

# Arts and Entertainment Service Annual Review 2019/20



# Welcome...



**I am delighted to be sharing with you a glimpse into the work the Arts & Entertainment Service at South Somerset District Council has delivered through the financial year from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. It has been a fantastic year of performances, exhibitions, events and creativity bringing many superb artists to South Somerset, supporting local artists who live in our district and providing opportunities for residents and attracting visitors into the area.**

As part of South Somerset District Council our Arts & Entertainment Service makes a significant contribution to our vision for South Somerset: a place where businesses flourish, communities are safe, vibrant and healthy; where residents enjoy good housing and cultural, leisure and sporting activities.

We continue to transform the authority ensuring we put our customers first and building the Council of the future - a modern and efficient council able to deliver better services and outcomes for South Somerset in the context of significantly less funding. We have been redesigning the way we work to ensure we remain financially secure, protect the services that make South Somerset a great place to live, play and work, and deliver for our communities. We want to build healthy communities that are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life supporting people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing. I hope you will always feel 'welcome' at our venues and my thanks go to our dedicated staff and volunteers who work incredibly hard to make your experience excellent and enjoyable.

Our venues remained at the forefront for providing quality arts and culture in the region and once again we have presented a broad range of high calibre productions with something to appeal to everyone. Audiences have enjoyed the very best in touring drama, musicals, opera, comedy, music, dance and ballet and our spectacular pantomime has again proved to be a massive hit!

The huge efforts and commitment displayed by each and every one of the hard-working members of staff and volunteers throughout our venues has again been recognised with the team winning TripAdvisor Awards. A richly deserved award and one which reflects the positive feedback shared by our loyal customers on a daily basis.

Sadly, this year has already been adversely affected by Coronavirus since March; and like all venues in the UK has had to close due to central government guidance. However, we are already working hard and planning to offer even better venues when we reopen and to deliver a superior programme of events and performances to our customers.

I hope you will share my pride in this fabulous team and the following brilliant set of achievements over the last year and I am certain that this will grow in the future when we are able to entertain you all again!

**Cllr. Mike Best**

Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing,  
South Somerset District Council





**The past year has been a time of consolidation for The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue as we looked to maintain and develop our strong audience figures by offering the best entertainment, events and an ever improving service to our guests. As we moved into our third year managing two large-scale vibrant venues, I am pleased to report that business is booming - we are trading ahead of budget, and our programme of development continues apace.**

The final two weeks of the year both of our venues were closed, following the advice from government to help prevent the spread of the Covid 19 virus. In an unprecedented move, all theatres and venues were closed throughout the UK and around the world as places that bring people together had to stop and find new ways of reaching people. Westlands Entertainment Venue has been turned into a 'Well Being Hub' with many staff seconded into supporting the effort to ensure food parcels reach our most vulnerable residents. The Octagon Theatre continues to engage with our audiences sharing work on a digital platform that audiences can enjoy from home, free of charge to keep their spirits high. We are sharing work from Motionhouse, BalletBoyz and the National Theatre. I am exceptionally proud that our venues and staff are playing their role in helping the most vulnerable at this time and our venue can be a beacon of hope in the darkest of times. As I write this we don't know when our venues will be able to resume their normal operation - but we know that audiences are keen to return and their appetite for live entertainment will be bigger than ever. When it is safe for people to come together our venues will have a vital role to play in the healing process.

The Octagon Theatre retains its position as 'Somerset's Premier Theatre' with a dynamic programme that offers 'something for everyone'. Our blockbuster pantomime set a new attendance record and 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' was crowned 'Queen' of the Box Office.

We've enjoyed stirring performances from Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and BBC Proms sensation, Jess Gillam. We have brought laughter with so many sold out comedians and four sold out preview shows from Russell Howard. Our audiences have enjoyed superb drama and classic thrillers with 'The Lady Vanishes' and the triumphant return of Agatha Christie's 'The Mousetrap' that was seen by 4,917 people. From the grace and beauty of ballet to introducing 'little ones' to the magic of live theatre with 'Stickman' there has been so much to enjoy. Our stage has been home to vibrant community and amateur societies - a place where local talent is nurtured and shines bright. Music legends have graced our stage from Lulu to Fisherman's Friends - there are so many memorable performances and moments.

I am very proud of our engagement and participatory work and we have cemented our plans to develop this work further - investing in local artists and companies creating work in South Somerset. We also work to provide opportunities to learn skills, make new friends and find joy and expression through the creative arts. The arts have the power to transform people's lives - and they do so every day in our venues.

