



19 - 28 SEPTEMBER 2019

# KENILWORTH ARTS FESTIVAL

END OF YEAR REPORT



## INTRODUCTION

Since launching in 2016, Kenilworth Arts Festival has grown into a thriving annual celebration of the creative arts. Held over several days each September, the festival brings leading writers, musicians and visual artists to Kenilworth (Warwickshire) for one-off events in different venues around the town. In the absence of any professional arts venues, a variety of cafes, bookshops, community theatres, churches and public spaces are temporarily re-imagined and re-purposed to play host to concerts, talks, screenings, exhibitions, family activities and more. In the process, the whole town becomes a stage for world class arts.

Kenilworth Arts Festival is a not-for-profit, volunteer-led organisation. The aims of the festival include: to celebrate and support outstanding new work within the creative arts; to provide a platform for ideas and stories that offer new ways of seeing the world around us; to give performance opportunities to emerging artists; to increase participation in – and appreciation of – the arts within Warwickshire, and to boost cultural tourism in the region.

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Kenilworth Arts Festival 2019 was held from 19 – 28th September. When planning the festival, two main areas of development were identified. Firstly, with feedback from previous years showing that audiences welcomed the opportunity to access well-produced, non-mainstream arts events in a district where such activities are scarce, the primary ambition for 2019 was to build on the foundations laid in previous years: to further grow & improve the festival's core offerings by bringing more acclaimed artists to Kenilworth, refining event production and offering unique experiences.

A second ambition for 2019 was to introduce a broader range of participatory activities. By giving people opportunities to engage in different ways, it was hoped the festival would be able to reach new audiences – particularly a wider variety of age groups.

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This report provides an overview of the Festival's activities in 2019, with information about the programme, audiences and outcomes.

**VIEW THE 2019 PHOTO GALLERY AT: [WWW.KENILWORTHARTSFESTIVAL.CO.UK](http://WWW.KENILWORTHARTSFESTIVAL.CO.UK)**



## KEY OUTCOMES

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### **Our biggest and most varied programme yet**

Kenilworth Arts Festival 2019 featured more than 40 events. Alongside talks, concerts and exhibitions, the programme included a series of film screenings for the first time, as well as a bigger range of participatory activities for people of different ages.

### **A stage for world class arts**

Our 2019 festival brought leading novelists, campaigners, musicians and visual artists to Kenilworth for one-off events. Headliners including celebrated human rights campaigner Caroline Criado Perez, 2018 Journalist of the Year Amelia Gentleman and rising classical star Isata Kanneh-Mason. Our 2019 programme was also our most international yet, with artists travelling from New Zealand, Poland, France, Belgium and beyond. The programme included UK premiere performances, exclusive appearances and several Midlands debuts.

### **A celebration of outstanding new work**

Over 90% of events in our 2019 programme showcased new work.

### **Significant increase in attendance figures**

Over 6,000 people attended / participated in the festival over the course of ten days - a large increase on 2018 numbers.

### **A boost for cultural tourism**

As well as being supported by local residents, the festival attracted visitors from all over the country and beyond. One couple even travelled from Barcelona, Spain, to attend an event.

### **High levels of audience satisfaction:**

Audience feedback has been extremely positive, with artist/event quality receiving an average score of 4.91 / 5 in completed questionnaires. Qualitative feedback from audience members, artists and partners has also been very strong.

### **Supporting the local cultural scene**

The festival helped to build capacity in the local arts scene by facilitating network building, developing venues and supporting local artists - most notably through performance and exhibiting opportunities and by supporting the establishment of a new artist collective.

### **Plus:**

- Achieved a gender balance across the entire line-up (for the fourth successive year).
- Worked with a local school on a multi-disciplinary project, which involved 100+ students.
- Commissioned new work.
- Secured Arts Council England funding for the second successive year.
- Increased awareness of the festival on a regional & national level and strengthened relations with agents & publishers, laying foundations for the future growth of the festival.



## THE PROGRAMME

### OVERVIEW

The programme for Kenilworth Arts Festival 2019 consisted of 41 events, spread over ten days. A total of 65 different artists / groups were involved. For the fourth successive year, the festival achieved a minimum 50% representation of female artists across the entire line up. Overall, 69% of artists / acts were female or female-led.

