

# “Philanthropy is not about being the big guy”

Photography by *Sophie Wedgwood*

During his 30-year tenure, Alan Grieve has seen the Jerwood Foundation donate £108m to the arts. *Harriet Quick* reflects on a mighty cultural legacy

A converted farm building in the rolling Shropshire hills, near the market town of Ludlow, is not where one might expect to find the office of one of the UK's most active and prolific arts and education charities. Yet the bucolic setting provides a nurturing environment for Alan Grieve CBE, the 93-year-old company director and chairman of the Jerwood Foundation.

Since 1991, when Grieve took over as chairman, Jerwood has given away £108m in capital and revenue to support the visual and performing arts in the UK. “There is a duty to give back on as wide a basis as one can afford and give back human values that are long-lasting; it might sound amorphous, but you have to try. Your mission must have a purpose – philanthropy is not about making money and giving it away to say that you are the ‘big guy,’” says Grieve. “The foundation has come to pride itself on its willingness to take risks. There is no formula. We’re flexible, open-minded and, I’d like to think, not a soft touch,” he asserts from his space that overlooks a handsome Victorian house (his former home), outbuildings and flourishing herbaceous borders.

The Jerwood Foundation, founded in 1977, is now a tightly managed three-pronged operation consisting of distinct but interconnected philanthropic arms – Jerwood Arts (mainly concerned with grant giving), Jerwood Space (a rehearsal and performance space near London Bridge) and the Jerwood Collection of Modern and Contemporary British Art, a body of just under 300 artworks that goes on loan, and is overseen by his art historian daughter Lara Wardle, who also serves as the foundation’s executive director.

Left: Alan Grieve in the grounds of his Shropshire home. Behind him is *Gethsemane*, 1992, by the sculptor Ronald Rae

Grieve is not one to dilly-dally and has kept the operation fleet-footed, focused and understated. Most recently, during the pandemic, he made some swift, radical decisions, such as selling Jerwood's west London HQ in Notting Hill and decamping to Shropshire to help reduce operations costs, and, separately, setting up the Blue Sky Fund, worth £1m, to help freelance artists. "Not just the violinist, but the bloke that fixes the lighting, the stagehands, carpenters and wig makers," says Grieve. Awarded through the Theatre Artists Fund (co-founded by Sam Mendes) and Help Musicians, the money supported people whose livelihoods were jeopardised by the closure of theatre and performance spaces.

Now that the fiercer winds of the pandemic have subsided and life returns to a new normality, Grieve, Wardle and the Jerwood Foundation (it employs some 30 people both full and part time) are able to pause to reflect on Grieve's 30-year anniversary as chairman.

"I was reminding Lara and myself that one of the principal purposes of the Jerwood is to create a memento for John Jerwood – an international pearl dealer who was resident and domiciled in Japan. John had a huge belief in young people and that's a strand that continues today in the wider Jerwood family. He wanted to give people that next step up," says Grieve, who met the enigmatic Jerwood in the late 1950s while working as a junior partner at the law firm Taylor & Humbert, where Jerwood was a client.

While other partners found Jerwood "a little difficult", Grieve and he became friends, and cultural as well as business ventures blossomed. Both saw the potential for business and investments on a global platform, and Grieve travelled widely on Jerwood's behalf to Europe, Asia and Australia. Grieve was given power of attorney over Jerwood's assets (he became trustee in 1974), and over time the idea of a foundation for education and the arts began to take shape.

The first endowment went to Oakham School in Rutland, where Jerwood had studied on a scholarship. He was a firm believer in brain training, and one of the first grants went towards funding a full-time chess teacher. Over the decades, more than £7m was donated to the school. Back then, the charitable sector had none of the bold-faced branding and professionalism that began to

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emerge in the 1990s. Yet Grieve and Jerwood established a new model of "business philanthropy" with a clear focus on education and strategic partnerships with arts organisations, trusts, foundations and the Arts Council England. The overriding goal was to enable artists to create their best work, which in turn would seize the cultural moment and develop new audiences.