My thanks go to my brilliant team of staff, volunteers and supporters. Let's look back and celebrate what we've achieved over the last 12 months and look forward to our venues bringing people together once more.

**Adam Burgan**

Arts and Entertainment Venues Manager,  
South Somerset District Council

# 2019/20 - Key Achievements

## Facts and Figures

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Attendance (Total number of tickets sold)	78,546	88,334	93,519	90,149	101,634	119,366	123,339
No. Of Performances	260	239	244	235	242	259	264
No. Of Screenings (Westlands)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gross Box Office Income	£1,098,093	£1,233,074	£1,362,419	£1,335,182	£1,549,590	£1,844,455	£1,843,064
Annual Income - Excluding Box Office	£359,367	£344,452	£364,735	£410,600	£477,181	£560,951	£610,876

The cost of running the Arts and Entertainment Service and operating The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue in 2019/20 was £452,706. This means the service and venues cost each resident in South Somerset £2.69 for the year or 11p per household per week.



*You obviously noticed the audience was made up of a bunch of 'wrinklies', but by the end we had all shed the last sixty/seventy years and stood at least a foot (not 30 cms!) taller as we walked out on air. Thank you so much.*

Angela and Mac Grant - On 'Buddy the Musical'



*Visually spectacular, hilariously funny, top class pantomime fun. We wouldn't go anywhere else for panto now and that's after trying Bath and Bristol too, Octagon is by far the best.*



	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Attendance (Total number of tickets sold)	133,295	116,227 (O) 24,937 (W) <b>141,164 (T)</b>	116,927 (O) 35,133 (W) <b>152,060 (T)</b>	125,331 (O) 36,612 (W) <b>161,943 (T)</b>
No. Of Performances	290	248 (O) 42 (W) <b>290 (T)</b>	242 (O) 49 (W) <b>291 (T)</b>	259 (O) 55 (W) <b>314 (T)</b>
No. Of Screenings (Westlands)	-	74	204	277
Gross Box Office Income	£2,196,389	£1,888,223 (O) £354,501 (W) <b>£2,242,724 (T)</b>	£1,986,342 (O) £500,754 (W) <b>£2,487,096 (T)</b>	<b>£2,776,610 (T)</b>
Annual Net Income - Excluding Box Office	£770,627	£710,629 (O) £510,623 (W) <b>£1,221,252 (T)</b>	£666,276 (O) £850,298 (W) <b>£1,516,574 (T)</b>	£739,536 (O) £751,432 (W) <b>£1,490,968 (T)</b>

O = Octagon, W = Westlands, T = Total



On 16th March both The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue were closed following the government advice to reduce the spread of Covid 19. Despite the loss of two weeks of events, performances and meetings we end the year having exceeded the figures set by the previous year showing excellent growth across both venues. A further 4,322 tickets had already been sold for the two weeks the venues were closed at the end of the financial year – 3,096 for performances at The Octagon Theatre and 1,226 at Westlands Entertainment Venue – these figures are not included in the table.

The figures for Westlands Entertainment Venue does not include the tens of thousands of guests at conferences, meetings, trade fairs, weekly ballroom sessions, banquets and parties. Westlands is ahead of the targets for year two of our business plan.

We estimate that the Octagon receives over 200,000 visitors a year who come to see a show, visit the gallery, dine in the café bar, use the venue for meetings and conferences or take part in a class or perform in a show. Our pantomime production of 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' broke the Box Office record set by 'Cinderella' and was seen by over 29,800 people.



## Continued: 2019/20 - Key Achievements Facts and Figures

Westlands has received a 'Certificate of Excellence' from Trip Advisor for achieving consistently excellent reviews on the website. The Octagon Theatre has qualified for the 'Certificate Excellence Hall of Fame' after achieving a 'Certificate of Excellence' for the past five years.

The Octagon Theatre is listed on Trip Advisor with a 4.5★ rating out of 265 reviews. Westlands Entertainment Venue is catching up at No. 6 on the list and a 4.5★ rating out of 36 reviews.

*You are a great asset to Yeovil & the surrounding areas. It is always a pleasure to visit. As a wheelchair user I appreciate all the assistance you give, especially being able to book parking!*

Feedback from the Annual Survey

**64% of all ticket were purchased online.**

Website stats...

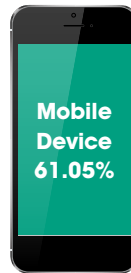
	Individual Website users	Individual Page Views
Octagon	257,369	1,808,355
Westlands	139,915	671,655
Total	397,284	2,480,010



For our Social Media channels Facebook remains the most popular with over 21,000 people liking our pages.

