



LAUNCH OF MEDWAY CULTURE FEST 24

Locals invited to be part of Medway's celebration of creativity and community

This weekend Creative Medway launches Medway Culture Fest 24 with an invitation for locals to take part in the year-long programme of cultural events and activities celebrating Medway's people, places and stories.

Medway Culture Fest 24 marks 40 years of culture-led transformation in Medway, a period which has seen the former Chatham Dockyard transformed into a thriving heritage site, university campus and creative hub. In addition to the anniversary of the closure of Chatham Dockyard on 31 March, 2024 also sees a number of other significant anniversaries for Medway including 40 years since the foundation of Medway African and Caribbean Association and the centenary of the Medway Queen paddle steamer. The Medway Culture Fest 24 programme is coordinated by Creative Medway in partnership with the local cultural sector, community organisations and Medway's three universities.

The Medway Culture Fest 24 programme includes large-scale spectacles, community events, exhibitions and hands-on experiences. Local and national creatives, heritage organisations and community groups will bring Medway's story to life in a year which will also include events run in communities by locals who have taken part in the Events Uncovered programme which trains and mentors community-led groups to plan and deliver local events.

The exciting year-long programme kicks off with Loop Dance's U.Dance event on Sunday 17 March inviting Medway's young people to showcase their dance talent, build their confidence and develop their performance skills, culminating in a finale performance of 200 community dancers. The event is one of a number of programmes giving children and young people the opportunity to get hands-on with arts, heritage and culture and explore careers in the creative sector. Ideas Test will be supporting young people to develop their musical talent as part of the DisQuiet programme, and to kickstart their careers as creators, producers and cultural leaders by providing mentoring, training, and paid work placements through the Make Waves programme. Medway African and Caribbean Association are inviting young performers and those interested in backstage roles to take part in a production exploring the history of hip hop and afrobeat dance as part of their anniversary year programme.

Icon Theatre is inviting over 150 local people of all ages to take part in a spectacular new production Ghost Ships staged at Chatham Dockyard this September. Ghost Ships tells the story of the extraordinary people who built and sailed the ships of Chatham Dockyard around the world and will feature a community cast of local residents and professional dancers performing together live on stage. Young people aged 8-25 years can get involved as performers and through a backstage technical training and mentoring programme leading to paid work experience placements on the production. Icon will be working with five Medway schools to run theatre and dance workshops which will culminate in performances within the show. Adults are invited to join the show's Community Cast or Community Choir. All opportunities are free and require no previous experience.

Medway residents are also invited to take part in Medway Culture Fest 24 as volunteers through Medway Change Makers, Medway's new cultural volunteering programme launching as part of the year. Medway Change Makers connects local people with cultural events and activities, breaking down barriers to

volunteering by offering one-off and short-term opportunities for an afternoon, a day or a weekend to suit modern-day schedules. The programme also supports those with additional needs, language or access barriers to volunteer. Opportunities include supporting Black Arts Hub's season of Black visual arts and poetry this Autumn as a Medway Black Art Trail Guide or helping install exhibition artworks.

Carol Stewart, Chair of Creative Medway, said: "Creative Medway are proud to be launching Medway Culture Fest 24, celebrating Medway's creativity, community and stories. The programme showcases the best of Medway's creative talent from largescale spectacles to small-scale community events and reflects the significance of 2024 as an anniversary year for Medway and its people. The programme is packed with opportunities for locals to take part and for young people to get hands-on with culture. We invite everyone to get involved!"

Maria Dorey, Medway Change Makers Volunteering Programme Manager, said: "Medway Change Makers is delighted to be supporting Medway people to be part of Medway Culture Fest 24 events this year. Whether you are looking to make new friends, improve your employability or just get involved in things happening locally, Medway Change Makers makes it possible to give your time in a way that works for *you* without making a long-term commitment and by accessing the support you need to take part as a volunteer."

Nina Atkinson, Artistic Director of Loop Dance Company, said: "We are thrilled to be the opening event of the Medway Culture Fest 24 programme and part of a packed programme offering locals and in particular young people the chance to get hands on with culture. U.Dance is about getting everyone dancing from those who have never danced before to those who want to become professional dancers and is truly a celebration of Medway people and talent."

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

The Medway Culture Fest 24 programme is available [here](#).

Photos are available [here](#).

Available for interview

Carol Stewart, Maria Dorey and Nina Atkinson and are available to interview.

Creative Medway are hosting an interview and photography opportunity as part of U.Dance Community Dance event on Sunday 17 March 2024, 15:00-18:00.

Please email admin@creativemedway.co.uk or call Imogen on 07815167645 to attend or to arrange other interview opportunities.

