



For release Monday 22 July

Canterbury Festival 2024: Programme Announcement

19 October – 2 November 2024

Festival Friends' Priority Booking Opens: Monday 29 July, 11am

General Booking Opens: Monday 12 August, 11am

canterburyfestival.co.uk

Canterbury Festival returns from **19 October – 2 November** to celebrate their 40th birthday with a brilliant array of exciting events. Presenting a stacked programme, the Festival celebrates four decades of culture with music, theatre, comedy, talks, science, family shows and much more. Showcasing local acts alongside international touring artists and companies, this year's Festival is packed full of unique experiences to share with friends and family, bringing colour and energy to the city this autumn.

The celebrations begin on Festival Eve with the **Festival's 40th Birthday Party** at Westgate Hall – AKA the Festival Club. Don't miss an evening of cabaret, comedy and music as Canterbury comes together to celebrate this momentous milestone.

Then on Saturday 19 October the Festival hits the ground running with the return of the community music celebration Beautiful Noise, across the city centre. In the evening **Tenebrae** perform Joby Talbot's modern masterpiece *Path of Miracles* in the beautiful setting of Canterbury Cathedral. Meanwhile indie-pop troubadours **The Feeling** take to the stage for an intimate concert at the Great Hall and blues legend Lil' Jimmy Reed heats things up at the Festival Club.

Over the following two weeks the Festival presents a months' worth of gigs, concerts and recitals. After 45 years on the road, the legendary Canterbury-formed **Oysterband and June Tabor** take to the stage to bid farewell in style with a career spanning set, while UK country stars **The Shires** visit the city for an intimate acoustic concert as part of The Two of Us Tour.

Secret Byrd is an immersive concert and theatre piece taking place in the atmospheric setting of Canterbury Cathedral's Eastern Crypt, celebrating the 400-year legacy of William Byrd. Performed by The Gesualdo Six and Fretwork, audiences rove freely, becoming part of the composer's story as a secret Catholic Mass takes place by candlelight during the Reformation – an experience like no other!

Don't miss the exceptionally talented **Sheku and Isata Kanneh-Mason**, award winning and world-renowned musicians, as they perform works for cello and piano; the **BBC Big Band** visit The Shirly Hall with a swinging celebration of Gershwin and his most popular and acclaimed works. **Canterbury**

Choral Society close the Cathedral series with Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, while the **Alabama 3** bring their raucous acoustic sound to the final night at the Festival Club.

Across the Festival other highlights include the 'heart-breakingly poignant and liltingly nostalgic' **Open Water**; Brazillian guitarist and Classical FM Rising Star **Plínio Fernandes**; DJ legend **Don Letts** to get you dancing; the all-singing, all-plucking **Ukelele Orchestra of Great Britain**; **Los Pacaminos** presenting a Tex Mex party night; and much more.

This year's Performance line-up is overflowing with talent, with cabaret, comedy, spoken word and everything in between. Irish comedian **Kieth Farnan** brings a laugh-out-loud show to the Great Hall, and fresh from their UK tour, the 5-star cabaret group **Flat and the Curves** reminisce and celebrate bygone years of revelry. **Guru Dudu** lead a high-energy Silent Disco Tour of the city, and *America's Got Talent* winner and Las Vegas resident artist, **Tape Face** flies into town with his hilarious and sublime show – an absolute must see!

For those wanting more laughs, **The Comedy Store Players** hit the stage with improv from the original stars of *Who's Line is it Anyway*, and there's even a stand-up matinee for new parents with **Bring Your Own Baby** – a stand-up show without the need for childcare.

Theatre lovers can enjoy a range of shows, including a clowning rendition of *Alas! Poor Yorick*. by **Ridiculusmus**, and a riotous, improvised parody of Blyton's back-catalogue with **Bumper Blyton**. **Best Man** brings the wedding to you, as an improvised Best Man's speech spirals wildly and hilariously out of control. Another must is *One Way Out*, a powerful drama exploring young British Caribbeans' experiences of the Windrush crisis.

Hailed as 'one of Kent's greatest secrets', **Ginger Bennett** presents an evening of topical song and spoken word, and the incredible **Mat Ricardo** will blow you away with his incredible mix of circus, comedy, magic and shenanigans!