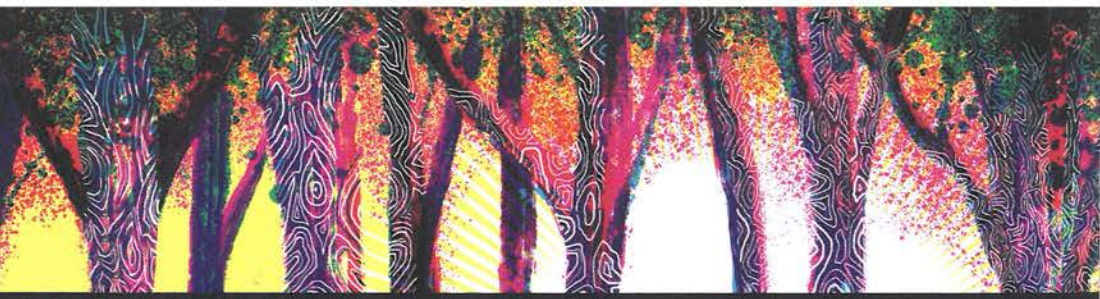
A wide variety of artforms were represented - including music (acoustic, jazz, classical, ambient and more), literature (fiction and non-fiction), theatre and visual arts. Film screenings were also incorporated into the programme for the first time.

Eight events, including a large-scale outdoor event, were free of charge. The remainder were individually ticketed, with prices ranging from £4 to £14. For ticketed events, concessionary prices were available for students and people who are registered disabled, unemployed or on a low wage. A small number of free tickets were given away as part of outreach efforts, mostly via a local school and a charity which supports the integration of refugees in the local area.

### WORLD-CLASS, THOUGHT-PROVOKING NEW WORK

At the heart of the festival's programming was an attempt to showcase outstanding new work and bring high quality arts opportunities to a town where chances to access such activities are otherwise scarce. A host of prominent, critically-acclaimed musicians, writers, campaigners and visual artists made appearances at the festival in 2019 (see p.6 for details of the headline acts). The programme was also our most international to date, with artists travelling from New Zealand, Poland, France and Belgium, among other countries, to participate. The programme featured two UK premiere performances, UK exclusive appearances and several Midlands debuts. The festival was also the first place in the world where copies of a new book by Amelia Gentleman were available for sale. In total, 91% of events showcased work that had been produced / released in the 12 months leading up to the festival. This includes work created specifically for the festival - most notably a new piece of public text art.

Another core aspect of the 2019 programme was that it gave a platform to work which explored serious issues in creative, inclusive ways. Through talks, screenings, workshops and installations, audiences were given an opportunity to engage with a wide range of social justice issues. Example events include a panel discussion on #MeToo in fiction, a workshop on 'telling untold stories' and a screening of a documentary about the Syrian uprising. Other events explored climate change, mental health and race, class and gender politics.



## MORE PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES

As outlined in the introduction, one of the festival's targets for 2019 was to introduce a bigger range of participatory activities. This was achieved in numerous ways. Firstly, more workshops were organised, on subjects ranging from cyanotype printing to creative writing. Secondly, activities for families and children were more directly targeted at participatory and learning experiences. The centrepiece of the family programme was a fully accessible multi-sensory installation, the Soundplay Dome, which gave children aged 0-12 an opportunity to create a soothing musical landscape using objects and tactile materials. The Dome was installed for a full day, with two sessions designated as 'relaxed sessions'.

