportunity. It creates a real emotional connection.



Managing the bucket collections

We asked our Pantomime Dame to give a shout out for the campaign so that people knew what we were collecting for. He did that after the first interval of each public performance so that it was in people's minds as they enjoyed the second half.

Our front of house ushers manned the buckets and collected donations as people were leaving the auditorium.

We didn't ask for a specific amount but a lot of people gave donations between £5 and £20. With 230 people attending each performance, the donations soon mounted up.



Donated tickets

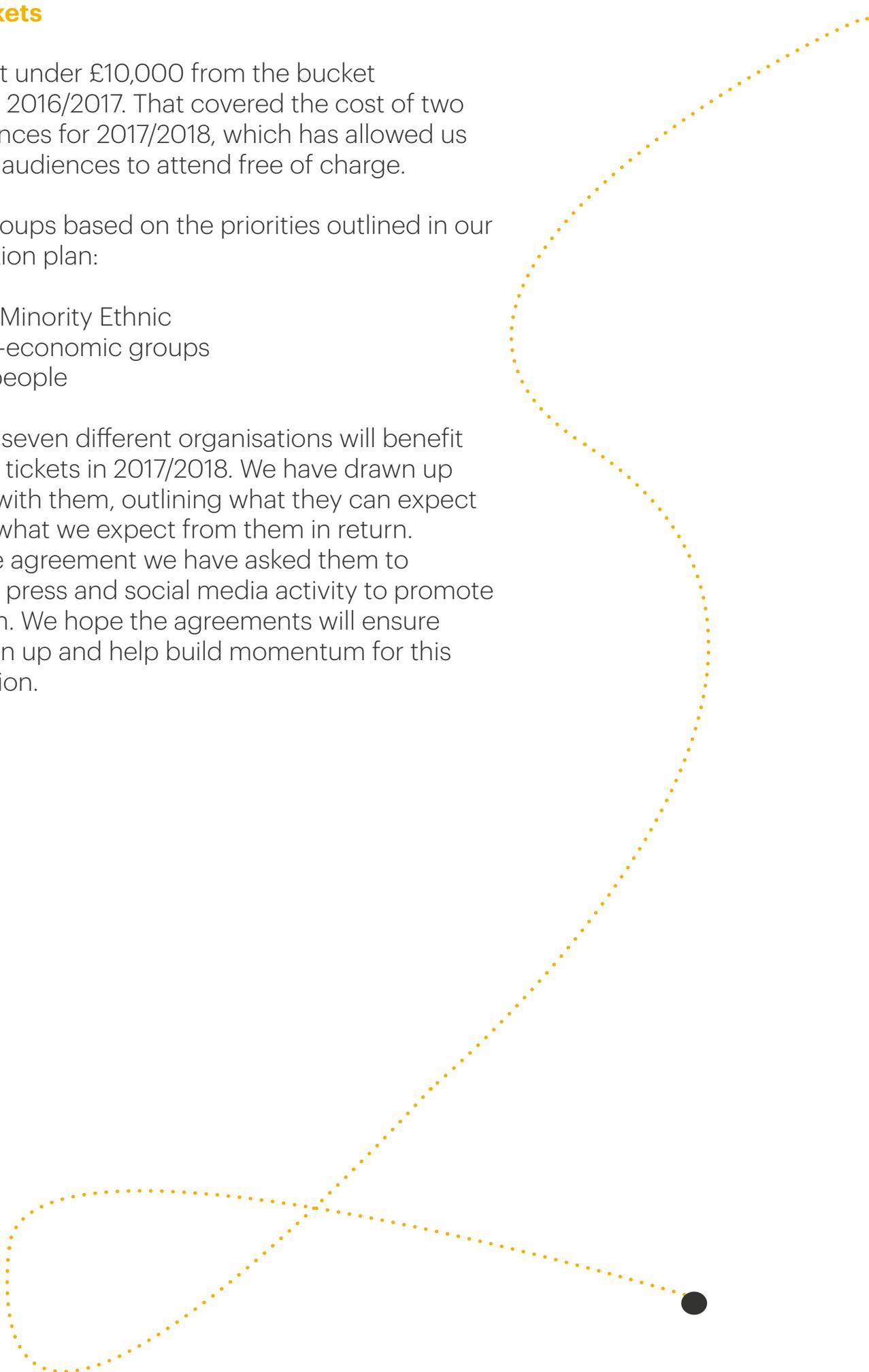
We raised just under £10,000 from the bucket collections in 2016/2017. That covered the cost of two full performances for 2017/2018, which has allowed us to invite new audiences to attend free of charge.

