



## THE ARTS

# A month of *Festivals*



JOHN BEST, CHAIR  
ARTS GATEWAY MK



*The Art of Body Painting*  
ctsy Sophia Tyler

In previous years I've written about the festivals and events that help make our towns and cities interesting and distinctive, and July 2016 is no different. Our towns are characterised by far more to do than one person can ever take in during one month – even if they were out every night. So at the risk of being over-selective I've singled out six July events: MK International Festival is the premier event, and it comes in parallel with MK Festival Fringe, both presented every other year in mid-July. They are preceded this year by Mótus, an exciting specialist Dance Festival in MK, previously held annually in June. First off, however, right at the start of the month, we look at three very different festival offerings, in Buckingham and Northampton. A brand new festival in Buckingham joins their established summer music festival, and celebrates an impressive range of writers and themes. And the Northampton Old Town festival, returns as a weekend of family entertainment on the Racecourse. All three towns are using cultural events to raise their spirits and put their place on the map, but each town's offer is distinctive: they have to be to unglue people from their screens and sofas.

## Buckingham Literary and Music and Festivals

### 1st–3rd and 2nd–9th July

*The Buckingham Summer Festival* has been bringing top quality music to Buckingham since 1989 when it was founded by the late Professor Alan Brook MBE and Artistic Director Robert Secret ARAM. It has become a part of the Aylesbury Vale's cultural calendar and deserves much more attention from neighbouring places. Like so many of this sort of event, it is organised by a registered charity and relies entirely on volunteer effort, local sponsorship, individual donations and grants to keep going. This year it runs from the 2nd to the 9th of July, opening with *Buckingham Choral Society* at the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, standing over the town. There then follows a menu of three excellent concerts a day through the week, from Mozart to Poulenc, Bach to Gershwin and back, mostly at the newly refurbished Radcliffe Centre in Church Street. The Festival finishes with a Gala Concert on the 9th, with *The Orchestra of Stowe Opera* performing Handel, Elgar and Sibelius at St Peter and St Paul.

No place sits comfortably with just one festival, so this year Buckingham has an extra treat, with the launch of a brand new one: *The Buckingham Literary Festival*. This event runs from 1st–3rd July at Buckingham University (so plenty of parking!) and they have announced a range of leading names in television, radio, journalism and the literary world. These include *Sinclair McKay* on the ghosts of

Bletchley Park, *Tony Webster* on Buckingham's own Flora Thompson, and *The Wimpy Kids Show*. It also has some big beasts on show too, with *Will Gompertz*, on the life of artists, *Oliver James* on Dave Bowie's background, and *Louis de Bernieres* on his latest novel and poetry. And that's just a quarter of the programme. Good start!

## Northampton Old Town Festival

### 2nd–3rd July

Fresh from their music and performing arts activities last month, Northampton doesn't rest.

For years, from 1909, there was an annual festival on Northampton Racecourse, pausing only for the war years. In 2002 it was combined with *Northampton Balloon Festival*, surely the most defining of Northampton's cultural events, and that conjunction continued until 2008. This year *Show Time Events* have decided the time is right to bring the community together and revive the best of *the Old Town Show* and once again bring in the Balloons to the Racecourse. They expect 40,000 to 60,000 people to attend, over the weekend of 2nd–3rd July between 10.30am and 11.00pm. As well as the



*The Orchestra of Stowe Opera*, ctsy Buckingham Summer Festival



balloons, there are two events stages, inflatables, funfairs and a lot more besides. The organisers spell out their reasons:

"Whether you are one of our local residents and families, a hard working local trader, a member of a local community group, part of our thriving entertainment scene or live outside of Northampton and are looking to attend an awesome event that exhibits REAL community spirit... this event is not to be missed. *The Northampton Town Festival* brings our community together..." Sponsors this year are Phipps the brewers, Big Funfair and Evans Funfair, DP Leisure consultants and NSUK, and the event will surely strengthen ties between the town and its communities.

### Mótus Push/Identify 5th–10th July

Then the focus of the month moves across to Milton Keynes, and the world of Dance. *Mótus*, a spin-off from Arts Gateway, have for four years now been delivering increasingly ambitious programmes of dance, both performances, workshops and participative events. This year's theme, *Push/Identify*, looks at work that stretches boundaries physically and culturally. The work presented is diverse, has cultural impact and is physically impressive. Starting on the 5th with an installation at *MK Gallery's Project Space* by digital artist *Nic Sandiland*, the workshops and performances are clustered round the weekend of



Balloons return to Northampton Racecourse, ctsy evaspellman



Amazing Festive Road creatures  
ctsy MK Festival Fringe

comedy and dance. It aims for a joined-up programme which includes some commissioning, and continues to nurture and support

the 9th and 10th July. There is a menu of many dance forms including jazz, capoeira, parkour, dance theatre, popping, waaking, contemporary and physical theatre. With a host of live performances, workshops, the chance feedback to artists and even a *Breakin' Night*, there's never been a better chance to get involved and dance. Saturday afternoon sees two rounds of six performances presented free in *Margaret Powell Square*, including *Mars and Venus on Earth* from *House of Absolute & Co* and *Sit Back* from *Moxie Brawl*, while the evening sees *Disappearing Acts* from *Yael Flexer* and *Nic Sandiland*, and a club night from *Club B-Boy*. Sunday has more workshops across a range of current dance genres well worth trying out. *Mótus* have really put MK on the dance map, and show no sign of slowing down.