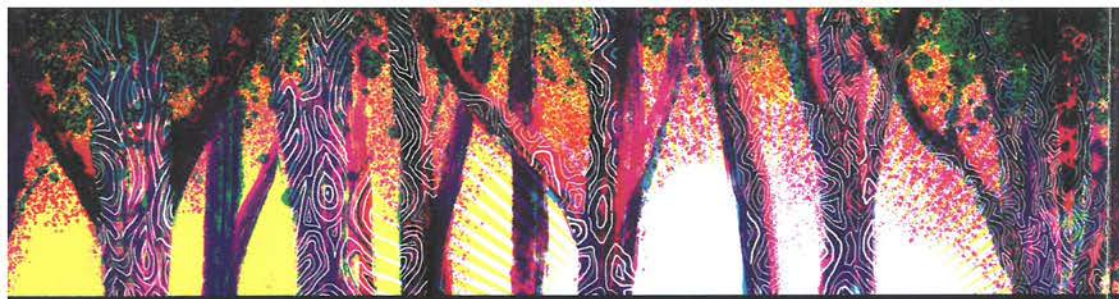
Three additional interactive installations engaged local residents as participants as well as audience members. A community piano was installed in Kenilworth town centre for the duration of the festival. The piano was professionally tuned, painted by local artists and freely available to play during daylight hours. A new piece of public text art was also produced. For this project, the festival commissioned an artist to work with students from a local school. With guidance from practitioners, 96 students created their own 'ten word stories', on the theme of Being Human. These stories were then displayed, on a rotating basis, on a bespoke steel frame built by artist Sam Edward.

Finally, the festival programme featured The Gramophone: a 10ft tall, 800kg sculpture and music playing device, created by Irish artist Donnacha Cahill. The Gramophone spent two days in Kenilworth. As well as making pop-up appearances in surprising places around the local area, the festival organised a Bring Your Own Records event, which gave people an opportunity to DJ and to hear and share their favourite songs in a completely new way. A tour of local residential homes and day centres was also arranged, with residents again encouraged to bring along a favourite record.

These activities gave people opportunities to engage with the arts in new and different ways. They also enabled the festival to reach new audiences - particularly people of different ages.



Being Human installation



## THE PROGRAMME

### VENUES

Events were hosted in a total of 18 venues and settings. These include churches, bookshops, community theatres, cafes, bars and a range of public spaces. By using a range of settings, the festival was able to provide a diverse showcase of the town. Moreover, this multi-venue approach enabled the delivery of distinctive experiences, with events curated to complement specific spaces. For example, a screening of concert documentary *Amazing Grace*, which is Aretha Franklin's famous gospel album of the same name, was screened in a church.

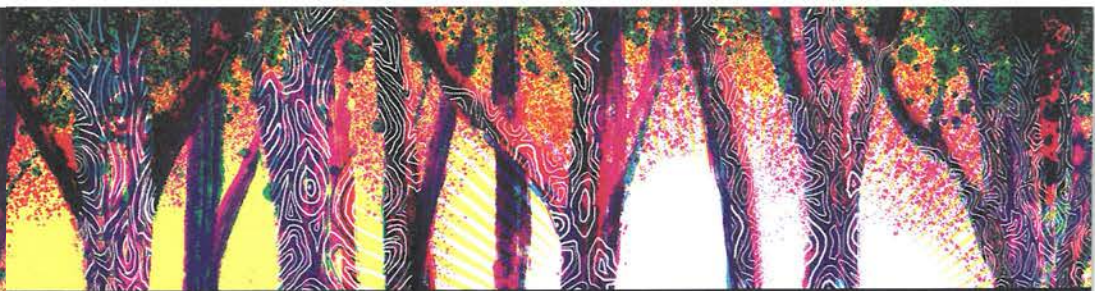
New venues for 2019 included Kenilworth Library, which was used for two talks, St. Nicholas' Parochial Hall, which was used for an exhibition, and the Senior Citizens' Club. Of the venues used in previous years, Kenilworth Castle was unfortunately not available this year owing to a change in policy regarding third party events. Kenilworth School was also not used. It had been hoped that the school's main hall could be used for a concert, but ultimately it proved impossible to find professional artists willing to perform in such a space.

### VENUE DEVELOPMENT

The festival aims to support the development of local venues and the local arts scene. These efforts involve knowledge sharing, network building and demonstrating / creating demand for high quality arts events. Efforts are also made to support local venues in practical matters. In 2019, the festival's biggest achievement in this respect was that it provided funding to help a bookshop install a permanent AV and projection system. Regular film screenings are now being held in the venue and a new film club has been established.