About Creative Medway

Creative Medway supports and promotes Medway's creative sector. Creative Medway is led by Medway's creative community and oversees the delivery of the 2020-2030 Creative Medway Cultural Strategy in partnership with Medway Council. The organisation connects Medway's creative community and works across-sectors to position culture at the centre of local life and give everyone in Medway the opportunity to get involved in cultural activity.

Find more information [here](#).

About Events Uncovered

Events Uncovered is a two day free events management training programme, available to all community and

cultural organisations in Medway. The training covers the essentials of delivering a safe, legal, accessible, inclusive and fun events from legislation, licences and risk assessment to Medway's local events policies and licencing processes. This year's cohort of forty-four programme graduates have access to free mentoring, support and skills development. The course is presented by Entity Events Ltd and led by Janice Hunte, who has worked in the events industry for over 25 years and supported by Medway Council. The programme is funded by the UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

More information is available [here](#).

About Loop Dance Company's U.Dance event

Loop's U.Dance event and community showcase is an opportunity for children and people of all ages to get dancing and grow their performance skills. Groups of dancers from community groups, schools, colleges and dance academies across Medway will attend a day of rehearsals, careers workshops and masterclasses culminating in a showcase with a finale performance featuring 200 community dancers. U.Dance is run by Loop Dance Company with support from Medway Council's Arts Development Team. Loop is a collective of six dancers led by Artistic Director Nina Atkinson who create contemporary repertory dance, working with internationally renowned guest choreographers. Loop runs an extensive dance education programme for people who have never danced before to professional dancers looking to perfect their skills and champions dance and performance opportunities across Medway and Kent.

Find more information [here](#).

About Ideas Test's Make Waves programme

Make Waves provides mentoring, training, paid work placements and investment to 18-25 year olds in Medway. The project supports young people to pursue sustainable, fulfilling careers as producers, creators and cultural leaders in Medway and beyond. Delivered by Ideas Test, Make Waves 2024 is free to join and will run from April - December and will support 10 local young creatives to fulfil their potential and kickstart their creative careers.

More information available [here](#).

About Ideas Test's DisQuiet programme

DisQuiet supports young people looking to make their first beats to those seeking mentorship to take their music to the next level. DisQuiet is an Ideas Test project in partnership with Medway Youth Services, offering opportunities for 11-18 year olds to connect with like-minded individuals, collaborate on projects, and push their musical boundaries. It's free to take part, with sessions every Monday at Woodlands Youth Centre in Gillingham, as well as school holiday projects across Medway.

More information available [here](#).

About Medway African and Caribbean Association's 40th anniversary programme

Medway African and Caribbean Association (MACA) promotes awareness of African and Caribbean Culture through arts, educational and social programmes. Celebrating four decades of culture, art, heritage, and diversity, MACA is thrilled to announce a unique opportunity for young people aged 11-18 to take centre stage in an exciting dance production. The production will showcase the evolution of hip hop and afrobeat dance over the past 40 years and be performed as part of MACA's 40th Anniversary Gala Event in July.

More information available [here](#).

About Icon Theatre's Ghost Ships

This major immersive theatre event, from award-winning Icon Theatre, recharts the history of Chatham Dockyard, asking who owns our history and what stories should we tell? Featuring explosive hip hop dance from Olivier Award winners ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company and powerful Kathak from Amina Khayyam Dance Company, original live music, and the choral power of a monumental community ensemble, Ghost Ships illuminates true and untold stories of the extraordinary people who built and sailed the ships of Chatham Dockyard around the world. Ghost Ships is an Icon Theatre, ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company and Amina Khayyam Dance Company co-production, supported by The Historic Dockyard Chatham. Icon Theatre is supported by Medway Council and using public funding from Arts Council England.

More information is available [here](#).

About Medway Change Makers

Medway Change Makers is a brand-new programme connecting people with cultural events-based volunteering opportunities in their community. The programme breaks down the barriers that prevent people from volunteering with flexible, supported opportunities that work for people's schedules and access needs. Medway Change Makers is a partnership project from Ideas Test, Creative Medway, Medway Place Board, Medway Council and Medway Voluntary Action, funded by Spirit of 2012.

Find more information [here](#).

About Black Arts Hub

Founded by Michi Masumi, Black Arts Hub's vision is to empower and showcase grassroots Black British visual artists and poets. Black Arts Hub's mission transcends exhibition; striving to create a platform where art becomes a vessel for change, understanding, and unity. Black Art Hub's Research and Development Programme is dedicated to nurturing ground-breaking ideas and practices in Black British visual arts and poetry, developing pioneering work, reflective of diverse heritage. Black Arts Hub seek ten passionate community volunteers to shape and support a season of art and poetry running in Medway from September – October 2024.

More information is available [here](#).