

DIDSBURY
ARTS
FESTIVAL
24 June - 2 July 2017



Didsbury Arts Festival 2017

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The Festival in Numbers

The 2017 Didsbury Arts Festival

The 2017 Festival

Overall the 2017 festival was a great success. This can be measured through a number of factors: a significant increase in the number of festival goers, the overall increase in income especially sponsorship and donations, the continuing support from Arts Council England, the commissioning of 7 new works, 2 new and premiered events, a significant increase in ticketing revenue, a modest increase in online engagement and the commitment of a significant number of new and dedicated volunteers, to name but a few.

Learning from the 2015 festival also helped this year's festival team to improve significantly the logistics associated with each event and provide greater support to individual artists and venue owners and operators.

The evaluation process itself has been invaluable in helping the festival team including the Board to understand better what it is doing well and what could be improved. It also helps us build up a much better knowledge of our audience, who they are, where they are from and how better to attract them in the future.

Through continuing the evaluation process at future festivals and sharing the results with our key stakeholders, we will build more tangible benchmarks and help more people understand the benefits the festival and the organisation has for the lives of local people. The DAF 2017 Evaluation Report can be obtained by emailing info@didsburyartsfestival.org.

The objective feedback via the evaluation process and the anecdotal feedback we have had, point to the atmosphere and the buzz that surrounds the festival and the events. This was felt by the festival team, Board, volunteers and festival goers alike and shows that this is a real feeling that changes the area for the 9 days of the festival. This is a really special thing for a town to have and to create for itself. It leaves an increasing legacy year on year and a desire for it to return when it is over.

Didsbury Arts Festival 2019 and beyond

In 2015 it was decided that the festival should become biennial, producing a full 9-day festival every 2 years. It was felt that this decision would help to create a steady sustainable pattern of festival activity which people can rely on and give more time between festivals to develop and commission more new work with artists, develop new programming strands and build more outreach capability. Alongside this, it was hoped that the festival would maintain a strong network of volunteers and organisers and be able to build a strong festival committee for the 2017 festival.

As indicated by the responses to the various surveys conducted in and around the event, the 2017 festival was considered by all those involved - those attending the festival, artists and volunteers - to be a well-

attended, highly rated, high quality (both artistically and organisationally) and multi-faceted artistic event. Although there was limited success with maintaining the volunteer network from the last festival and building a strong festival delivery team, it is felt that a sound basis for doing this now exists with a number of committed volunteers who worked on this year's festival.

DAF will continue to aim to maintain a year-round profile through funding the post of festival director and, although the director of the 2015 and 2017 festivals has resigned, a successor has been appointed and will take up the post in February, 2018. This will help maintain the momentum and ambition of the DAF organisation with one-off events including fundraising events and the extremely popular Didsbury Lantern Parade.

Some events will be planned for 2018 to keep the festival in people's minds before the launch of the programme for the following year. The Lantern Parade, now also biennial, will take place in November, 2018.

In early 2018 planning will start for the next festival and we want to involve more of the wider festival team and the community in that process so that the festival continues to have a feel of community ownership, 'made by the people for the people'.

We will also be seeking to strengthen our volunteer team, especially around key structural roles in the festival, such as marketing, young people, outreach, and event production.

We will be learning from this report and aiming to increase audience participation and find new audiences.

The development of our festival handbook is well advanced and this will contain improved operational plans that we can use and update year on year. This should support the smooth and efficient running of the festival, whilst still taking artistic risks and creatively challenging festival goers.

We will review and introduce, where necessary, financial policies and procedures which aim to improve both how we contract with artists and the commercial sustainability of the festival.



The 2017 Festival in Numbers

A Well Attended Festival

The 2017 festival had over **14,000** visitors, with **5,594** counted at specific events and an additional estimated audience visiting other events and the visual arts trail and school art work in shops.



of festival-goers were new audience who had not attended the festival before



Over 75% were in the age range 35-60+



of our audience came from within a 13 minute driving distance.

A Substantial and Highly Rated Artistic Programme

There were **93** events performed by over **200** artists.



of respondents to the feedback survey rated the overall quality of Didsbury Arts Festival as very good or good.



of respondents rated the quality of the events and exhibitions as very good or good.



of respondents rated the venues as very good or good.

The overwhelming response of artists was extremely positive and complimentary both about their individual experience and about the quality of the festival events in general.

Strong sponsorship and local community support

The festival enjoyed strong support from local businesses, community groups, venues and Patrons.

There were **4** Gold Sponsors comprising Siemens, PJ Livesey, ABa Quality Monitoring and Spire Healthcare. A number of other businesses and organisations contributed as Silver and Bronze sponsors or Corporate Friends, while **21** individuals were also Patrons of DAF in 2017.



A Multi-faceted Programme

Music Events



40 music events of which **3** were choir performances, **12** were classical concerts, **5** were jazz concerts and **20** were other genres or mixed performances.

Visual Arts



22 exhibitions, installations and events including the festival gallery, open house scheme of art in people's homes and 'Art Over the Counter' displays in **46** shops and the tram stop and rail station in East Didsbury.

Literature and Talks



12 talks by writers, most notably Howard Jacobson discussing his new book 'Pussy', and broadcaster Michael Wood who presented a bespoke talk 'Roots: A Manchester Story', sponsored by Spire Healthcare.

