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Canterbury Festival 2023: Programme Announcement

Saturday 26 September – Saturday 4 November 2023

Festival Friends' Priority Booking Opens: Monday 24 July, 11am

General Booking Opens: Monday 7 August, 11am

canterburyfestival.co.uk

Canterbury Festival returns from **26 September – 4 November** to light up the city as the autumn evenings draw in. Presenting local favourites, fresh faces and some truly unique experiences, this year's line-up promises thrills, spills and eclectic chills.

This year's bumper programme celebrates arts and culture in the city, presenting live music, performance, comedy, cabaret, talks, science, family events and much more. Whether you love a comedy club, a choral concert or a clay-making extravaganza, you'll find an unforgettable event to share with friends and family.

Following last year's three-day sold-out event, the Festival are over the moon that **Luxmuralis** will follow up their spectacular son-et-lumiere experience *Shine: Let There Be Light* at Canterbury Cathedral with a thrilling opening to this year's Canterbury Festival – **Renaissance** (26-30 Sep). 2022's inaugural three-day event proved to be a huge hit with people travelling from across Kent to witness Canterbury's most iconic landmark stunningly transformed.

In October the Festival kicks into phase two, offering a broad range of live experiences that could only happen as part of Kent's International Arts Festival. The Festival flag will fly in venues and community hubs across the city including Canterbury Cathedral, The Great Hall, Westgate Hall and The Malthouse Theatre.

This year's opening concert welcomes one of the UK's greatest choirs, **Tallis Scholars**, who celebrate their 50th birthday. Meanwhile music legend **Ruby Turner** and her band hit the stage at The Great Hall with an unbeatable night of soul, gospel and R&B.

Over the following two weeks the Festival presents a months' worth of gigs, concerts and recitals. Following her 2020 Beethoven marathon, pianist **Joanna MacGregor** makes a triumphant return, performing a specially curated Schubert series. UK legend **Gabrielle** performs an intimate concert packed full of hits, as part of her 30 Years of Dreaming tour.

The **Frisian Symphonic Wind Orchestra** celebrate the joy of making-music across borders with a night of English, Dutch and Frisian works; **Armonico Consort** presents Scarlatti's rarely performed masterpieces; and **Canterbury Choral Society** close the Cathedral series with Haydn's *The Creation*.

Across the Festival other highlights include pianist **Lucy Parham** with *Elégie – Rachmaninoff*, narrated by celebrated actor Alex Jennings; legendary Scottish trailblazers **Peatbog Faeries**; folk troubadour **Seth Lakeman**; Ivo Neame's 12-piece jazz super group **Dodeka**; Canterbury heroes **Gentlemen of Few**; high-energy classical comedy group **Graffiti Classics** and much more.

This year's Performance line-up packs a punch with comedy, theatre and everything in between launching with the **Festival Opening Party** - raising funds for the Festival's year-round work and partner charity Catching Lives – the event features cabaret Queen Abi Collins, KD Jazz and Dance Orchestra, magician Josh King and more.

Cabaret's triple threat **Abi Collins** follows this up with a rollercoaster ride through a career packed with stories, songs and larger-than-life characters. Dutch quintet **Släpstick** deliver an extravaganza of physical comedy and music with *Schërzo*. Rob Broderick aka **Abandoman** brings his 'relentlessly hilarious' (*The Times*) show *Discography* to town, presenting an improvised musical comedy experience that will blow your socks off.

If that wasn't enough there's more comedy with stand-up legend **Rich Hall**, **Hal Cruttenden**, Britain's favourite French dead-pan comedian **Marcel Lucont**, variety troupe **Slightly Fat Features**, an unmissable **Comedy Club**, **A Marvellous Evening of Magic** and the Scottish Falsetto Sock Puppet Theatre's **Eurovision Sock Contest**.

This year's Talks series welcomes speakers on history, travel, the arts and more. Highlights include the UK's foremost female travel writer **Sara Wheeler**, Geopolitics expert **Tim Marshall** on the exploration and exploitation of space, **Oliver Soden** on the life of 'The Master' – Noel Coward, Royal Shakespeare Company director **Gregory Doran**, historian **Michael Wood** on the Dark Ages, and **William Sieghart** on the positive power of poetry.