On Facebook The Octagon Theatre is rated 4.7 out of 5 with 1,087 reviews.

**How customers access our websites...**



*We had a wonderful afternoon and the three male leads were a triumph of the traditional pantomime art - a brilliant introduction to live theatre for our grandchildren!*

Thank you.  
Sarah Cuff

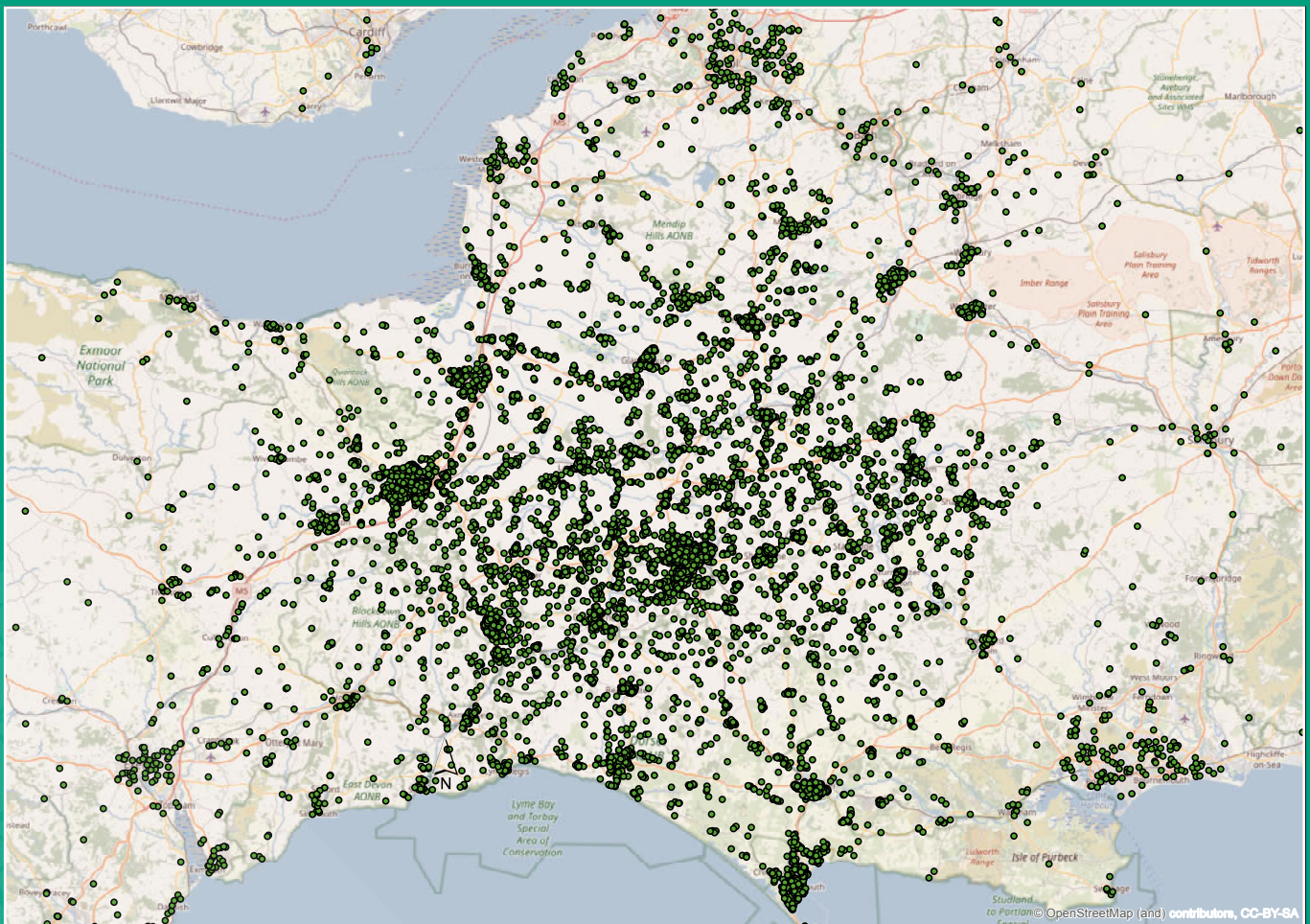


# Where Do Our Customers Come From?

Each dot represents a customer who made a booking for an event at The Octagon Theatre or Westlands Entertainment Venue that took place from 1st April 2019 - 15th March 2020. It does not reflect how many tickets they purchased or how many times they bought tickets within that period. There were a further approx. 1,000 booking records that could not be included as the postcode was incomplete.