### MK Festival Fringe 13th-23rd July

This lives up to its reputation as a vibrant and engaging, fringe arts festival, showcasing some of the most pioneering and experimental work across the arts. Since its inauguration in 2012, expressly to complement MK's International Festival, it has grown in size and expanded its following, drawn in by the lure of in/outdoor arts, immersive theatre street arts, performance, outdoor theatre, visual arts, music,

emerging artists, encouraging new and experimental work. This year *Fringe* presents over 30 events and 50 artists. Aside from our own performances which I'll describe in more detail on the next page, my favourites in the *Fringe* are likely to be...

*Festive Road's* amazing *Giants* will be on exhibition all through the festival in the Barn at the excellent *Westbury Arts Centre*. This is a great opportunity to get up close to some of the stars of former years' *Walking with Giants* carnival parades, and wonder not only how they're made, but how someone could come up with these ideas.

*The voice of the wood*, created and presented by storyteller and master puppeteer, *Jo Munton*, and poet/musician *Stephanie Finegan*. This charming musical journey tells a simple tale about friendship, love and how the very first xylophone was made. See it twice, at the *Central Library* at 3.45pm on the 19th July and at the *Chrysalis Theatre* the following day, at 3.00pm.

The Russian Speaking Community in MK presents Gagarin, first in Space on 20th at 7.30pm in *MK Gallery's Project Space*. An inspiring story of friendship, love and achievements, it tells one of the most adventurous stories of the 20th century, in the life of the first man in space.

*Continued over...*



Yael Flexer to perform at Mótus 2016, ctsy Mótus



*The Voice of the Wood*, ctsy MK Festival Fringe

## THE ARTS

### Milton Keynes International Festival 2016 15th–24th July

Top billing of the month goes to *Milton Keynes International Festival*, a biennial event now in its fourth iteration, and now under the creative direction of *Maria Bota*, taking over from *Bill Gee*. Festival Director *Monica Ferguson* of *The Stables* has again put together a stunning programme. Regular readers may know my fondness for aerialists, and IF2016 doesn't disappoint, with Spanish/Argentine company *Voalá* to delight audiences on the opening night with Station. "Four suited and booted businessmen are distracted from their daily commute by a mysterious woman and four sirens who transform the men's evening into an unforgettable world of sky-soaring aerial acrobatics, music and colour." Says it all...

There's a reprise of 2014's most memorable production *Under the Vaulted Sky*, with a video installation of that amazing community dance composition by *Rosemary Lee*. The triptych, *Liquid Gold* is in the Air shows throughout the festival on three screens in a festival *Garden Room* created in Queens Court by *Bridgman and Bridgman*.

*The Spiegel tent* is back with another magnificent programme throughout the festival, starting on opening night with Australian acrobats *Gravity and*



Aerial fantasy from Voalá  
ctsy IF2016

*Other Myths*, followed by comedian *Lee Nelson*, live and unleashed.

Main sponsor centre:mk hosts *Magic Carpets* from renowned digital artist *Miguel Chevalier* with sound spheres by *Ray Lee*, so successful last time with Chorus,



Station House Opera's Dominoes  
ctsy IF2016

transforming Middleton Hall throughout IF2016.

Watch out for marching bands, comedy, music and intimate unexpected moments and above all, don't miss *Station House Opera's Dominoes*, on Saturday 16th July, when thousands of giant dominoes will create a dynamic event

2km long, snaking its way along, round, over and through CMK starting at 5.30pm at The Point and finishing by the Theatre District. ■

## NEWS FROM ARTS CENTRAL

This month we, like the rest of MK creative community, are very engaged in the festival season, particularly *The Fringe*, where we are directly behind four of the events.

*49 Ways to change MK* is a call for ideas about the city in its 49th year. 49 ideas will be selected, from which one will be selected by public vote to be the one that 'could be realised in 2017' when the city turns 50. The lucky 49, selected by AC stars *Jane Charles* and *Yvonne Elliott*, both fresh from *Mix3d Stitch & Friends* in Bucks Open Studios, will be displayed at AC at the *Cornerstone gallery* throughout *The Fringe*, opening on 13th July at 7.00pm.

*Arts in Motion* is the first of two taster events for *MK Arts Week* later in the year. Presented at music venue MK11 on 14th July, this will show art as never before. Four brave artists including our own *Matt Waruszynski* and *Lily Glover-Wright* will take turns miked up to narrate their creative process as they paint a very rapid piece of art. A musician and a contemporary dancer will interpret that in real-time and the audience will respond...



The Art of Body Painting, ctsy Sophia Tyler

*Oh... and by the way* is a short drama presented by AC residents *Pandora Diverse Arts* in the *Arts Central Theatre* on the evenings of 17th, 18th and 19th July. Three conversations between individuals who for varying reasons are marginalised, delivered with poignancy and humour.

*Bodies as One*, in the *Arts Central Theatre* late on 22nd July, is an adventure in the emerging art of Body Painting – face-painting for grown-ups. Two contrasting body models will be created in parallel, to live music accompaniment, one by an expert professional and the other through creative audience participation. Then the two characters find life...

Having just launched our *Clyde House Visual Arts community*, with studios with display facilities from £24.00 pw all-in including car parking, **we have LOTS of STUDIO space available...** These studios are by written application (email will do) setting out what your artistic direction is, giving examples of your current and past work and offering an artistic referee. We also have half a dozen empty desks across three of our premises, crying out for creative occupation from £12.00.

**AND FINALLY...** For those who would like to get involved in any of these projects, either in MK or Northampton, you can sign up on our website at [www.artsgatewaymk.org.uk](http://www.artsgatewaymk.org.uk) email me at [john.best@artsgatewaymk.org.uk](mailto:john.best@artsgatewaymk.org.uk) or call the office on **01908 241122**. We'd like to hear from you, wherever you're based.



49 Ways to change MK, ctsy Jane Charles