Darius Brubeck Quartet, St. John's Church



## HEADLINE ARTISTS

**CAROLINE CRIADO-PEREZ**

Caroline Criado Perez is a writer, broadcaster and award-winning feminist activist. Her most notable campaigns include getting a woman on Bank of England banknotes and successfully lobbying for a statue of suffragist Millicent Fawcett to be erected in Parliament. In conversation with journalist Lucy Scholes, Caroline spoke about her new book, *Invisible Women*, which shows how a 'gender data gap' is having a profound impact on women's health and well-being.

**AMELIA GENTLEMAN**

Amelia Gentleman is a writer for The Guardian who, in 2018, won the Journalist of the Year Award for her extraordinary investigative work uncovering the 'Windrush Scandal'. Amelia joined us to give a talk about her work, providing insights into the political and historical context of the scandal and sharing individual stories of those affected. Amelia also ran a one-off writing workshop on 'How to Tell Untold Stories'.

**ISATA KANNEH-MASON**

Isata Kanneh-Mason is widely recognised as one of the most talented emerging classical artists in the UK today. An outstanding pianist, Isata first rose to prominence as a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. She has since performed around the UK and abroad, including regular duo recitals with her brother, the cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason. As part of our festival, Isata gave a solo recital in St. John's Church, performing pieces from her newly-released debut album.

**NADIA REID**

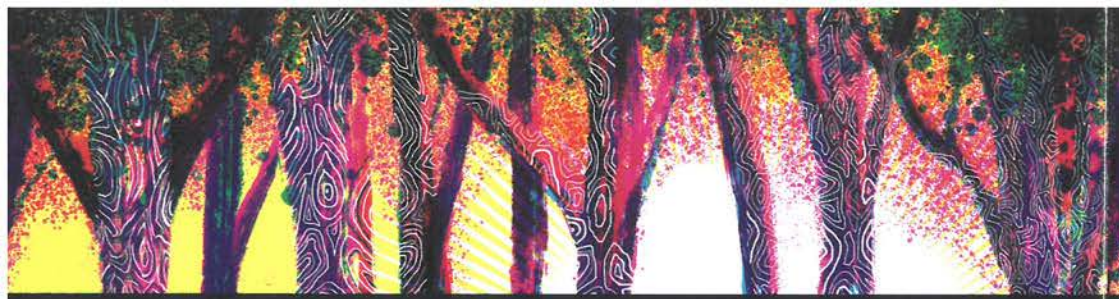
Nadia Reid is a singer-songwriter from New Zealand, who has earned a global fanbase following the release of two highly-acclaimed albums. She has played at respected venues and festivals all over the world, appeared on BBC's 'Later... with Jools Holland', and been nominated for two of New Zealand's leading arts prizes. Nadia opened our 2019 festival with a rare solo concert in the beautiful surroundings of St Nicholas' Church - her only UK appearance of 2019.

**DARIUS BRUBECK QUARTET**

Darius Brubeck, the acclaimed American jazz pianist and son of legendary musician Dave Brubeck, brought his celebrated quartet to Kenilworth for a sold-out show in St. John's Church. The quartet offered a glimpse into material from a forthcoming album, due for release in 2020, which was recorded during their highly successful recent tour of Poland.

**NIKESH SHUKLA**

Nikesh Shukla is a writer, presenter and the editor of *The Good Immigrant*, a ground-breaking anthology by British writers of colour about race and immigration in the UK. His novels have been shortlisted for the Costa First Novel Award and the Specsavers National Book Award, and he is widely recognised as one of the most influential people in publishing today. Nikesh joined us to talk about his new YA novel, *The Boxer*.



## THE PROGRAMME: SUMMARY OF EVENTS

### MUSIC

The opening act of this year's festival was New Zealand-based singer-songwriter Nadia Reid, who performed a one-off concert in St. Nicholas' Church. Other musical highlights during the festival included concerts from jazz group Darius Brubeck Quartet, classical pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason and emerging acoustic artists Joshua Burnside and Rosie Carney, plus a first UK show from French musician Pauline Drand. There was also a special evening of cinematic instrumental music featuring AVA and, in a UK premiere, a joint set from Warsaw-based cellist Resina and Brussels-based composer Christina Vantzou.

