



ADVISORY  
BOARD  
for the ARTS

Transforming Arts Organizations Worldwide

## Case Study: Leveraging The Freemium Model

**SCOTTISH  
BALLET**

# Overview of Scottish Ballet's Freemium Membership

## The Situation

In the pandemic setting where everything is digital, how do you build a sustainable new digital audience without diminishing value for your existing donors and subscribers?

## What Scottish Ballet Does

Create a “freemium” membership program to draw new digital audiences to the unique, online content the current audience base finds appealing, thus building a pathway to develop long-term relationships with these new audiences.

- **Positioning of Program:** The company wanted to create an offer that would not conflict with current donor/subscriber levels, but rather act as a foundation from which the Ballet could draw new audiences into their donor/subscriber pipeline. This new level is both easy to join and enticing for new audiences.
- **Goal of Program:** The membership program casts a broad net for future audiences, both locally to return in person and globally to develop a long-term digital audience base by creating a sense of community.
- **Bridge to Digital Content:** A new, original film production, *The Secret Theatre*, excited existing audiences while providing new audiences a chance to start a relationship with the ballet.

# A Little Give For A Lot of Get

Members provide just a few pieces of information to join...

## Membership Sign-Up Process

### Don't miss out

Become a FREE member today and you'll hear about our latest films, tours, events & classes, and ways to support us.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ **Subscribe now**

Let us know your interests so we can send you more relevant updates, offers and information

**PERFORMANCE**

- Family shows
- Films
- Performances on stage

**CLASSES**

- Adult classes
- Associates
- Dance health programme

**SUPPORT**

- Ways to support SB

Only after hitting "Subscribe Now" are members then asked to select their interests and also provide their address, phone number, and consent to receive emails.

...and gain access to a suite of benefits

1 Member-only film releases & events

AVAILABLE FROM THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY

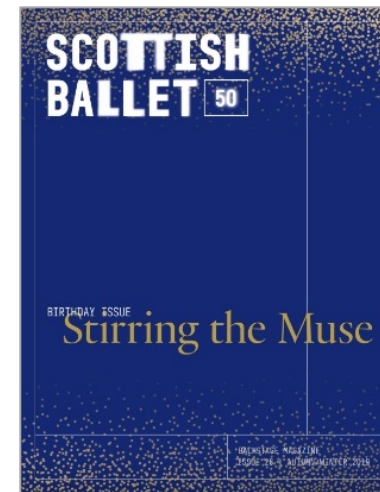
This film follows four dancers as they explosively intertwine and interact on a dark and empty stage, reflecting the labyrinth of sound and changing tempos created by the drums.

*Dark Full Ride* was first performed on stage as part of the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival and was filmed in a Covid-safe environment in December 2020.

As a Member, you don't have to do anything to view *Dark Full Ride*! A viewing link will be sent to this email address around 5pm on Thursday 25 February 2021.

To ensure you're always first to hear about our films, log in and update your interests [here](#).

2 Backstage magazine & email updates



3 Access to purchase ballet classes

**Class**  
Improvers Ballet

Please sign up for free Membership to be able to book.

**BECOME A FREE MEMBER TO BOOK CLASSES**

Along with the free content, membership creates direct pathways to ticketed classes and donation-based films. This link is one benefit of a freemium model, which can help shift free users into paying customers.

# Membership as a Community, Not a Transaction

## Member Welcome E-mail

1 From the first email members receive, it's clear they are becoming part of a community, creating a more emotional – and less transactional – connection to the company.

2 The authentic tone, with friendly and conversational language, conveys there is a genuine desire to make a personal connection with each new member.



Welcome to our world



WELL, HELLO THERE!

You've joined our free membership programme, and we're really chuffed to welcome you into the Scottish Ballet community.

This means you have access to exclusive films, events and classes, and we'll be keeping you up to date with all our news. You'll also receive a digital subscription to Backstage, our company magazine, and special perks from our pals.