We invited groups based on the priorities outlined in our equalities action plan:

- Black and Minority Ethnic
- Low socio-economic groups
- Disabled people

Groups from seven different organisations will benefit from the free tickets in 2017/2018. We have drawn up agreements with them, outlining what they can expect from us and what we expect from them in return.

As part of the agreement we have asked them to participate in press and social media activity to promote the campaign. We hope the agreements will ensure recipients turn up and help build momentum for this year's collection.

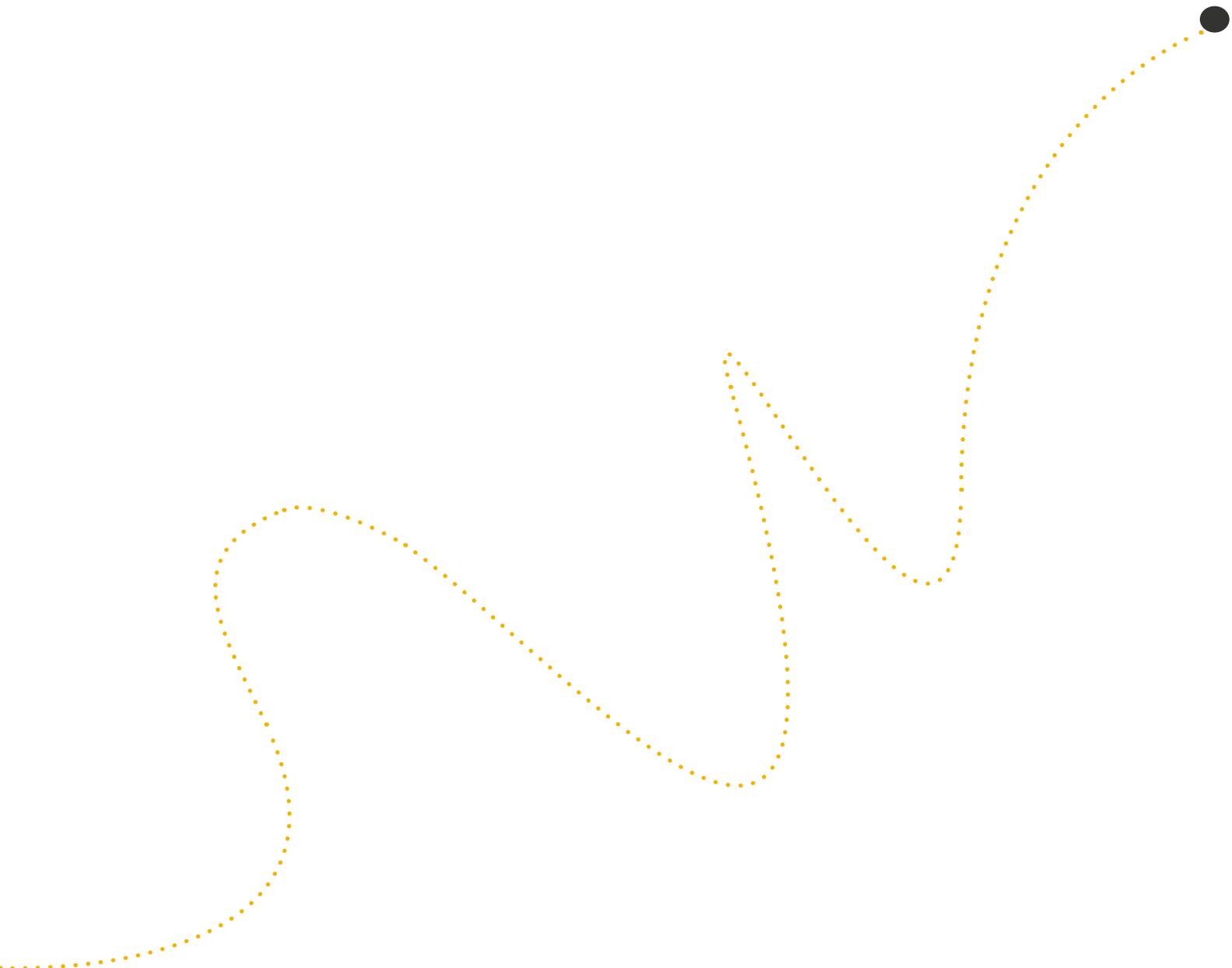


Building the campaign

As well as the bucket collections, we have continued to encourage donations throughout the year. We've added a page to our website to encourage online donations. We have also featured the campaign in our brochure and thanked people via social media.

Any further donations will pay for interval ice creams or workshops for the groups who are attending. For some of them pantomime will be an unfamiliar concept so the workshops will be a vital part of their experience.

This year we're testing the water but we're keen to develop the campaign further in the future.