### TALKS & READINGS

The literary strand of this year's programme featured some of the most original and vital voices in fiction and non-fiction writing today. The centrepiece was the Talking Shop: a full weekend of talks and panel events taking place in Priory Theatre on 21st/22nd September. Among the speakers were human rights campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez, best-selling author Nathan Filer, journalist Amelia Gentleman and writer & editor Nikesh Shukla. With events exploring subjects such as Windrush, mental health and #MeToo, it proved to be a thought-provoking and inspiring weekend. Elsewhere in the programme, there was an event celebrating the 90th anniversary of world-famous publishing house Faber & Faber and an appearance from internationally-best-selling novelist Clare Mackintosh.

### FILM SCREENINGS

A new addition to the programme this year was a series of pop-up cinema events. The festival showcased five of the best films to come out in 2019: Oscar-nominated *If Beale Street Could Talk*, comedies *Woman at War* and *Can You Ever Forgive Me*, concert documentary *Amazing Grace* and, in a Midlands premiere, a screening of FOR SAMA, which was awarded Prix L'Œil d'Or for Best Documentary at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival.

### ART & COMMUNITY

The art & community strand of the festival programme gave people opportunities to engage with the arts in a wide range of ways. The largest event was the Old Town Street Party - a free all-day event which featured live music, walkabout theatre, pop-up workshops and an art & craft market. Other offerings included a brand new text art installation, produced in part by students from a local school, and *The Gramophone* - an extraordinary interactive sculpture made by Irish artist Donnacha Cahill. The festival also gave a first exhibition opportunity to a newly-formed collective of Kenilworth-based artists.





## THE PROGRAMME: SUMMARY OF EVENTS

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### WORKSHOPS

Workshops offered a valuable opportunity for people to get hands-on experience, try something new and gain insights from artists who are at the forefront of their respective fields. Offerings included a cyanotype workshop, mosaic workshop and writing workshops, as well as a more informal 'wine and watercolours' event.

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

This year's festival featured some awe-inspiring activities for younger ones. Events included puppet making with a local theatre company, pinhole photography workshops and a Family Arts Discovery Day. The highlight of this day was the installation of a fully accessible sensory space, the Soundplay Dome, which gave children of all ages the opportunity to explore sound and light.



Soundplay Dome



The Gramophone, Abbey Fields



Walkabout theatre at the Old Town Street Party



PHOTOS: LIVE MUSIC



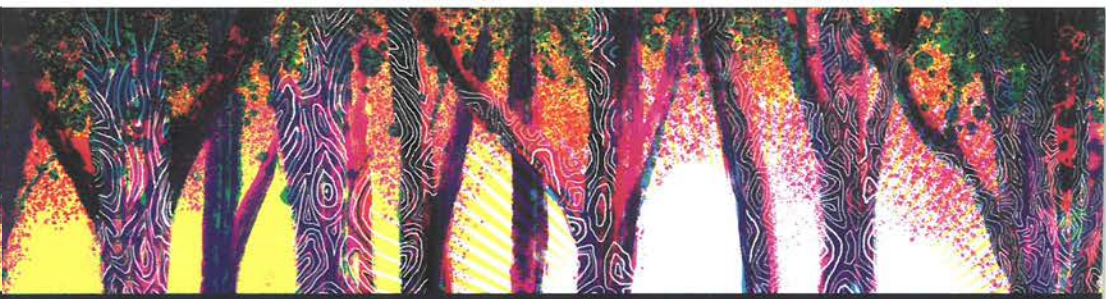
AVA, St. Nicholas' Church



Isata Kanneh-Mason, St. John's Church



Joshua Burnside, Tallman Theatre



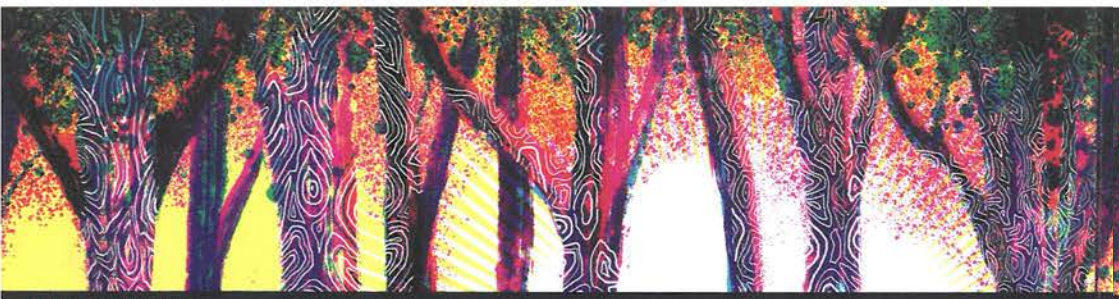
Afia Ahmed, Mariam Khan and Salma Haidrani, Priory Theatre