*My grandson who had come from Mexico and this was his first ever pantomime was so excited that his name was mentioned and he was wished merry Christmas and happy New year in Spanish!*



# What's On? At The Octagon Theatre...

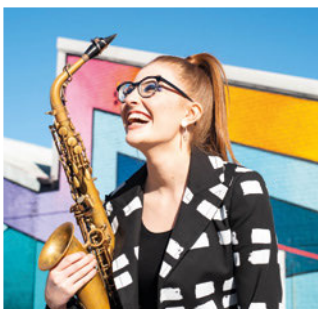
Over the twelve month period for the financial year 2019/20 The Octagon Theatre has enjoyed superb performances from a diverse range of artists and companies.

We've enjoyed live music from The Black Dyke Band, Marty Wilde, Leo Sayer, Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, Paul Young, the Chris Barber Band, Joe Brown, 'That'll Be The Day', Lulu, Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers, Turin Breaks, Fascinating Aida, Phil Beer and Fisherman's Friends.

Outside of the Yeovil Literary Festival we have enjoyed fascinating and entertaining talks from Geoff Hurst, John Challis and Doug Allen.

Our audiences have enjoyed sublime classical music from Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Armonico Consort, Craig Ogen, Jess Gillam, Elin Manahan Thomas, Tasmin Little, Emma Johnson and BBC Concert Orchestra who performed two free concerts for primary school children.

We have also staged thrilling operas from Welsh National Opera (WNO) with 'Don Pasquale' and The Russian State Ballet and Opera House and their production of 'Aida'.





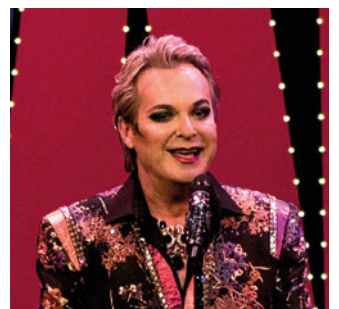


Our stage has been home to superb dance productions from Motionhouse, James Wilton Dance, and we've welcomed the stars of 'Strictly' with Aijaz, Giovanni, Gorka. Some of our ballet highlights include The Russian State Ballet and Opera House with productions of 'Nutcracker' and 'Don Quixote'.

Comedy remains one of our most popular performance strands with performances from Mark Steel, Paul Merton, Rich Hall, Julian Clary, Reginald D Hunter, Al Murray, Gill Sims, Jethro, Griff Rhys Jones, Dave Gorman, Mark Watson, Ed Byrne and four sold out performances from Russell Howard - seen by 2,488 people at The Octagon with all tickets selling out in 24 hours.

We have enjoyed some of the finest plays and musicals including London Classic Theatre - 'No Man's Land', New Old Friends - 'Crimes on the Coast', Blackeyed Theatre Company - 'Jane Eyre', Bill Kenwright's production of 'The Lady Vanishes', 'Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story' - enjoyed by 2,897 people, 'The Mousetrap' - selling 4,917 tickets, 'Round the Horne' and 'Eric and Ern'.

Some of our highlights for children include 'Stickman', 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea' and Milkshake Live!



# What's On? At Westlands Entertainment Venue...



Westlands Entertainment Venue has welcomed Henning Wehn, James Acaster, Jack Dee, Martin Kemp, Richard & Adam, Dave Pearce, Andy Parsons, Mark 'Billy' Billingham, Stewart Francis, Show of Hands, Russell Kane, Ben Fogle, Neil Oliver, Gordon Buchanan, Toyah, Ardal O'Hanlon, Blake, Tony Blackburn, 5ive/911/Damage, Joel Dommett, Dick and Angel Strawbridge, Harry Redknapp, Francis Rossi, Merrill Osmond and Strictly's Graziano Di Prima.

Our monthly Comedy Club, quiz Nights, Open Mic Nights, Ballroom events and jive and swing events, alongside a large number of conferences and large scale events including Yeovil Beer Fest, Somerset Gin Festival, Cider and Cheese Festival, Silent Disco, Party! By Order of the Peaky Blinders and many more.







Our programme of screening films and live events continues to grow in popularity showing the best of mainstream films, independent and foreign language films from the comfort of our leather sofas. We showed 79 different films and screened 30,963 minutes of film.

We have hosted numerous conferences, banquets, balls, trade fairs, family celebrations and wakes. Seasonal arts and crafts fayres, Funtasia's Charity Ball, Election Counts and our Holistic and Wellbeing Fayre.





