Mole Valley Arts Alive Festival 2017

Mole Valley Arts Alive Festival is newly firmly established as one of the largest in the South East of England.

We followed much the same format as ever this year – but with new and innovative events. STEAMroom, combining art with science was much enjoyed. The Radical Film Festival promoted their usual hard-hitting films with a message, including “Mad to be Normal” on Mental Health Day and an afternoon especially for children. We were delighted to be back at the Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden, the scene of happy events in the past. The Head2head Theatre Company delighted with the pantomime, “Aladdin” a wonderful sensory experience and the Freewheelers were their usual impressive selves! A new Book Club began at Denbies and people all over the District gathered to sing together, dance together and listen to beautiful music and watch excellent productions.

Celebration days were enjoyed at the beginning, promoting the Festival in Leatherhead, where we enhanced a hen party outing; and Dorking, where a member of the public delighted us all with her dancing!

And, then we had the finale evening at Dorking Halls – our first ever. Not as well attended as we had hoped, but those who came so enjoyed the variety of acts, from Folk Singers, our own tame poet, Mark Barnes, Charlie Taylor’s wonderful ballet dancing and finally Bloco do Sul raising the roof with their amazing drumming. Our patron, Sherree Valentine-Daines, in her third and final year thoroughly enjoyed herself – and we thank her for her patronage.

Thank you too to Gatwick Airport for their very generous sponsorship – matching the financial input of Mole Valley District Council, and to Surrey County Councillors, Helyn Clack, Clare Curran and Tim Hall for their support. And without our hard-working committee none of this would happen.

We have a lot to live up to – the work starts now for 2018!

Mary Huggins, Mole Valley Arts Alive Chairman

Brochure Front Cover

This year saw the return of the popular brochure design competition. The winner was 12-year-old Ellie Hammett from The Ashcombe School. Lots of children and adults from across the district entered, but Ellie’s abstract, modern and colourful design was the unanimous favourite.

Promotional Video

This year we showcased local talent from the festival’s events. There was music from the Amber Foundation, who sang a moving cover of Adele’s Someone Like You. There were images and clips from Dorking School of Performing Arts, acts from the Creative Celebration Days, LeRoc Surrey dances, Head2Head Theatre, Autumn Concert with favourites from Last Night at the Proms, All Aloud Choir and Music on Thursdays.

The video has had more than 300 YouTube views. We proudly shared it on social media and with all event holders.
Launch Party

Our annual launch party took place in the Yehudi Menuhin School, a regular supporter and promoter of the festival, and an event holder. The varied programme included the premiere of the Arts Alive promotional video, a showstopping performance from the mesmerising ballerino Charlie Taylor, and performances from the school’s students.

The glamorous event was, as always, expertly presented, and a great networking opportunity for event holders and festival supporters.

Closing Ceremony

For the first time in the festival’s history, we hosted a closing ceremony, a public event held at Dorking Halls. There were performances from local groups, schools, creative celebration acts and Arts Alive event holders. Acts included The Estevans, St John’s School Choir, George O’Hanlon, Mark Barnes, Going South, Dorking Folk Club, High Five Salsa, Claire Malcolmson, Charlie Taylor and Bloco-do-sul.

The event was very well received and had a celebratory atmosphere. We aim to make next year’s ceremony bigger and even better.

Festival Spotlight: Something New

Once again, events were full of creativity and diversity. For the first time there was a radio open day hosted by Surrey Hills Radio and a Knitting Pattern Play.

“A real insight to what goes on, with some great people”

STEAMroom was another diverse event which Arts Alive event holders had the pleasure of attending. The workshops, held at Narnia in The Old House, united artists and scientists in exploring cutting-edge research and translating it into unique works of art. These inspiring workshops were at almost full capacity.

Another new type of event was a book launch and wine club, supported by Barton’s Bookshop and held at Denbies. The special guest for the evening was author Rowan Coleman with her new book The Summer of Impossible Things.

“Enjoyable evening”

Dorking and Leatherhead Creative Celebrations

The Creative Celebrations returned to Dorking and Leatherhead town centres to entertain all ages, give local acts an opportunity to showcase their talent and raise awareness of the festival.

Festival Spotlight: Young People

Our aim this year was to attract more young people to the festival. Events included a popular graffiti workshop hosted by Mole Valley District Council and Mary Frances Trust. The Mole Valley Squash and Pumpkin Show was also a big hit.

“Love the displays, and the children involvement.”

The newly formed Dorking School of Performing Arts took part in the festival, with their weekly drama classes and the October half term drama workshop for children aged 6 – 14.

The Dorking Radical Film Festival held bigger and better events. One, called Children’s Delight, was aimed specifically at children.

“The group leaders (both called Sarah) did a great job in working with older people, including people living with dementia. We did three sessions, one on our schooldays, one about our working lives and the final session on autumn. Lots of interaction, a good selection of resources to look at, touch and use”

For the first time Mole Valley District Council and Walk for Health hosted an art trail around the Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden. The combination of art and walking proved a big hit.

Other events focused on wellbeing were an Arts and Meditation Workshop hosted by ex-Arts Alive committee member Giulia Mauri. Matrix Theatre also hosted a play called Eat Me, which explored eating disorders.