Caroline Criado-Perez



Nikesh Shukla



## AUDIENCES

### ATTENDANCE FIGURES

At each event, a volunteer was tasked with measuring the numbers of attendees. Attendance was recorded at ticketed events using a counter, while sample counts were used to estimate attendance at unticketed events and monitor engagement with installations. These measures, combined with ticket sales data and feedback from partners, give us a strong indication of overall attendance / participation levels for Kenilworth Arts Festival 2019.

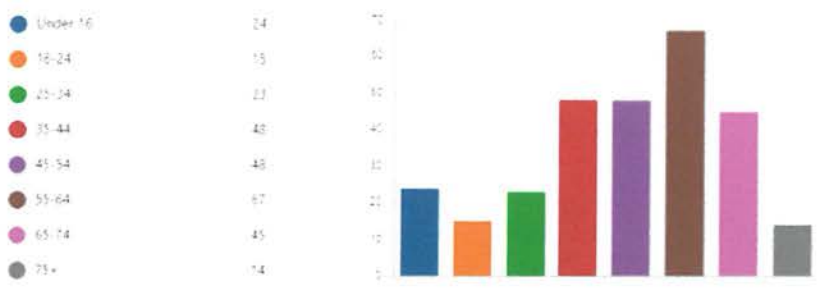
Figures show an increased level of engagement with the festival's activities compared with 2018. Over 1,700 tickets were sold, fifteen events sold out and two thirds of events surpassed 60% capacity. Music events and workshops continued to be particularly popular, while literary events saw a marked increase in levels of engagement.

Overall attendance figures were boosted by efforts to expand the programme of free community and participatory activities. An estimated 3,000 people attended the Old Town Street Party alone. Taking into account people's involvement as audience members, as visitors to exhibitions / installations and as active participants, total count for the whole festival was over 6,000.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Responses to an audience survey provide insights into the demographics of festival goers. Of the 205 people who completed the survey, a wide range of age groups were represented (see chart below). The two groups with the smallest representation were 16-24 yrs and 75+ yrs. This finding appears to justify efforts to engage these groups directly through targeted projects such as schools projects and by taking art into residential centres.

What are the ages of those attending in your party?