# yeovil literary festival

## The Seventh Chapter



2019 saw our seventh Yeovil Literary Festival take place over five days in October and November. The festival offers an exciting programme of literature and arts events from well-known literary figures, comedians, celebrities and exciting local and emerging writers. The festival is a not-for-profit partnership between The Octagon Theatre (South Somerset District Council), Waterstones, Yeovil Community Arts Association and Somerset Library Service and the headline sponsor was Battens Solicitors.

*It's such a cosy, friendly and clean theatre, with easy parking and the added enjoyment of a restaurant and bar. A good choice for entertainment throughout the year, what else could anyone want.*





GREAT INSPIRATION  
 MOVING  
 CELEBRITY  
 VIBRANT  
 HISTORY  
 FACTUAL  
 ENGROSSING  
 EXCITING  
 FASCINATING

Pre-festival events included Robert Harris and David Suchet. The festival welcomed 800 patrons for events including David Laws, Terry Waite CBE, Brett Anderson, Raynor Winn, Michael Eavis, Prue Leith, Anton Du Beke, Mark 'Billy' Billingham, Clare Balding, Adam Kay and many more.





# 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' Pantomime crowned 'Queen' of the Box Office!

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' broke all box office records becoming the highest attended pantomime in the history of The Octagon Theatre selling 29,800 tickets.

## Panto Fun Facts:

- 63 sound effect cues per show
- 223 sound cues per show

## Through the 53 show run we saw:

- Over 200 Pyrotechnics
- 12,480 Lighting cues
- 53 Royal weddings
- 988 Scene changes
- 66 People working per performance
- 884 Songs (17 per show)
- 1,924 Fruit/veg puns in the cart scene
- 312 Panto thigh slaps
- 364 Ghosts
- 520 Dame costume changes
- 135 Costumes per show

*The panto Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was amazing, I take my three kids every year and it never disappoints. It just gets better and better, the cast are amazing and plenty of laughs. Kids absolutely loved it and had such a fun evening. Would highly recommend!"*

Adele Norie





# Gallery

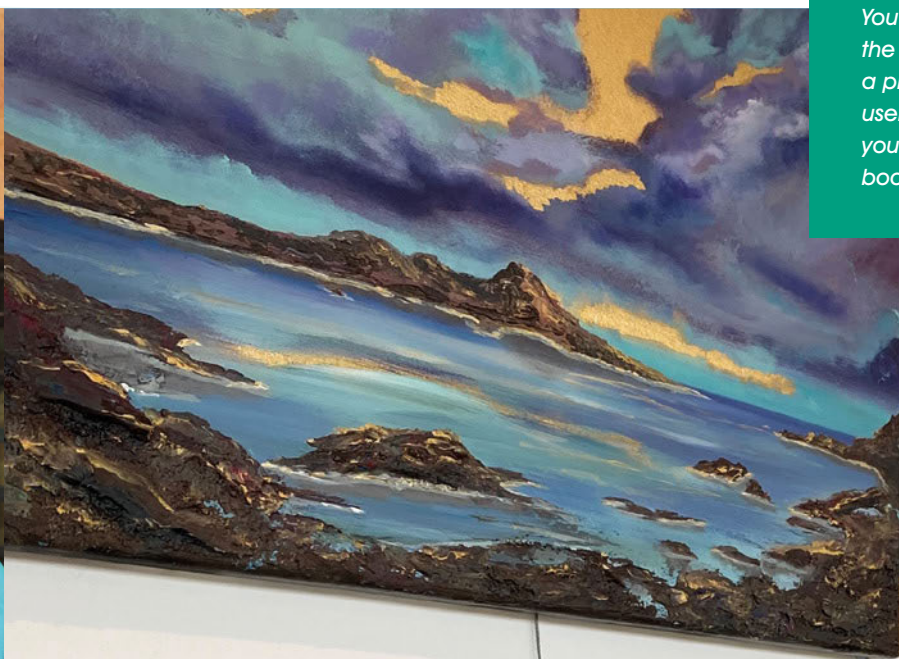
The Gallery at the Octagon continues to focus on local talent from the surrounding areas, promoting groups & artists whose main motive is to share the pleasure of art.

This year's programme supported a range of works from independent artists to local groups such as South Somerset Monochrome Art Group. The Octagon continues to support annual exhibitions from Yeovil Art Group and Somerset Art Works as a participating venue in the Arts Week programme.

The programme also included an exhibition that invited 30 young artists from 10 secondary schools and colleges across Somerset, to exhibit three pieces of artwork in an exhibition designed to display the extraordinary works of art created by students. The exhibition displayed artwork from students at Preston Secondary School, Bruton School for Girls, King Arthur's School, Swanmead Middle School, Whitstone School, Sexey's School, Stanchester Academy, Perrott Hill, Blue School, Huish Episcopi Academy, and Fairmead School.



