

Dublin City Council
Bram Stoker Festival



**Presentation to
Arts & Culture Strategic Policy Committee**

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival - Co-Directors



Maria Schweppe is a director of Schweppe Curtis Nunn, contract holders for curating, producing and marketing the festival. A producer, programmer and arts manager with more than 20 years experience working professionally in the arts, she has been Co-Director of Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival since 2017.

Responsible for programming, production, staffing and producing.



Tom Lawlor has worked in the arts since 2007, across marketing, sponsorship, audience development and programming. He has connected hundreds of thousands of people nationally and internationally with memorable cultural experiences, and has been Co-Director of Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival since 2016.

Responsible for marketing & comms, business engagement, audience development.

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival - Timeline

- 2012** Festival started by Dublin City Council on the centenary of Stoker's death
- 2015** Contract awarded to Tom Lawlor & Roise Goan under the auspice of Project Arts Centre
- 2016** Maria Schweppe joins as Producer
- 2016** Development with DCC of programming pillars
- 2017** Contract awarded to Schweppe Curtis Nunn with Maria Schweppe joining as Co-Director
- 2017 - 2024** Contract remains with Schweppe Curtis Nunn, with tender submission / contract extension every two years

Major Aims of the festival

- Animation of the public domain and use of the streetscape in innovative ways to engage the people of Dublin who might not otherwise attend city festivals.
- Programming will reflect these values of high quality, social engagement and new/hard to reach audiences while being mindful of the economic impact that large scale cultural events can have.
- To enhance Dublin's reputation as a great destination for tourism, and to act as a strategic driver for international visitors to Ireland.
- Programme to contain variety and opportunities for everyone to enjoy the entertainment in a safe and socially inclusive environment.
- Programme to contain large, medium and small-scale events and programmes that will have an appeal to a variety of audiences attracting visitors to Dublin and building on the large audiences that the Festival has enjoyed to date.

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival – Programming Pillars

- Locations tied to Stoker including his residences and places of work
- Stoker’s lesser known works, from “The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions” to “Famous Imposters” and Gothic works from his era
- The people in Stoker’s life: his wife Florence Balcombe; Henry Irving; his social-reformer mother Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornley; his literary and theatrical circle of friends and acquaintances including Oscar Wilde, Henry Irving & Walt Whitman
- The food, people, customs, costumes, traditions and supernatural beliefs of the time
- Fresh perspectives on Dracula - what new lens can we view this seminal work through?
- Stoker’s research on, and interest in, Irish and international supernatural traditions and tales
- Irish supernatural folklore and myth and how this can speak to and entertain modern audiences
- Seances, spiritualism, the occult and other Victorian practices
- Dublin’s Victorian & Gothic Architecture

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival - Video of 2023 Festival



2023 Festival – Key Outcomes & Statistics

Overall attendance 67,746 - one of the largest festival attendances in Dublin

Stokerland Attendance 36,230 (+503% increase on Stokerland 2015)

C2DE attendees 40% (based on 2019 Ipsos B&A Survey)

Media Reach / Value 37.46M / €2.15M

Majority of events sold out in advance

Awards

- **Irish Tourism Industry Awards 2019** - Nominated for Best Festival / Event
- **Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards 2018** - Whitby nominated for Best Soundscape & winner of Best Movement Direction

Major Media Wins

- **RTE Six One** - Live broadcast from Macnas 2023 and package on Nine O'Clock News
- **Lonely Planet** - Festival listed as one of the world's top 10 Hallowe'en Destinations
- **El Pais** - Full page print article in 2023 on the festival, with online editorial expanding further
- **Irish Times Front Page** - Macnas photograph landed on front page of The Irish Times

Impact – Arts Sector, City & Citizens

Employment (2023 Festival)

Artists: 116 | **Crew:** 151 | **Core Team** (including Box Office and H&S Consultants): 23 | **Marketing & PR:** 20

Total 310 (+ 89 Security at events over the weekend)

Business Engagement (2022 Audience Survey)

- 67% of Bram Stoker Festival attendees visit a city centre business while attending the festival
 - Of those, 57% visit restaurants, 26% shop at retailers, 21% go to cafes and 10% go to pubs
 - