

## DEAL MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL REPORT 2024

The 2024 Deal Festival was the biggest Deal Festival that has ever been mounted, with over 65 events spanning all art forms, encompassing new commissions, artists of the highest calibre and a central focus on the community that makes Deal such a fantastic place to live and visit. This created a wonderful buzz and hive of activity in the town and created a range of choice in the festival which has opened the organisation to all audiences and communities in our local area and further afield.

The 2024 festival theme was French Connections, and this was explored through a host of French music from the Renaissance to today. We welcomed four French artists from Paris who delivered a series of four concerts that covered a huge diversity of repertoire from church music to cabaret and allowed our audience to get to know these four artists in performance and in conversations after concerts. This initiative was part of the 120 Entente Cordiale celebrations and promoted in collaboration with the Institut Français.

The festival featured a 3-part film series exploring classic new wave French cinema and Jessica Walker performed a unique deep dive into the extraordinary life and works of Barbara, one of the greatest French singer-songwriters of the twentieth century.

2024 was a year of big “firsts” with our inaugural Composer in Residence (Florence Anna Maunders) and Young Artist in Association in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Music (Lizzie Knatt). These two artists were involved across the whole festival in multiple events (as well as before and after the festival in our Spring Concert series and our Summer School), which gave our audience a chance to get to know them and their music. It also gave the two artists a chance to try out different creative ideas of their own, to gain curatorial experience and to write new works specifically for the festival. This involved two new commissions from Florence, one for our Community Band, giving Florence valuable experience in writing for amateur musicians, and one for professional chamber orchestra, Chamber Domaine, which will be repeated at the Wigmore Hall in 2025, building a legacy for DMA and Florence.



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Our second Poetry Day was a huge success. We built on 2023 by offering a series of development sessions for young poets and musicians (mentored by Jacob Sam-La Rose and Luke Styles) to create bespoke events of music and poetry for our audience. This gave valuable cross arts collaborative experiences to these artists and created original poetry/music events for our audience. These were accompanied by poetry readings and an open mic night which brought together the flourishing local poetry scene in Deal. Our literature strand was in full swing again this year with the likes of Tom Service, Gavin Esler and Alison Weir captivating the audience with personal insights into their work, politics in Britain and the musical culture of France. Local writers Deborah Moggach and Lord Gawain Douglas displayed the wealth of literary talent that exists in Deal.



For the second year in a row local musicians filled the streets of Deal with our Town Takeover letting everyone know that there was a festival happening and kicking off the festival buzz on the festival's opening weekend. This was continued into our Afterwork Tunes events where community bands had a chance to entertain audiences with a drink at local music pub the Walmer Castle. In total this gave a chance for 100 local musicians to take part in the festival.

Festival 2024 brought together for the first time two of the town's most prestigious local music making bodies, the Betteshanger Colliery Welfare Band and The Deal and Walmer Handelian Choral Society. These two groups collaborated on a joint programme performed at the Betteshanger Sports and Social Club, an important local establishment that the festival worked with for the first time in 2024. This event was packed, it was a real celebration of all of Deal's communities, at a local social venue, playing joyous music at a high level.

Young People were at the centre of the 2024 festival with a bespoke programme of events for young people and families of all ages. The centrepiece of this programme was Circo Rum Ba Ba's The Whale, a giant inflatable whale with a theatre show inside. This made a striking impression in the town, drawing attention to the festival and exciting the young people who were entertained and it also exposed them to important environmental issues facing our coastal community. We hosted a dance workshop and performance based on the children's book The Koala Who Could, family friendly concerts of classical music and events by local early years practitioner Sarah Hubbard with her Moo Music interactive sessions. We also worked with the Chineke! Orchestra and Dover secondary school students on new compositions that were showcased in a lunchtime concert with Chineke! playing alongside the Dover students.



In addition to our Young Artist in Association we continued to promote the early careers of young professionals. From the Keyboard Trust we were treated to a virtuosic recital from Gabrielè Sutkutė,



and sold-out lunchtime concerts from the likes of RPS Awards-nominated and Countess of Munster Musical Trust accordionist Ryan Corbett and award-winning guitarist Jack Hancher. There were workshops for all ages from kora player Kadiale Kouyate and tabla player Kuljit Bhamra.

The festival featured the results of an amazing collaboration between the Irene Taylor Trust (ITT) and our own Community Band. This involved ITT workshop leaders spending many weeks working with local young people in Kent at risk of offending writing their own songs, as well as with former prisoners from Kent. These two groups then came together to perform their new music with our Community Band including a new piece from our Composer in Residence. The multiple strands to this project were incredibly moving and uplifting for audiences and participants alike.

Jazz, popular music and global music were more on offer in 2024 than ever before with a new collaboration with the Smugglers Festival which brought together audiences young and old dancing in the aisles of St George's Church. There they enjoyed Gamelan Lila Cita and Baque Luar an all-female Brazilian vocal and drumming group. One of the UK's most exciting young jazz musicians Sultan Stevenson played a sold-out gig at local venue The Lighthouse. The National Youth Jazz Orchestra combined with our own DMA Jazz Academy to perform a concert of Latin music. We featured two Kent-based experiential rock and ambient bands in late-night gigs, as well as the hugely popular Jeremy Sassoon singing jazz, blues, groove and soul classics from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.



It was a breakthrough year for opera at the Deal Festival with the critically acclaimed Wild Arts opera company performing a stunning fully staged production of the Magic Flute at St. Mary's Arts Centre in Sandwich. This was an important chance for local audiences to hear high quality opera without having to travel to London or Glyndebourne, and at a fraction of the price. Theatre was also able to

be enjoyed once again from Kent company the Changeling Theatre, whose Henry V was a festival highlight. More experimental theatre was on offer in the form of Dracula Bite Size featuring narrator Jon Iles (from ITV's The Bill) and clarinettist and composer of the show's music Sarah Watts.

The festival continued to champion living composers and to celebrate diversity across all our events, whether this was in the form of performers or composers from diverse backgrounds or artists who are underrepresented because of their gender or sexual orientation.



## Deal Music & Arts Festival Report 2024

The Deal Festival is proving to be a welcoming place to celebrate every facet of our society through the arts. Our commitment to new music was particularly in evidence with music by living composers in every single concert. We were exceptionally proud of our inaugural Composer in Residence Florence Anna Maunders and our two festival commissions, from Florence and from Aaron Holloway-Nahum. Both pieces were part of our biggest concert(s), a two-part journey through all of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos alongside nine new commissions (3 of which were world premieres). These two concerts were introduced by writer, critic and journalist Sir Nicholas Kenyon and hosted by BBC Radio 3 journalist Tom Service. These two concerts typified the world class calibre of Deal Festival events and our position at the forefront of new music and in the celebration of music of the past.



### **Deal Music and Arts would like to thank all those who make it possible for us to do this**

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