

East Midlands: Current Context

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While the East Midlands has not traditionally been seen as a focal point for outdoor performance, over the last few years there have been a few events and initiatives that have aimed to change that perspective,

- **Street Petite** a three-year programme sought to bring high quality Street Theatre to Derbyshire through the delivery of an annual programme of free accessible, non venue-based Street Theatre.
- **The THREE Cities** Create and Connect project received £800,000 in funding from the Millennium Commission and Arts Council England through the Urban Cultural Programme. Impacting on the quality, range and number of outdoor performances in Leicester, Derby & Nottingham between 2005 and 2006.
- **Leicester Comedy Festival** – On cold and wintery night in February 2007 the French Street arts Company Plasticiens Volants brought their enchanting show “Perle” to the community of Braunstone in Leicester-extraordinary flying inflatable creatures invaded the heavens, streets with the finale in the local park
- **BJC 07** (British juggling Convention) in Nottingham –The BJC is one of the main events on the country’s contemporary circus calendar - It also featured outdoor street performances in and around the re-vamped Old Market Square

Local Authorities are essential partners in the development of street arts, in many cases driving much of the activity within this sector and that is true here in the East Midlands

- **Nottinghamshire County Council** promoted the incredible “Sticky” (which The Stage described as “*quite simply the most awesome and joyous piece I have ever seen in my life*”) at Rufford Country Park.
- For several years until the mid-1990’s, **Newark on Water festival**, managed by Newark and Sherwood District Council, saw major performances by companies including Walk the Plank, thanks to an Arts Council England funded consortium between NSDC, De La Warr Pavilion, [Bexhill-on-sea](#) and other UK producers.

While other East Midlands events have demonstrated a commitment to programming outdoor performance:

- **Nottingham City Councils’** annual three day **Riverside Festival** during the first weekend of August on the banks of the River Trent

- **Loughborough's Streets Alive** –Loughborough's town centre animated through the use of Street performers
- **Leicester Comedy Festival** - Emergency Exit Arts -Runga Rung' Performance commissioned as part of their 10th birthday and have commissioned other large scale performances at either the launch or finale of the Comedy Festival in other years.

Arts Council East Midlands commitment to outdoor performance has helped regional artists to develop new work and supported regional festivals to attract people to outdoor arts events and brought the wonder of outdoor arts to the wider public

There is still a fair way to go before the East Midlands can boast the infrastructure of other regions, but there are some jewels in the crown both established and emerging - some of those Regional Artists, Companies and Festivals involved in outdoor work are as follows:

Artizani - Artizani has been established since 1989, specializing in spectacular theatre. One of Europe's most stylish and stunning street acts, Artizani combines traditional circus skills, performed at the highest level with a vaudevillian repertoire of routines and an eye for the surreal image.

www.artizani.net

Art Fresco – **Arts Fresco** presents a free outdoor one-day festival of innovative street **arts** and exhilarating entertainment in Market Harborough town centre. An extraordinarily fun celebration of innovative street arts and spectacular entertainment taking place the first weekend in September – Last Year was its seventh year! And it has gotten bigger and better every year.

Watch this space

www.artsfresco.com

Ashbourne Streetfest – The small market town of Ashbourne is situated at the southern end of the beautiful Derbyshire Dales. Ashbourne Arts, which organises the Ashbourne Festival, has really pulled out the stops this year. The festival has established a great local reputation for a high quality and eclectic programme... The centre piece of the Festival is the International Streetfest. Sat 20, Sun 21 Jun 2009

<http://www.ashbournefestival.org/streetfest.html>

Babbling Vagabonds – Babbling Vagabonds create special Tailor Made projects for just about any event. Past projects include village celebrations, carnival events, lantern processions and community training and heritage projects www.babblingvagabonds.co.uk

Derby Feste - Organisers of a **Derby** arts extravaganza have ambitious plans to turn it into a major festival attracting up to 150000 visitors annually. The third Feste celebration, due to take place on the weekend of September 4-6 2009, could build into a two-week festival by 2014 that will compete with major rivals such as Norwich or Bath. www.derbyfeste.com

Hanby and Barrett – Hanby and Barrett, a participatory arts organisation specialising in outdoor theatre events, work in and with communities to create performances about those communities. They have staged shows in woods, train stations, parks, a Napoleonic Blast Furnace, and throughout the streets and public spaces of towns and villages across the East Midlands. www.hanbyandbarrett.com

Metro-Boulot-Dodo - Metro-Boulot-Dodo is a Leicester based organisation After initially starting out producing end-on performances to tour arts centres across the UK, MBD have diversified into other areas of live art, outdoor performance, large scale and site specific installation, visual art and new media.

www.metro-boulot-dodo.com

Shifting Sands Theatre - Shifting **Sands** combines clowning with the techniques of walkabout street theatre, using easily recognisable characters that interact spontaneously and playfully with the crowds. They have performed nationally at many festivals and community events.

www.shiftingsandstheatre.co.uk

And further exciting developments are still to come...Watch this space for the new "SO" festival. East Lindsey District Council and Arts Council England are at the planning stage of developing a major regular festival for Skegness on the East Coast of Lincolnshire which aims to include outdoor performances – street Theatre & large scale processions, as one of 3 planned strands of activity for the event. So2009 will be staged as a single days worth of activity on July 25th acting as a taster for the full festival event starting in 2010 (So2010) and occurring as a biennale thereafter.