



Festival of Dover 1998

REVIEW AND ROUND-UP

Lisa Webb, Arts Development Officer, Dover District Council

It's at this time every year that the Arts and Events Department gives a huge sigh of relief and says "Phew! Thank goodness that's over for another year!" Ten months of preparation, securing artists, programming activities and persuading businesses to part with their sponsorship budgets, before actually running the Festival of Dover certainly takes the toll on the team of Donna, Lisa and Sue at Dover District Council.

1998 marked a significant achievement in the Festival's history, with a series of major projects targeting young people and their families. The Festival took the theme "Coastal Landscapes" and was staged during the Whitsun break, offering the opportunity for lots of environmentally themed activities, particularly for those visiting the town or for those with time to spare during the half term break.

The White Cliffs Countryside Project, in association with the Festival, coordinated a series of activities, ranging from Rockpool Adventures to Seashore Safaris, and Kites on the Heights to the Dover Ghost Walk. Over 1000 people attended the package of events, and they will be pleased to hear that a similar programme will be offered during the October festival of Coastal Landscapes, which is a district-wide initiative.

A highlight for some of the rural areas, was a touring production of Twelfth Night by Kent Shakespeare Project. The show went to eight village halls and three schools, with over 500 children benefiting from the tour and audience attendances averaging 40 - 50% capacity. The feedback has been extremely positive, with many requests for the project to be repeated.

One of the most popular events was a mediaeval folk concert held in the prestigious setting of Dover Castle. The sell-out event featured the music of Jean-Pierre Rasle and Phil Martin, and was organised as part of the Cross Channel Arts Association

Music & Remparts programme. The evening culminated in the annual fireworks display, launched from the grounds of the Castle. It is estimated that an additional 1500 people watched the display from Dover's sea front.

The annual schools' project involved students and teachers from Archers Court Secondary School and pupils from St. Martin's and Whitfield Primary Schools. The four week residency "Century's Ebb" included a series of arts workshops within the schools and an evening open air production on the water side at De Bradelei Wharf. The illuminated show featured over 100 participants and was watched by approximately 800 people.

One of the highlights for me was a three day music workshop, Music Lab '98, which attracted over 50 young people from the area, giving them the opportunity to learn with a team of experts from the music industry. The event culminated in a finale concert show casing the work of the various bands formed during the course. A number of students on the course have already been approached with recording offers and/or places at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, as a direct result of Music Lab '98.

Another personal favourite was a project with which I was very much involved. A Celebration of Dance was a competitive dance showcase, featuring the talents of over 100 young dancers from the area. The show was produced and staged in the short space of six hours, with fantastic results. Over 200

18 people came to watch the performance, which was judged by the Town Mayor of Dover, Mrs. Donna Sowerby and Nina Atkinson, Director of Loop Dance Company. The event was won by a team of dancers from Footsteps in Deal, who presented a dazzling interpretation of a routine from the show, Lord of the Dance.

Other events included visits to Market Square by the KCC Beach Bus and street performers on both Saturdays, the annual Teddy Bears' Picnic at Kearsney Abbey (which attracted over 1000 people), free tours for local residents on the Guide Friday bus, a record number of participants in the Fun Kids Triathlon, an environmental music and craft project with Vale View Primary School (with finale concert in Market Square), open air drama at the White Cliffs Experience and various exhibitions at seven different venues.

De Bradelei Wharf was once again the principal sponsor of the Festival, in the second year of their three year partnership with Dover District Council. Their generous investment provides £30,000 of additional funding to the programme, enabling the majority of activities to be provided at no charge to the general public. The Festival is also funded by a range of other local business and supporters, notably Pfizer, Dover Harbour Board, Sea France and Dover Town Council, and for 1998, the event was awarded a special funding grant of £4000 from South East Arts in recognition of the audience development work achieved by the festival projects (namely Music Lab '98, Century's Ebb, Celebration of Dance and Twelfth Night).

We believe that our annual arts festival continues to provide Dover with a package of quality and value for money events, which

would not otherwise be seen in the town. The programme clearly contributes to developing the quality and variety of arts opportunities in the area, while providing additional attraction to those visiting the town. It also provides good publicity for the area, contributing to both social and economic regeneration initiatives. This year's environmental theme encouraged a number of innovative, imaginative and creative projects to emerge, generating new partnerships and developing new audiences for several art forms.

For 1999, the arts and events programme will focus on the past and reflect on issues relating to key dates in local history, entitled "Echoes of an Era". The proposed dates for the Festival of Dover are Bank Holiday Saturday 29 May until Saturday 5 June 1999, encompassing the schools' half term holiday.

The programme will again focus on meeting the needs of local children, while adding interest to those visiting the area. 90% of the activities will be free of charge to the public. This will be achieved by developing further partnerships and identifying new funding opportunities.

Proposed projects include a three day competitive dance festival and showcase, a three day residency of Music Lab '99, including an open air concert and a week long residential drama course. Strange Cargo will be working on "The Dreaming Sea", Part Two of a three-year schools combined arts project. A touring production will be offered to rural venues. Obviously further ideas for projects will emerge following consultation with supporters and partners.

If you have any comments or suggestions regarding next year's festival please contact me on 01304 872058.

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CENTURY'S EBB

Merril Lilley

While the audience at the castle enjoyed an evening of music, in the town hundreds of people flocked to De Bradley Wharf to watch the production called "Century's Ebb". This was the result of a two week combined arts residency by Strange Cargo Arts Company, working with schools and local residents. Also it was the first part of a trilogy called "Millennium Voyage", the other two parts to be completed in 1999 and 2000.

The event was staged on the wharf, with a stretch of water between the cast and the audience. The spectators were ranged, three deep, on the raised boardwalk of the De Bradley shopping