We're Scotland's national dance company. Based in Glasgow, we aim to bring the best of ballet to audiences at home and abroad, promoting Scotland's pioneering spirit far and wide. Right now we're busy making some incredible films to share with you – find out more below.

CAN WE GET TO KNOW YOU A WEE BIT BETTER?

If you haven't already, please take a moment to complete your online account. That way you'll be ready to book whatever takes your fancy, and we can send you more of the stuff you're into.

COMPLETE YOUR ACCOUNT





3 The request for data is bookended by two descriptions of what the member will get out of the program, keeping the emphasis on the "what I get" more than the "what I give."



## Benefits of Membership Program

- + Audience data collection**
  - Contact information for communications and relationship building
  - Location data for analysis of reach
- + Customer journey personalization**
  - Customer experiences can be tailored based on preferences indicated in membership profile
  - Preference data provides a better understanding of the type of content that attracts digital viewers
- + Digital event scalability**
  - Event/class capacity is higher and cost is lower than when offered live, increasing income potential
- + Brand awareness and strength expansion**
  - Developing a sustained virtual audience base can be an asset for future monetization of digital content
  - Reach and brand recognition is enhanced globally in a meaningful way to foster long-term relationships
- + Audience bond strengthening**
  - Sense of community can potentially lead to a desire from new audiences to attend live upon reopening

## Resources Required to Develop/Maintain Program

-  Conducting research on potential new audiences to understand the unique appeal of Scottish Ballet
-  Building a technical backend system that pulls together a seamless frontend experience
-  Developing internal cohesion between departments to ensure alignment on the larger goals and how the program will affect specific initiatives across teams
-  Creating new, revenue-generating events specific to members

# Uniquely Scottish Ballet Digital Content

## *The Secret Theatre* as an Opportunity for New Members to Experience Content Scottish Ballet Uniquely Provides

- **The production:** A new original Christmas ballet, showcasing the most popular characters from Scottish Ballet’s holiday shows, created for and captured on film.
- **Who it was for:** The film was developed with **current audiences** in mind, which served a dual purpose of providing value to existing donors/subscribers, while also demonstrating what new members can expect from the company.
- **Cost to view:** Free to watch, with an option to donate.



### A smart way to encourage donations

While donations were optional, viewers were required to input a number in the donation box when registering for the show, making a donation of “£0” a much more conscious (and likely less justifiable) decision.