Festival Spotlight: Wellbeing

This year, the organisers have been working to increase the number events promoting Wellbeing by working with different organisations and charities like Mary Frances Trust. The Memory Book also hosted a series of creative reminiscence workshops.

Festival Spotlight: Inclusivity

Once again the festival hosted a variety of events for all ages. There were also many events for people with special needs. Head2Head Theatre staged their annual pantomime for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Chairman of Arts Alive thought it was “a brilliant inclusive hour and quarter of excellent entertainment.
Halloween walks included tours of the Spooky South Street Cave and a Ghost Walk through Dorking’s streets, graveyards and alleyways. The tour ended with a Ghastly Gathering at the historic Pippbrook House, which has a much more sinister atmosphere in the evening!

Festival Spotlight: Performances

Dorking Halls and Leatherhead Theatre also hosted a range of performances by local groups and professional organisations, including live music and theatre productions. Many local theatre, music and dance groups also put on events. Bookham Light Operatic Society returned with an outstanding production of Patience by Gilbert and Sullivan.

“Fabulous show! B.L.O.S. were brilliant as usual. Really super venue, lovely hall.”

Music performances were also popular this year. There was brass, jazz, opera, choirs, pop, orchestras and folk. Music on Thursdays returned to the festival with outstanding weekly lunchtime performances.

“We are so fortunate to have the opportunity of hearing these exceptionally talented young musicians on a weekly basis.”

Festival Spotlight: Halloween

Our Halloween events proved scarily popular. The Amber Foundation returned to the festival with a Halloween-themed show, with music, poetry and drawing from the residents of Amber in Ockley.

Shops in Dorking also got involved. Friends of Dorking ran a fangtastic treasure hunt, in which families had to spot 100 spooky Halloween characters in shop windows.

“The show was fab. They all got involved and did Makaton as well, which really helped my boy who doesn’t speak.”

The Freewheelers Theatre Company once again got involved in the festival, this year hosting a film and music night at Dorking Halls.

The inclusive All Aloud Community Choir performed at the lively Creative Celebration Day in Leatherhead and hosted an open workshop. The choir welcome members who have visual impairments and other special needs.

“Excellent singing in a large group which was very friendly and melodious.”

catering for all and enjoyed by all.”
The Numbers

17,650 people enjoyed the rich and diverse creative events hosted by the Mole Valley community. We’re thrilled with this number.

We received 530 audience evaluation forms representing 46 different events. The following is a snapshot of this data; please note that there were 117 listings and 221 events this year so the information used is not fully representative of the whole festival.

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Under 24</th>
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<td>46 - 59</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
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99% of people thought that the events they attended were excellent or good.

62% of people were aware that the event was part of the Arts Alive festival.

43% of visited cafes, restaurants, bars, shops, sports centres, taxis, parking and hotels, giving a boost to the local economy.

Arts Alive received £12,810 in grants and sponsorship.

It wasn’t just Mole Valley residents who enjoyed the festival. People came from across the UK and beyond:

**Mole Valley 67%**
Includes: Abinger Common, Abinger Hammer, Ashtead, Beare Green, Bookham, Brockham, Buckland, Capel, Dorking, Fetcham, Great Bookham, Headley, Holmwood, Leatherhead, Little Bookham, Mickleham, Newdigate, North Holmwood, Pixham, Westcott and Westhumble

**Rest of Surrey 20%**

**Rest of South East 7%**
Includes: Angmering (Sussex), Carshalton (London), Coulsdon (London), Crawley (Sussex), Croydon (London), Edenbridge (Kent), Fleet (Hampshire), Henley-on-Thames (Oxfordshire), Horsham (Sussex), Kent, Keymer (Sussex), Kingston (London), London, Portsmouth (Hampshire), Purley (London), Surbiton (London), Sutton (London), Twickenham (London), Windsor (Berkshire) and Worcester Park (London)

**Rest of UK 1%**
Includes: Cambridgeshire, Northampton, Skipton (Yorkshire), Stoneleigh (Warwickshire), Suffolk and Totnes (Devon)

**International 0.6%**
Includes: Holstebro (Denmark), Netherlands and Spain

**Did not specify 1%**
The festival committee are really pleased with this year’s festival. Next year we will work on the following areas:

**Brochure** - This year the brochure, our key marketing tool, was more bright, colourful and eye-catching. We plan to improve the structure and design of 2018’s brochure, making it even better.

**Marketing strategy** - We have received a lot of feedback from people keen to come to the festival, had they known about it. We will therefore develop a marketing strategy to ensure that as many people as possible know about the festival.

**Engaging more young people** – This year we did well at involving more young people in the festival, both by encouraging them to perform in the creative celebrations and closing ceremony, and hosting events for children. Next year we will do more work with schools and Molly Valley Youth Voice.

**Closing Ceremony** – Next year it will be bigger and better. We will also develop a marketing strategy for the event to ensure we sell more tickets.

**Committee Development** – We will be doing a big push on recruitment to the committee to ensure that we have more members with a range of expertise. We will also provide more training opportunities for committee members, and potentially event holders.

**Thank you!**

Thank you to all of the groups, individuals and businesses that made Arts Alive 2017 such a success.

The arts community in Mole Valley is clearly thriving.

The committee would like to say thank you in particular to the following organisations for supporting the festival: