

DEAL MUSIC & ARTS

Festival Review 2025



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A word from our Artistic Director, Luke Styles



The 2025 Deal Festival was a resounding artistic success, hosting over 55 events across all art forms, surpassing our audience targets, and creating a vibrant cultural hub in Deal, Dover and Sandwich. With a focus on community engagement, new commissions, and world-class artists, we delivered a diverse programme that attracted record numbers and resonated deeply with audiences.



Our community-focused initiatives excelled, particularly the Captain's Garden Festival Day, which drew over 700 people to hear music, participate in art workshops, and join a poetry open mic, fostering unprecedented local engagement. The Town Takeover saw musicians performing in public spaces like Deal High Street and outside St George's Church, while our free sound installation, Pilgrimage took place in an important community space, The Landmark, bringing in over 120 local people to experience a new Deal Festival commission that used sounds of the coast from Deal to Dover as its sonic material.



Highlights included the artistic brilliance of Lucy Crowe with the Fantasia Orchestra, Wild Arts Opera's captivating performance of *The Elixir of Love* and top jazz saxophonist Maddy Coombs at the Lighthouse. Our lunchtime concert series, spotlighting young artists, achieved excellent audiences with exceptional performances by emerging talents. Our first Saturday was dedicated to Dover, featuring the *Coastlines* Oratorio of Gulls, which sold out the newly refurbished 400-seat Dover Town Hall. This 30-minute new work, which I composed in collaboration with librettist Hazel Gould for Dover and Deal school children and White Cliffs Symphonic Winds saw workshops in schools in Dover and Deal to bring the young people's creativity into the new work and to foster a collaborative singing and instrumental performance, making a significant local impact.



Young People and Family events thrived, with storytelling, dancing, music and art workshops and performances. Our collaboration with the Royal Academy of Music for our Artist in Association scheme brought the cellist Hoda Jahanpour into the festival for three exceptional events and took the festival into the home of artist Joanna Jones. Hoda, and our Composer in Residence Blasio Kavuma, were part of our revitalised festival launch event which introduced these two artists to the festival.

Facts and figures

11 festival days

55 events

8 free events

4,500 attendances

24 venues

163 professional musicians and performers engaged

9 world premieres

518 participants from the local community (as performers or in workshops)

22 local community organisations worked with (excluding venue partners)

28 volunteers

Some quotes from our audience

“I thought it was great that local children were involved in the festival and that it had a community feel about it as well as very high-quality professional performances.”

“The standard of musicians and speakers was always very high. In addition, the introduction of new talent- for example the Festival’s composer-in-residence makes newer more challenging works accessible.”

“Very high-quality performances you'd be lucky to see in London, but in the intimate setting of St George's church, close up to the action...”

“The breadth of art forms - classical music, folk, jazz, literary talks, history walks, family events and circus skills. The opera was joyous, funny, witty and well sung and staged.”

Thank you

to all the funders and supporters who come together to make the Deal Festival such a special event. Without you, none of this would happen.

Funders & Supporters

Arts Council England, The Burnard Sunley Foundation, The Cavatina Music Trust, The Countess of Munster Trust, Deal Rotary Icebreakers, Dover Town Council, The Arts Society of Dover, Deal & Sandwich, Esperanza Syndicate, The Foyle Foundation, Sir Graeme Odgers, Guy and Elinor Meynell Trust, John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust, Julie Nandi, Kent Community Foundation, The Keyboard Trust, The Mary Farrell Trust, The Oak Foundation, Port of Dover Charitable Trust, Southeastern Railways, St. Andrew's Church, Deal, The RVW Foundation, The Friends of Deal Music & Arts.



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