

DIDSBURY ARTS FESTIVAL



The 2019 Festival in Numbers

The 2019 Didsbury Arts Festival (DAF2019)

DAF2019 was a great success!

This can be measured through a number of factors, including: an increase in the number of festival goers with over **57%** of attendees surveyed attending for the first time; continuing support from Arts Council England; the commissioning of two new works and premiered events; a significant increase in ticketing revenue; an increase in online engagement and the commitment of a significant number of new and dedicated volunteers... to name just a few.

As indicated by the responses to the various surveys conducted in and around the event, the 2019 festival was considered by all those involved – audiences, artists and volunteers – to be a well-attended, highly rated, high quality (both artistically and organisationally) and multi-faceted event.

Learning from the 2017 festival also helped the festival team to improve significantly the logistics associated with each event and provide greater support to individual artists and venue owners and operators. This was evidenced in the artist and venue feedback.

In fact, much of the feedback – both detailed and anecdotal – which we have received is extremely positive. People emphasized in particular the heightened atmosphere and buzz which surrounded the festival and the events. This was felt by the Board, festival team, volunteers and festival goers alike and shows that this is a real feeling that permeates the area for the **9** days of the festival. This is a really special thing for a town to have and create for itself. The festival leaves an increasing legacy year on year and a desire for it to return when it is over.

Didsbury Arts Festival 2021 and beyond

This document is a summary of the 2019 festival in numbers. Since 2015 the festival has been held every **2** years as the Board felt that moving to a biennial festival would help to create a steady sustainable pattern of festival activity which people could rely on as well as give more time between festivals to develop and commission more new work with artists, develop more programming strands and build more outreach capability. Alongside this, it is hoped that the festival will maintain a committed network of volunteers and organizers and be able to build a strong festival committee.

Over the next 12 months, the Board will review key areas of the festival to help inform the thinking for the 2021 festival. In particular, we want to better understand what we are doing well and what we could improve and to build up a much better picture of our audience: who they are, where they're from and how better to attract a wider, more diverse audience in the future. A particular aim is to build more tangible benchmarks and help more people understand the benefits which the festival brings to the lives of local people.

We aim to keep the festival in people's minds during 2020 and in the lead-up to the launch of the programme for the 2021 festival by funding the part-time post of festival director, who will also be tasked with helping to maintain the momentum and ambition of DAF between festivals.

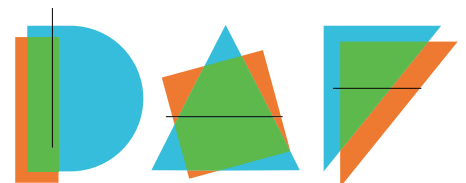
In early 2020, planning will start for the next festival and we want to involve both the festival team and more of the community in that process so that the festival continues to have the feel of community ownership - "made by the people for the people".

Our underlying artistic ambition for the 2021 festival is to continue to develop a programme of events which takes artistic and creative risks and challenges festival goers. We will continue to increase our reach to new audiences, building on the success of the 2019 Curious Commissions programme which saw an increase in engagement from people living in traditionally hard to reach areas such as Burnage and Withington.

Operationally, we will also be seeking to strengthen our volunteer team, especially around key functional roles such as marketing, young people, outreach and event production. The development of our festival operational plans and procedures progressed significantly for the 2019 festival and we will continue to improve and refine these to ensure the high standards of quality, operations and smooth and efficient running of the 2021 festival.



Made by the people
for the people. ”



DIDSBURY
ARTS
FESTIVAL

The 2019 Festival in Numbers

A Well Attended Festival

The 2019 Festival had over **10,000** visitors with **6,021** counted at specific events and an additional estimated audience visiting other events and the visual arts trail and school artwork in Didsbury Village, including the library and in shops.



57% of festival goers were new audience who had not attended the festival before.



96% of festival goers were in the age range 35-60+.



OVER
10,000
VISITORS

The majority of our audience came from within a **13** minute driving distance with over half from Manchester postcodes, mainly from across Didsbury and neighbouring areas.

A Substantial and Highly Rated Artistic Programme

There were **117** events performed by over **500** artists.

There were in addition **16** individual exhibitions of art including Art over the Counter in Didsbury Village, a number of separate exhibitions at Didsbury Parsonage Trust, a number of photography exhibitions in and around Didsbury Village and work undertaken by patients at Buccleugh Lodge, an NHS rehabilitation unit in Didsbury which also exhibited at Didsbury Library.

The majority of respondents to our audience survey rated the festival as 'very good or good' in terms of quality, and venues.

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

117
EVENTS

500
ARTISTS

Strong sponsorship and local community support

The festival enjoyed strong support from local businesses, community groups, venues and patrons. There were **4** main Sponsors comprising Siemens, P.J Livesey and ABa Quality Monitoring, as Gold sponsors and Spire Healthcare, who were a Silver sponsor. A number of other organizations and individuals contributed as Corporate & Individual Friends or as one of the **16** individual Patrons.



A Multi-Faceted Programme

Music Events

36 music events of which **8** were classical concerts, **6** were jazz events, **1** was a choir performance and **21** were other genres or mixed genre performances.

Visual Arts

23 exhibitions, installations and events including the Festival Exhibition, Art over the Counter displays in shops, Art on the Railings, a number of photographic exhibitions and a number of pop-up art galleries in various locations across Didsbury.

Literature and Spoken Word

9 talks by writers including most notably Lemn Sissay and Dave Haslam in conversation, Henry Normal who talked about his latest work of poetry, Nell Stevens who talked about her latest book "Mrs Gaskell and Me" and Christie Watson who talked about her latest memoir "The Language of Kindness: A Nurse's Story".



Performance

A programme of **15** performance events including theatre, comedy, poetry and performance art. This included the Curious Picnic in Didsbury Park with its pop-up stage and wide range of family-friendly performances.

Film

1 film event comprising short film screenings showcasing local and regional talent.

Guided Walking Tour

4 guided walks – This is Where it Happened, one of the Curious Commissions – which took people on a journey of local memories and reflections across Didsbury and Withington.

Workshops

18 workshops including a writing workshop for adults "My Family and Other Curiosities", "Design your own Universe" led by Meha Hindoca, **2** linocut printing sessions, a creative writing workshop "The Extraordinary in the Ordinary" and "Urban Sketching with Simone Ridyard".

Family Friendly

10 events were specific Family Friendly events most notably a variety of events at the Parsonage including the Tales of the Mesmerist – one of the Curious Commissions - performed by Northern Rascals and the Curious Picnic held on the closing day.

Accessible

76 of the events (**65%**) were free and **47 (35%)** were ticketed or pay on the door. All of the exhibitions were free.

Outreach

A number of events, exhibitions and workshops involved schools and outreach into care homes and were particularly well received by those organizations. For the 2019 festival, the creation of the Didsbury Community Choir was a particularly exciting development which involved a number of professionally led-choir sessions for the local community which were open to all ages and abilities.

The Festival Theme

This year's festival theme was **'Curiosity'** – encouraging festival goers to try something new and experience a range of events and exhibitions.

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.

Commissions

DAF commissioned **2** new pieces of work as part of the "Curious Commissions" project. Leading theatre companies Powder Keg and Northern Rascals were commissioned to produce new site-specific theatre aimed at families and encouraging people living in areas of low engagement to participate in the festival.

Most of this was funded through an Arts Council England grant.

These works were:

- **Powder Keg** – This is where it happened
- **Northern Rascals** – Tales of the Mesmerist

A key part of the project was the engagement programme in partnership with Z Arts where **18** specialised workshops were delivered to a range of groups across Didsbury, Withington and Burnage:

- Green End Primary School
- Ladybarn Primary School
- Parrs Wood High School
- Residents of the West Didsbury Estate in association with Southway Housing Trust

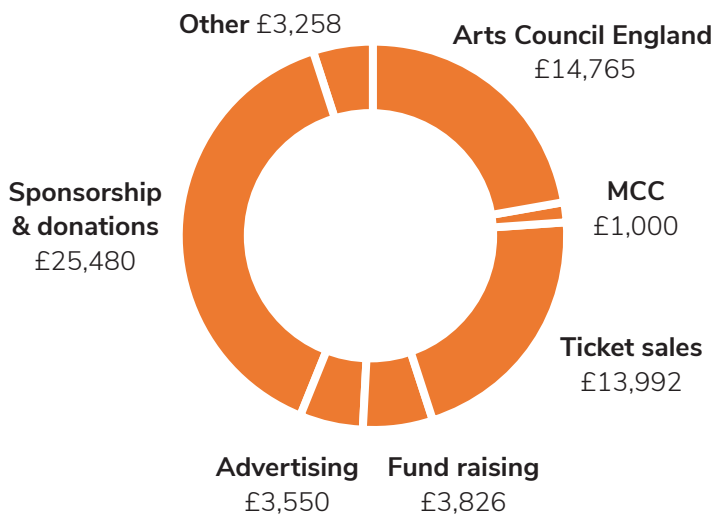
Curiosity



What did it cost?

The Festival cost **£66,000** to deliver. This includes the cost of the festival itself and the preparatory costs during the financial year. In 2019 we broke even with a reserves figure of **£16,670**. Funding for the festival totaled **£65,000** resulting in a small surplus of **£1,000**.

The source of the funding was:



Festival reserves carried forward are £17,011.

A valuable volunteer experience

There were **30** volunteers working during the festival. On average each volunteer gave **23** hours of their time during the festival.

Many were new to the festival and all said they would like to volunteer at the next festival. **8** of the volunteers had also done voluntary work elsewhere.

A strong, social media and press campaign

A strong and successful marketing, social media and press campaign was undertaken with design and print support provided by Stealth Design. Online advertising was placed in the Manchester Evening News and south Manchester publications and targeted use was made of social media.

The website attracted **6,149** users over the festival period with over **46,000** page views.

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

A big thank you also to our team of volunteer photographers from Siemens including Rav Shawe and Tom Bullock.



Thank you to all our supporters!

We wish to thank our funders, 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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