The 2023 Science programme begins with the Kent College Lecture, presenting **Simon Watt** with *Cracking the Code – the Genetics of Super Heroes*. Over the following weeks speakers include **Helen Czerski** with *Blue Machine*, **Sir David Haslam** on a lifetime as a doctor, patient and healthcare leader; **Dr Kathryn Harkup** answers all your Bond villain questions; **Louise Gray** delves into ethical food decisions; and the team behind **The Blean Bison Project** reveal how these amazing animals can act as ecosystem engineers.

The October half term gets underway with a week of shows to keep all the family entertained. Don't miss a puppet-filled extravaganza - **The Sea Show**. Variety legend John Hicks presents the fast-paced fable of Jon and Frank the Dog - **Kickmouse Mysterium**. **Comedy Club 4 Kids** bring the laughs with three of the stand-up circuit's best. One-man ringmaster, magician and comedian Matt Bernard wows with **Instant circus – Just Add Kids**. Rounding things off is Marcel Lucont with **Les Enfants Terribles – A Gameshow For Awful Children**, guaranteed to be a hit with ages 6+.

Throughout the Festival there are lots of ways to get involved in creative activities as part of the Public Engagement programme. Don't miss the **Beautiful Noise Community Music Celebration** with local musicians, community groups and choirs performing across Canterbury City Centre. The **Upstart Comedy Workshop and Show** is a great opportunity for budding comedians to learn from a trio of professionals and perform live to a Festival audience. Ceramics project Open Clay in collaboration with Clayground Collective will be taking over Guildhall Street on Friday 27 October with **Open Clay – Building Bridges Together** – join in and help sculpt something special.

In addition the Festival presents an extensive programme of Walks, Visual Arts, Community, Umbrella events and more.

2023 marks **Canterbury Christ Church University's 13th year as Partner and Principal Sponsor of Canterbury Festival**. This long-running partnership has enabled a close-knit bond that celebrates, showcases and champions arts and culture in the city. Working closely with different departments to engage staff and students directly in Festival events – on stage, behind the scenes and online. This year students and faculty members present a series of free lunchtime concerts, performances and events that demonstrate the wealth and breadth of the University's talent and knowledge.

As an independent charity, the Festival would like to thank the loyal support of their sponsors, funders, members, volunteers and audiences – without whom this year's events would not be possible. These include Partner and Principal Sponsor Canterbury Christ Church University, Headline Sponsors Kent College, University of Kent and Paul Roberts, and over 27 other businesses across the Canterbury community. Canterbury Festival are truly grateful for their backing and encouragement.

You can explore the full programme by picking up a copy of the brochure from the Festival Office, 8 Orange Street, Canterbury CT1 2JA, or by visiting canterburyfestival.co.uk.

Priority booking for Festival Friends will open on Monday 24 July at 11am, with general sales opening on Monday 7 August at 11am. Tickets can be purchased online at canterburyfestival.co.uk, over the phone on 01227 457568 or in person at the Festival Office (Mon – Fri, 10am – 5pm).

Ends

For Festival information, assets and interview requests, please contact Marketing Manager Rob Smith at rob@canterburyfestival.co.uk / 01227 452853.

Notes to Editors:

- [Images for Festival highlights can be found here](#). To request any additional images please contact Rob at rob@canterburyfestival.co.uk / 01227 452853.
- Canterbury Festival is enthusiastic about reaching new audiences, encouraging participation, providing opportunities for learning and making sure everyone can be a part of the biggest arts festival in the region. For more information on our participatory activities, [click here](#).
- Canterbury Christ Church University is a major contributor to the arts and creative industries in Kent and Medway, with strong and established partnerships across the South East including Canterbury Festival as Partner and Principal Sponsor. Its students are a key talent pipeline to creative industries locally and nationally, and the University is proud to be part of a vibrant and flourishing creative sector that is supporting regional economic growth and success. For more information about the University and its programme of arts and culture events visit: www.canterbury.ac.uk