Among the many spaces, halls and libraries that bear the Jerwood name are the Jerwood Library at Trinity Hall, Cambridge; the Jerwood Vanbrugh Theatre at RADA; and the Jerwood Hall at St Luke's Church, home of the London Symphony Orchestra. These sit alongside a dizzying number of annual prizes, grants and bursaries, including the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursary programme, which supports 50 jobs in UK arts and cultural organisations. Recently, Jerwood made a significant contribution to the Royal College of Physicians' medical educational centre in Liverpool, The Spine.

The largest "intervention" grant the Jerwood Foundation has ever made was worth £3m and rescued the Royal Court Theatre at the turn of the millennium. "It was not common for foundations to give gifts of that level to cultural institutions that were at the cutting edge," says Dame Vikki Heywood, who at the time was joint chief executive of the Royal Court. "Alan Grieve was clear that he wanted to support something that was out of the ordinary and support young, diverse talents. We were struggling to complete our capital fundraising campaign, and that gift allowed us to reopen the theatre. He was a breath of fresh air." The relationship has stood the test of time and proved that it can have longevity – Jerwood Arts continues to support the Royal Court Young Writers' Programme. "Alan has always looked for the challenges in life and is deeply interested in what makes creative personalities tick – and he wants to give them the time and space to flourish," she adds.

Behind Jerwood's grant giving is a backbone of not only human values but, crucially, successful fund management that has consistently helped grow the capital fund pot. "The world was opening up economically in the '80s and '90s and, with respect to the foundation, it was clear that the way many UK charities invested was restricted, mainly in UK securities and bonds, sometimes in Europe and rarely in Asia," says Grieve who took a global approach to investing Jerwood's fortune. When Jerwood died in 1991, he took control of the



Institutions bearing the foundation's name include (left) the Jerwood Library at Trinity Hall, Cambridge; the Jerwood Hall at St Luke's Church, home of the London Symphony Orchestra (above); and The Jerwood Space in Union Street, London (below)



business's diverse assets. In the boom years of the 1990s and early 2000s, he started to invest the foundation's capital in hedge funds and property (the Jerwood Space in London Bridge is owned outright, as was the former HQ on Fitzroy Square) – trebling the assets. In 1999, he established the Jerwood Charitable Foundation in the UK to give support to individual artists, later appointing Tim Eyles as a separate chairman and endowing it with £25m. Grieve also established charitable partnerships with philanthropic organisations including the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Leverhulme Trust.

Grieve's healthy outdoor life, coupled with almighty reasoning powers and an insistence on results, means his brain is as sharp as the lapels on his blazer. He is happily married to his second wife and is father to five children – including Amanda Harlech (from his first marriage), the creative consultant and stylist who was the one-time right hand to John Galliano, and later key player in Karl Lagerfeld's inner circle at Chanel, where she continues to work. Charlie is CEO of digital content agency Broadcast Media, Tom is an architect, and Ivan an artist. "I have instilled the work ethic first, then natural instinct – they have lived with art and seen it," says Grieve.

Lara Wardle worked for Phillips and Christie's auction houses before joining the foundation to oversee the Jerwood Collection. Dora Carrington, Yinka Shonibare, Craigie Aitchison, Paul Nash and Chantal Joffe are among the wide-ranging artists who are on loan and contribute to major displays at the Harley Gallery in Nottinghamshire. "We do not have an acquisition policy or have to tick boxes," says Wardle. Now, as she steps up into the role of executive director, the organisation's responsibilities are being shared. "Most donors and foundations tend to modify their interests as they grow older and reappraise where money is going. Grieve and the Jerwood have stuck with the new and contemporary across all their sectors. That consistency is not unique, but it is unusual," says Heywood.

"In the past year, the sense of how important culture has become in connecting people has intensified, and the benefits of access to live streaming of theatre, music and dance performances showed how important investment in the arts is," says Wardle. "With the reduction in government funds, the Jerwood Foundation must remain agile, act with humanity and be able to fund areas that we feel we can add value to." Smiling, Grieve adds: "We agree more than we disagree about funding and the collection."

Does he see retirement soon? "Have I passed my sell-by date? I've enjoyed doing it and I do believe if something's not fun, don't do it. Success is a mixture of luck, timing and expertise and if you are able to bring these together, you will usually produce results." ■ HTSI



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Grieve beside *Under the Forest*, 2006, by Fernando Casasempere. Far left: the philanthropist in his office