*You are a great asset to Yeovil & the surrounding areas. It is always a pleasure to visit. As a wheelchair user I appreciate all the assistance you give, especially being able to book parking!*





# Venues at the Heart of the Community...

We are proud that our venues are at the 'heart' of the community in South Somerset. Many local groups and societies stage performances and events including Motiv8 Productions, Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society, University College Yeovil (Graduation), Helen Laxton School of Dance, Beatnik Productions, The Dance Factory, Castaways Theatre Group, Yeovil Amateur Pantomime Society, Yeovil Youth Theatre, Yeovilton Military Wives, Project Play and many more.



*First time visiting The Octagon last night to see 42nd Street. Brilliant experience! Easy to park as large car park nearby. Great view of the stage, comfy seats, nice bar area. We really enjoyed the performance and should definitely go to The Octagon again.*

Liz Farmer



# Join In

The Octagon Academy was launched in 2010 following a grant from SSDC Area South Forum. We now have over 18 weekly classes for all ages and abilities. Over 400 people aged from 15 months to 73 are taking part in classes at the Octagon and Westlands in singing, dancing and drama every week.

Our venues are home to Somerset Youth Theatre and Castaway Theatre Group and classes from The Helen Laxton School of Dance, The Allen School of Dance and many more.

The Johnson Studio is also the home of Yeovil Community Arts Association, Yeovil Art Group and University of the Third Age local history group.

Through 2019/20 we held 622 classes and 86 meetings in the Johnson Studio at The Octagon Theatre.



*The Octagon Choir has been my second 'family' for the last five years. Great friendship; love & support whenever needed and singing is so good for my mind & body.*

Audrey Haskell







## Supporting Roles...

The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue serve thousands of customers each week and are proud to use local suppliers where possible to support the local economy and to source the best quality products that showcase Somerset producers. Whether it is ice cream from near Bath, meat from the butchers in Crewkerne, Glastonbury water, bread from Mortimers in Yeovil or local ales and cider, we are proud to share the 'taste of Somerset'.

- Mortimers Bakery
- Marshfield Ice Cream
- A & J Winters, Butchers, South Petherton
- Barrett Bros, Butchers, Crewkerne
- Glastonbury Spring Water Co
- Coffeeworks, Exeter
- Wild Puddings, Ilchester - supplying freshly baked cakes

We also support local companies who we partner with to provide goods and services. In addition to the advertising in local magazines, newspapers and printers, here are just some of the other local suppliers benefitting from our venues.

- Ever So Clean Supplies
- Inno Fire & Security
- Atlas Security
- The Cloth Shop, Crewkerne (re-upholstery)
- Dataweigh Systems Ltd, Yeovil
- Perrys Recycling
- Greenstock Refrigeration

*If you like the idea of going to the cinema but find the reality rather disappointing with noisy kids with popcorn and ear splitting soundtracks then this is for you. Enjoy a drink before you go in or indeed take it in with you in a real glass, sit on a nice settee or armchair and not be deafened by the soundtrack. A lovely way to enjoy good films, couldn't be better, well done Westlands.*

Claire Wynne-Riley



THE CLOTH SHOP - SEATON

Dataweigh Systems

PERRYS RECYCLING

In the last year, the Octagon alone served more than 15,000 freshly prepared meals and more than 37,000 tubs of ice cream. We also handed out almost 9,000 packets of sweets and 425 flashing red roses (for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, naturally).



## A Helping Hand

Our venues are supported by a team of 100 volunteers - The Foyer Club, who undertake Front of House duties (taking tickets, showing customers to their seats, selling ice creams, confectionary and merchandise, helping with mailings). They donate approximately 15,800 hours per year!

Without these volunteers it would cost us an additional £153,000 to operate.

## Fundraising

The Foyer Club gained charitable status in 2014 and work with our staff to raise money to purchase new equipment and support the theatre. The Foyer Club are currently fundraising to support our 'Name A Seat' campaign that will replace the auditorium seating in The Octagon Theatre.



*Best thing about The Octagon is the size of the venue. No matter what seats you have you can see everything on stage so clearly. Had a great evening.*

Glenda Sherwood Wright

## Raising Money For Local Charities

Each year we receive hundreds of requests to support local school fetes, raffles and many other fundraising events that we support where possible. We also support many local charities with Bucket Collections and other fundraising events throughout the year. Here are just a few from the last twelve months...