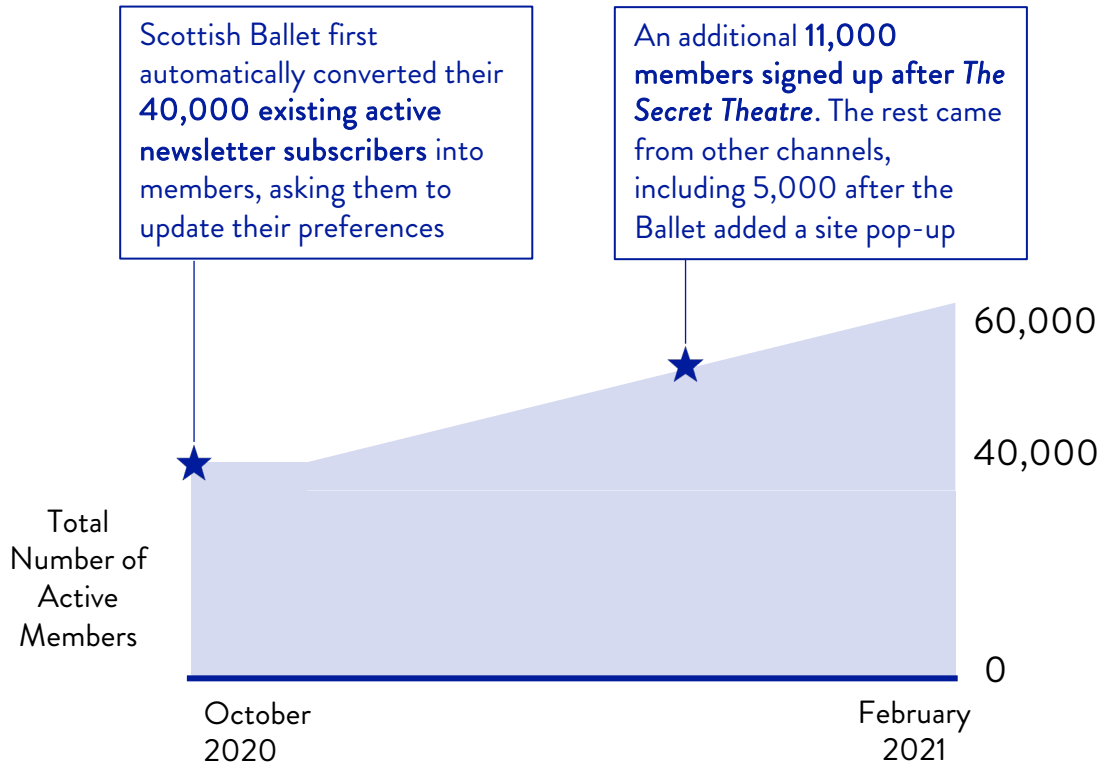
## Key Notes on Logistics

- **Tech requirements:** Along with their in-house producer and filmmaker, an additional freelance crew of 35 people and a cinema-standard kit were brought in for the production.
- **Platform choice:** The film streamed on YouTube, since the team had seen some audiences struggle with other platforms.
- **Touring theater partnerships:** Audiences could choose to donate to their local touring theater, who had supported Scottish Ballet in marketing the film.
- **Working without archives:** The company did not use archive footage but they also did not start from scratch, instead leveraging existing costumes, sets and stories.

# Off To A Fast Start

## Active\* Membership Growth

\*Active members are members who regularly open communications and interact with content. 60,000 active members – and growing – demonstrates that members see value from their membership.



## Impact of Membership on Programs

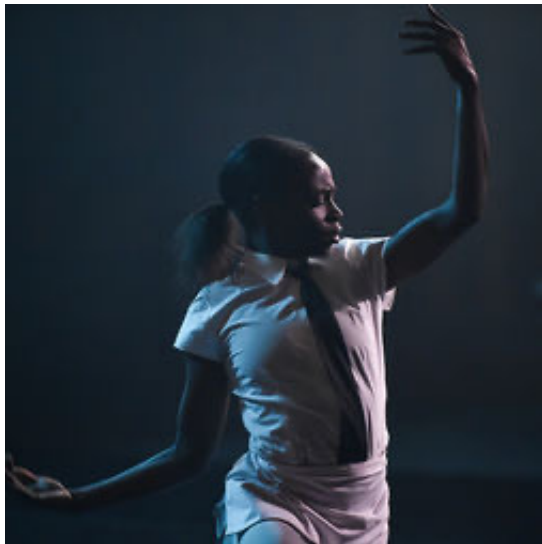
- The Secret Theatre** 50% of viewers donated, with the most common donation of £10
- Online classes & events** Significant increases in revenue (compared to live) due to higher capacity and lower costs to execute
- Donor acquisition** Active conversion of free members into paying 'Friends' after each event using targeted messaging

Revenue generation increases are largely due to digital being much more scalable

# Examples of Scottish Ballet's Digital Content

## [‘Tremble’](#)

Part of Scottish Ballet's series of innovative dance films, 'Tremble' transforms a dining room service into an exciting visual performance.



## [Ballet for 55+ \(Barre Practice\)](#)



Scottish Ballet offered a selection of free fitness videos as part of Regenerate, its public dance program for dancers aged 55+. In this video, dancers at home can use chairs to practice barre exercises.