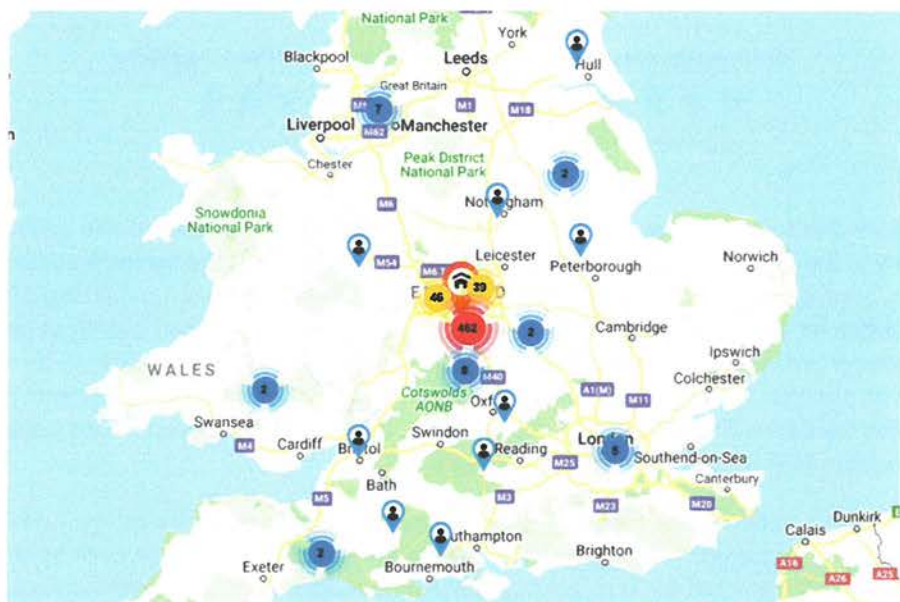




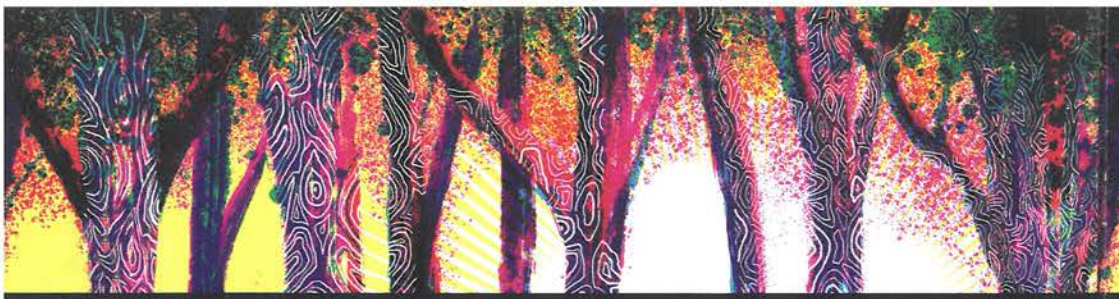
Survey data also reveals that people had a wide range of motivations for attending events – including wanting to see a specific artist, wanting to support local events and being interested in a genre / artform. Additionally, 30% of respondents stated their main reason for attending the event was 'being interested in trying something new'. This suggests that, as well as giving arts lovers an opportunity to indulge their passion, the festival is encouraging new communities to engage with the arts.

Finally, survey data, ticket data and face-to-face meetings reveal that the 2019 festival attracted both local residents and those travelling from further afield. One couple even travelled from Barcelona to attend an event, enticed by the prospect of seeing a rare concert from their favourite musician. Other ticket holders travelled from Wales, London, Hull, Leeds and beyond. This suggests the festival is contributing to cultural tourism in the region, and points to the broader economic benefits of the festival for the local region.

Along with audience feedback, these findings will be used to help us shape our programme and marketing efforts in future years.



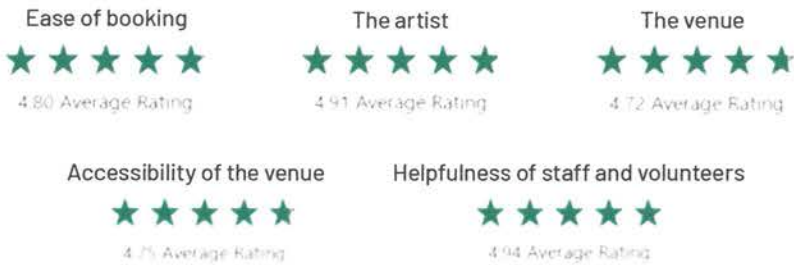
Verified locations of people who bought tickets online for Kenilworth Arts Festival 2019 events. Source: WeGotTickets



## FEEDBACK

As in previous years, we actively sought feedback from audience members and partners about their experience of the festival. The central tool for gathering responses was an audience questionnaire, which was disseminated at events. Guests were asked to provide an assessment of the artist / event, the venue, accessibility, ease of booking and the helpfulness of staff and volunteers. The questionnaire also included a space for further comments and suggestions.

In total, 205 completed forms were submitted – a slight increase on 2018. These were completed at a variety of events. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive: the average score awarded to the quality of artist / event was 4.91 out of 5. Ratings for all other categories also exceeded 4.7/5.



Qualitative feedback was also excellent. In comments, attendees praised the calibre and diversity of the artists, the professionalism of event production and the distinctiveness of the venues. Several respondents expressed a view that the festival had offered something different and positive for the region. Other written feedback specifically described events as learning experiences and/or thought-provoking – suggesting the festival is succeeding in its aim of offering a platform for new and challenging ideas. The high levels of satisfaction from guests attending the Darius Brubeck Quartet concert in St. John’s Church suggest sound issues that were noted in 2018 were successfully rectified this year.