- The Panto Bucket Collection during 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' and the 'Christmas Celebration Concert at Westlands raised £12,194 that was split equally between the Foyer Club and Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal.
- A Raffle was held for Somerset Mind Charity £80.00.
- Raffle held for Guide Dogs for the Blind £317.00.
- Yeovil Beer Festival 2019 raised £14,227 that was divided between Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal, St Margaret's Hospice, Yeovil Round Table, Yeovil Lions Club and Yeovil Opportunity Group.
- Motiv8 Production's 'Starlight Express' raised £1000 for Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal and £500 for In The Bag charity for testicular cancer.
- Yeovil Youth Theatre raised £515.60 during their production of 'Chicago'.
- YAOS's production of 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' raised £640.63 while their production of 'The Sound of Music' raised £295.83 for Fiveways School Playground appeal.
- Barry & Jean Brewster, who are members of the Foyer Club sold poppies at multiple performances and raised £2160.00 for the Royal British Legion.
- YAPS production of 'Wizard of Oz' raised £367.42 for the Lily Foundation.
- Party! By Order of the Peaky Blinders raised £9,500 for the Yeovil District Hospital Breast Cancer Unit Appeal. It was organised by Funtasia, Santiago Productions and Westlands Entertainment Venue.



# Arts Engagement and Outreach in South Somerset

**A key part of the Arts Entertainment Service is to develop opportunities for community engagement across the district and offer cultural experiences for all ages and abilities. The ambition throughout the year has been to collaborate with the community, to create and develop projects that are accessible to all and celebrate the vibrant cultural life of South Somerset. To achieve this we work with individual artists, art groups and organisations from both the professional and voluntary sectors.**

Over the year, we have extended our support to local arts organisations such as, OSR Projects, Wassail Theatre Company and artist, Angela Blackwell. The projects we have supported include Od Arts Festival, Somerset Emergency Theatre, and the Blind Painter Project. These projects celebrate the achievements of local artists, bring communities together where they live, and put South Somerset on the map for high quality arts and culture. Whilst some of these projects may be put on hold temporarily as a result of the pandemic, much of the work continues behind the scenes; Wassail Theatre Company have moved their community engagement online, with an offer to commission Somerset based artists and graduates to produce new work which will connect our communities during the lockdown.

One of our main priorities is to support our community and offer cultural experiences for all ages and abilities. Through providing arts and cultural opportunities, we hope to nurture, inspire and empower local artistic talent and enrich our community. Over the past year, our focus has led us to strengthen our relationship with The Hub in Yeovil and Somerset Secondary and Primary Schools. We have explored ways we can make the arts more accessible for people with disabilities, and how we encourage young people to access local arts and cultural opportunities. To achieve this we partnered with Somerset County Council to deliver 'TalentEd Academies' at the Octagon and Westlands, to provide young people interested in the arts with a high quality workplace experience. The 'TalentEd Academies' offer participants an insight into a career in the arts and as an artist. The sessions were successfully delivered to students from Preston Secondary and Westfield Academy, with plans to expand and develop our reach in the coming year.

To enable us to extend our reach within the community we continue to fund four key arts organisations, Take Art, Somerset Art Works, Somerset Film and Actiontrack, who help us to deliver a cross section of art projects to our communities.





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### Take Art

[takeart.org](http://takeart.org)

Take Art aim to promote performance and participation in the arts across Somerset, supporting professional artists and arts in the community. Over the last year, Take Art delivered a total of 10 projects in various locations across South Somerset, engaging a total of 2,925 residents as either participants or audience members. Projects include Spring Forward, Rural Touring, InspirED, Word/Play, BARN, and the SoundWaves Network. Projects delivered supported a range of art forms from dance to music and provided access to the arts for all ages and abilities.

Take Art's rural performance scheme continues to bring professional, high quality music, theatre, dance and performance to village halls, churches & pubs across Somerset. The Rural Touring scheme plays a vital role in uniting communities and keeping villages' alive, the

scheme allows people living in rural areas access to live art at an affordable price. In the last year, the scheme has engaged over 1,960 audience members across South Somerset.

### Somerset Art Works

[somerseartworks.org.uk](http://somerseartworks.org.uk)

Somerset Art Works aim to develop opportunities for artists to work here in Somerset and for the community to experience high quality visual arts at a local level. Since its inception in 1994, Somerset Art Weeks have become an important date in Somerset's calendar, delighting art lovers near and far. In 2019, Somerset Art Works celebrated 25 years of Arts Weeks, and featured over 300 artists in 135 venues.