This year's Talks series welcomes speakers on history, travel, the arts and more. Highlights include a discussion on dementia between **Keith Oliver** and **Reinhard Guss**, Geopolitics expert **Tim Marshall** on the exploration and exploitation of space, **Bettany Hughes** on the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*, **Dave Parker** on the life behind H.G. Wells, and **Frances Tophill** on making the most of your garden space.

The Science series begins with the Kent College Lecture, presenting **Luca Viganò** with *Fairy Tales, Cybersecurity and AI*. Retired Head of Forensic Investigation at Scotland Yard, **David Tadd** reveals the complex processes used to crack the hardest of cases; wildlife inspector **David Roberts** discusses the challenges of identifying and tracking down illegal wildlife traffickers; **Maggie Aderin-Pocock** answers questions about the night sky in *The Story of the Solar System*; **Pierre Emmanuel Taittinger and Patrick McGrath** talk about the science of winemaking and **The Canterbury Climate Action Partnership** reveal the revolutionary project creating natural habitats on 100 farms across East Kent.

The October half term gets underway with a week of shows for the whole family to enjoy. Clowning comedian **Mr Pineapple Head** brings a world of play and silliness and Britain's Got Talent star **El Baldiniho** performs and teaches magic tricks. Get your imagination whirring and shout out some suggestions to make improv show **The Extraordinary Time-Traveling Adventures of Baron Munchausen** a rousing success. **Mr Sleepybum** re-enacts his silly dreams in an interactive comedy show, following a sell-out run at Edinburgh Fringe. And the **Trash Test Dummies Circus** deliver a dump-truck full of hilarity and physical feats in their slapstick show for all ages.

Throughout the Festival there are lots of ways to get involved in creative activities as part of the Public Engagement programme. **Upstart Silver Surfers** is a great opportunity for over 60's to be mentored by celebrated comedians, culminating in an evening showcase, while **tiptaptoe** is for local schools, aspiring choreographers and dancers to showcase their work and participate in workshops led by Canterbury Christ Church University and Jasmin Vardimon Company. Jasmin Vardimon Company.

Join us for a day of live music with **Contraband**, for musicians aged 14-21 to play together as a band, and schools across Canterbury will come together for a second year to make the **Beautiful Noise Orchestra**, as part of a collaborative music project that combines youth orchestral and choral groups.

Following last year's spectacular event at Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury Festival are delighted to welcome **Luxmuralis** back with a groundbreaking new light show - **Fantastic Tales and Where to Find Them** (13-21 Dec). This year's show will be an outdoor experience set against the stunning backdrop of St Augustine's Abbey and The King's School. Be transported back in time to the captivating world of the Anglo-Saxon era, featuring world famous collections of the British Library and a series of bespoke sound artworks for a multi-sensory spectacle for all ages.

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

Amanda McKean, Interim Festival Director said:

"2024 is an exciting year for Canterbury Festival as we celebrate our 40th Anniversary. I've been delighted to bridge the gap between Festival Directors this year and have been working hard to bring you a programme that has something for all tastes. A Festival is nothing without its supporters and I would like to say a huge thank you to our Partner and Principal Sponsor, our Headline Sponsors, Event Sponsors, Corporate Members, Festival Patrons, and Friends and of course, you, our audience who come out in droves to support your Festival."

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. They are delighted to share that Paul Roberts Canterbury is this year's Partner and Principal Sponsor, Paul Roberts said:

"Since its reinvention in 1984, the Canterbury Festival has delivered a contemporary programme of the arts worthy of a city famed for its rich contribution to European culture. Today's Festival – international, inclusive and innovative – is as vibrant and forward-looking as ever. Paul Roberts Canterbury is particularly delighted by its breadth. Over a fortnight of events, young and old from all walks of life are sure to find something to gladden the heart. It is this that makes the Canterbury Festival a key feature of the British festival calendar."

The Festival would also like to thank the generous support of Headline Sponsors Kent College, Canterbury Christ Church University, University of Kent and new this year Craven Street Wealth, 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 29 July at 11am, with general sales opening on Monday 12 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](#).