Some valuable constructive feedback was offered, including comments on the comfort of seating in one venue and issues with the ticket booking process. Feedback such as this will, where possible, be acted on. On the whole, though, audience feedback is very encouraging. Indeed, several respondents explicitly urge the festival to deliver ‘more of the same’.



## FEEDBACK

Finally, feedback from artists - in both written correspondence and public social media posts about their experiences - has also been extremely positive. Nadia Reid described her concert as a 'special night', author Serena Patel spoke of a 'fantastic day' and author Lucy Scholes wrote that being involved in the Festival was 'such a joy'. Another author wrote to thank the festival for 'a brilliant day', praising the 'generous and welcoming' team and the calibre of the event chair.

### SAMPLE AUDIENCE FEEDBACK:

- 'It has been brilliant. I wouldn't change a thing'
- 'Please continue with this festival - we thoroughly enjoy the varied acts and events'
- 'Excellent event - the festival continues to grow from strength to strength. Well done to all involved in organising'
- 'Excellent event and excellent programme - varied and thought provoking. Looking forward to future festivals'
- 'We've really enjoyed each festival event and in particular the eclecticism of high quality music, literature and film of the less obvious kind'
- 'I like the diversity of cultures [represented]'
- 'Love the emphasis on feminism - definitely a need for more platforms for this perspective'
- 'More please. We are a local book club and have really enjoyed the outing'
- 'Getting better every year'
- 'More of the same. Wonderful speakers. A lovely evening. Thank you'
- 'Brilliant. Thank you. Very informative'
- 'A very interesting talk. Enjoyed it a lot.'
- 'A really interesting and enjoyable event. Thank you so much to all involved. I learnt a lot.'
- 'A brilliant talk. So privileged. A great young woman and writer.'
- 'Speechless.'



Alex Drofiak (@Xelafish)

28/09/2019 13:25

Fantastic night - transported to rolling waves, reeling sea birds in the wind, and the many faces of the coast as weather patterns change through spirit-soaring music! So much fun to introduce my brother to this music live :)

Thanks @AVAmusic @kenilwortharts!



Amy Proud (@amyproud)

19/09/2019 23:51

That was heaven! I've wanted to see @HulloNadiaReid for such a long time 😊 thank you

@kenilwortharts x pic.twitter.com/pnkx3qur2k



Sunny Lalli (@sllali1)

29/09/2019 12:43

@kenilwortharts @lexisjsmith @iabryantphoto Great work.

Kenilworth is lucky to have the diligence and passion of the Kenilworth Arts Festival production team to each year curate and deliver extraordinary acts and stories which illuminate our lives. Not all small towns are lucky enough to have such events. Thank you all. :)



Lynda McMahon (@LyndaMcMahon20)

23/09/2019 09:16

@TreeHouseBkshoop @kenilwortharts @RadioAbbey @BookFolkRadio: Just spent the whole weekend in The Priory Theatre listening to inspirational writers talking about what they do. Absolutely brilliant. All of them. Thank you so much to them for organising this. It was particularly great to meet Kerry Hudson. I have met some amazing people!

## WITH THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS:

Arts Council England • Kenilworth Town Council • Warwick District Council  
Kenilworth Books • Emmerson Press • The Almanack • Kenilworth Lions

Abbey Hill United Reformed Church • Andy Saunders • Bablake School • Boothroyd & co  
Clarendon Arms • Drew Coleman Sound • The Farthing Gallery • The Kenilworth Centre  
Kenilworth Jazz Club • Kenilworth Methodist Church • Kenilworth School • Kenilworth  
Senior Citizens' Club • Leaders • Leamington Underground Cinema • MGAW Photography  
M Seven PR • Nic Hurst Staging • Onside Coaching • The Orangery • Priory Theatre  
St John's Church • St. Nicholas' Church • Switchopen • Talisman Theatre • Tesco  
Bags of Help • Tia Bryant Photography • Toast Ale • Transluceo Photography  
Tree House Bookshop • Waitrose • Warwickshire Libraries • WeGotTickets

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