Last year, Somerset Art Works produced an exhibition titled 'Quiet Places for Unquiet Minds' at the Octagon Theatre. The Somerset Art Works project with Mind in Somerset, aimed to help people to stay well, express themselves, to feel more engaged in their communities and experience a better quality of life. The exhibition displayed artwork produced by Yeovil Mind Community Day, Art and Poetry Groups and the Minehead Mind Art Group working with artists' Simon Ripley and Megan Players.





## Continued: Arts Engagement and Outreach in South Somerset

### **Somerset Film**

[www.somersetfilm.com](http://www.somersetfilm.com)

Somerset Film are dedicated to empowering individuals and communities through the use of film and digital technology. Somerset Film offer a programme of outreach activity and projects that encourage and facilitate the use of digital media by all sectors of the community. They provide learning opportunities through schools based projects, bursary schemes and training for all abilities.

Successful projects include the BBC New Creatives project, designed to signpost and support emerging talent. Through this scheme, Somerset Film supported an emerging artist from Langport to produce a programme on demystifying 'dadhood', which received positive feedback from the BBC. Somerset Film have also been busy this year working on 'Change Step' a film shot in Yeovil to help raise awareness about the Armed Forces Covenant. The film presents life after the military and encourages ex-military personnel to seek help with their transition.

### **Actiontrack**

[www.actiontrackperformance.co.uk](http://www.actiontrackperformance.co.uk)

Actiontrack works collaboratively to deliver opportunities for individuals and groups to access practical involvement in music, drama, dance and the visual arts. The organisation develops and delivers wholly accessible projects, predominantly with children and young people and often with marginalized groups.

They have delivered an exciting range of projects throughout the year, including the delivery of several World Music Residencies for education groups in Langport, Crewkerne, and Chard, plus the MyTunes project. MyTunes is part of Actiontrack's regular delivery, the music-making project works in and alongside Pupil Referral Units and other agencies of Alternative Provision with vulnerable young people at risk. Work takes place in centres across the county and in Actiontrack's recording studio, ranging from instrumental tuition, through group playing to song-writing, recording and even instrument making.



# MOVE TO IMPROVE



## Move To Improve - Dance Development Project

**We are pleased to announce the Move To Improve dance project. The project will build engagement in the arts amongst members of our community, provide support for young people or graduates beginning a career in the arts, and offer opportunities for artists and dance companies to perform their work on a regional stage.**

Earlier this year the Arts Engagement team at the Octagon were successful in their bid for funding from Arts Council England and Yarlington Housing Group, allowing us to deliver the first strand of the project. The first strand will enable residents from rural and deprived areas access to local cultural opportunities, introduce communities to high quality dance where they live and build a local appreciation for dance. We will be delivering a series of affordable contemporary dance performances as well as taking high quality performance art to local festivals, supporting and nurturing local talent, and working in partnership with new and existing audiences.

Through this project our aim is for The Octagon to become a 'Hub' for dance; a place where professional dancers, companies, dance students, dance graduates, dance enthusiasts, community dance groups and more will come together with a shared passion for all things dance. It is our hope that, in light of the pandemic, the first strand of the Move To Improve project will have a positive impact on our community and industry, and go a long way in re-engaging people with live performance art.



This project is funded by:



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**South Somerset  
District Council**

**yarlington**





*Came here to celebrate The Chinese New Year. The acts were simply amazing! We really enjoyed the Hat Jugglers and the Contortionist (and the pandas, who came on during the show). The theatre staff, as always, were so friendly and helpful, and their attentiveness cannot be faulted. We had fantastic seats with a great view of the stage. Thanks to everyone for a lovely evening!*

Tripadvisor Review Feb 2020



*Went to see Hormonal Housewives this evening with my mum and sister. It was bloody hilarious. The three ladies bounced off each other perfectly but the Julie character was hilariously funny... had tears streaming. Such a great show.*



*Yet another great night at the Gin festival. A good atmosphere with local musicians performing in the lounge bar and the ballroom.*

*A good menu was on offer for the evening. We had the falafel & spinach burger with skinny fries and a side salad. It was very tasty, the fries were crisp on the outside and soft in the middle. It was all very well presented.*

*Well done to all the staff who work so hard and make these events a pleasure to attend.*

Jane B, Tripadvisor Review



**Box Office: 01935 422884 [octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://octagon-theatre.co.uk) [westlandsyevovil.co.uk](http://westlandsyevovil.co.uk)**

The Octagon Theatre | Hendford | Yeovil | Somerset | BA20 1UX  
Westlands Entertainment Venue | Westbourne Close | Yeovil | Somerset | BA20 2DD

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