Performance



A programme of **8** performance events, including theatre, comedy, poetry, and performance art. This included the multi-arts, Didsbury Park Stage event, sponsored by PJ Livesey.

Film



A programme of **7** film based events, including significant contributions from A Northern Life in Pictures and short film screenings showcasing local and regional talent.

Guided Walking Tour



1 guided walk – the Community Mapping Project - which involved the people of Didsbury in mapping their neighbourhood through a walking tour whilst connecting with the past, present and future of Didsbury.

Workshops



3 Workshops, including RePlace(d) and the very popular Family Workshop with John Hegley.

Family friendly



10 events were specific Family Friendly events, significantly a variety of events at the Parsonage, including the Revolting Rhymes sponsored by ABa Quality Monitoring and Marvellous Music and Oak Mobile small Theatre outside in the Didsbury Park stage event.

Accessible



57 of the events and exhibitions (**61%**) were free and **36 (39%)** were paid for.

Outreach



A number of events, exhibitions and workshops involved schools and outreach into care homes and were particularly well-received by those organisations.

The Festival Theme

This year's festival theme was 'Roots' - celebrating Didsbury's rich history, creativity and cultural diversity.

Artists had the freedom to explore a broad range of interpretations of the theme in their work. The brief was not prescriptive or directed; rather artists were encouraged to bring their flare and originality to develop the theme creatively and artistically.

Festival Commissions

The festival commissioned **7** new pieces of work, all responding to the festival theme of Roots. Most of this was funded through an Arts Council England grant. These works were:

- Claire Louise Mather – Bound by Our Roots – a new outdoor sculpture
- Louise Wallwein – Transient Roots – a new poetry site with digital interface
- Nicola Schofield – Flight – a new play based on RSPB founder Emily Williamson
- X plus Y Equals – FEED – participatory food events and cook book.
- The Strange Train Company – Didsbury's Lost American Ice Cream Store – family theatre performance
- Joel Cahen – Wet Sounds Didsbury – sound installation in Swimming pool
- Sarah Claire Conlon & David Gaffney – Re/Place(d) – New site specific writing and performance

Premieres

The festival staged **2** premieres:

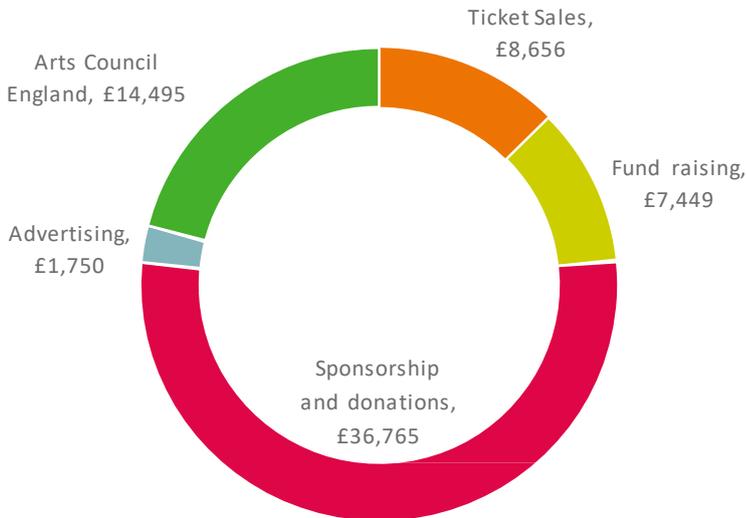
- Michael Wood: Roots a Manchester Story – bespoke talk about the people that made Manchester
- Minutetaker – To Love Somebody Melancholy – new music set to animation film

What did it cost?

The festival cost £65,000 to run. This includes the cost of the festival itself and the preparatory costs during the financial year.

Funding for the festival totalled £69,000 resulting in a small surplus of £4,000.

The source of the funding was:



Festival reserves carried forward are £18,532.

A valuable Volunteer Experience

There were **25** volunteers working during the festival. On average each volunteer gave **23** hours of their time during the festival.

All were new to Didsbury Arts Festival and all said they would like to volunteer at the next festival. **8** of the volunteers have done voluntary work elsewhere.

A strong marketing, social media and press campaign

A strong and successful marketing, social media and press campaign was undertaken, led by Queen Bee PA with printed material provided by Stealth Design, and online advertising being placed with the Manchester Evening News and targeted use of social media.

The website attracted **10,084** users and there were **15,686** visits, with **48,015** page views and **62%** of visits being by new visitors.

The press campaign was successful in attracting coverage across a range of local media, especially Open Up South Manchester and Didsbury Magazine as well as on Trip Advisor, Manchester Confidential and the Manchester Evening News.

A big thank you to our team of volunteer photographers (see photos in this report and on the web site) from Siemens: Tom Bullock (lead), Molly Jones, Bartosz Kowalczyk, Tony Chapman, Neil Nevill, Christakis Schinis, Adarsh Emmanuel.



Thank you to our supporters

We wish to thank our sponsors and supporters, without whom the festival would not take place. We hope they will continue to support DAF into the future.

Funders



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Patrons

Terry Sheldon & Carole Isis, Maria & Robert Stripling, John & Penny Early, Jonathan & Deborah Grace, Brenda Mallon and John Kershaw, Nick Brimelow, Jan Icton & Chris Coyne, David & Sue Kaberry, Tony & Shelagh Howell, Neil & Sue Smith, Max & Cecile Elstein