What worked well

The message resonated with people — people were in the auditorium having a good time and the thought of paying for someone else to have that experience connected with people on an emotional level.

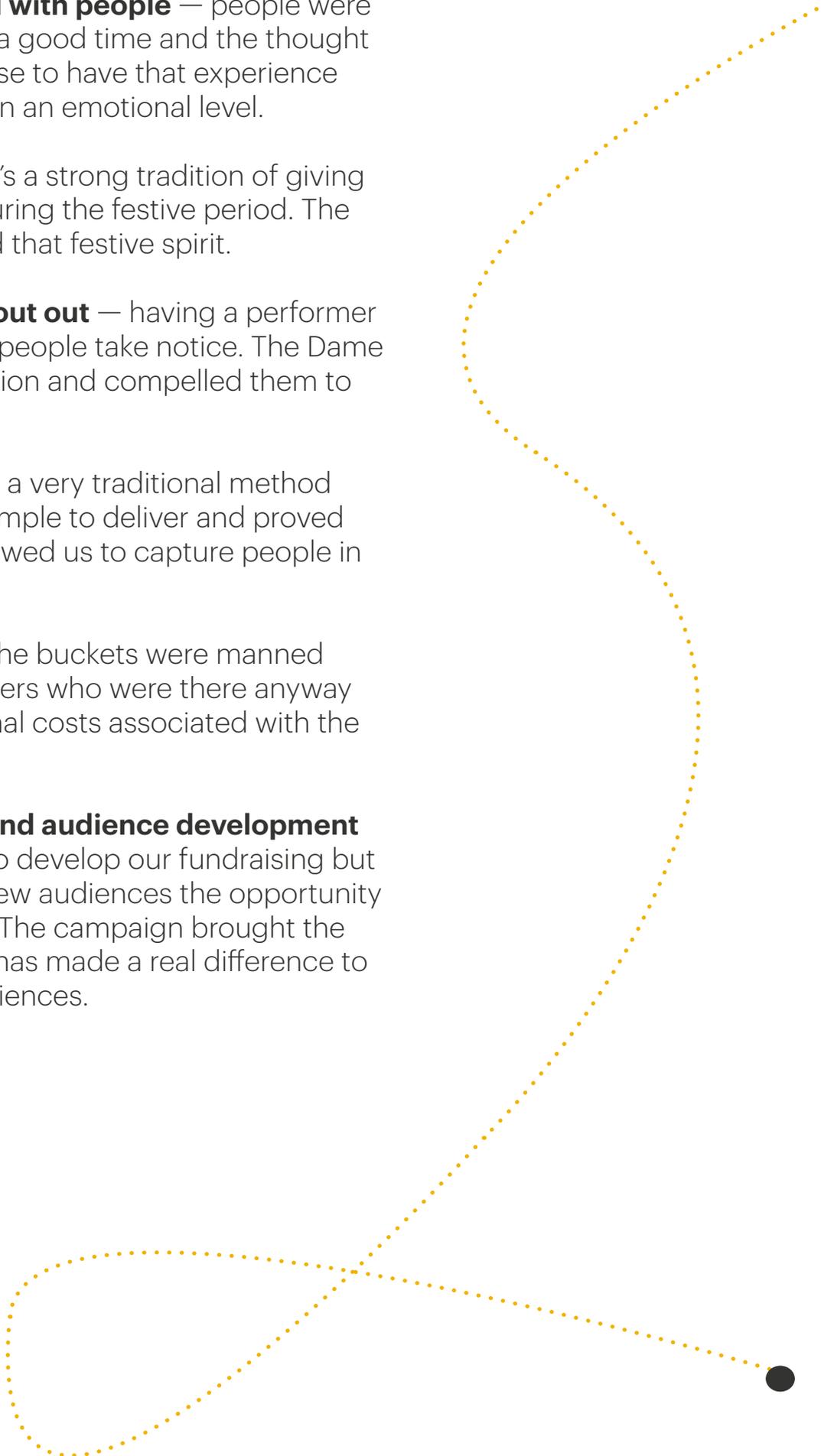
Christmas spirit — there's a strong tradition of giving to those less fortunate during the festive period. The campaign really captured that festive spirit.

Performer doing the shout out — having a performer give the shout out made people take notice. The Dame had the audience's attention and compelled them to listen.

It was simple — we used a very traditional method of fundraising that was simple to deliver and proved incredibly effective. It allowed us to capture people in the moment.

It was cost effective — the buckets were manned by our front of house ushers who were there anyway so there were no additional costs associated with the campaign.

It brought fundraising and audience development together — we wanted to develop our fundraising but we also wanted to give new audiences the opportunity to enjoy the pantomime. The campaign brought the two things together and has made a real difference to our organisation and audiences.





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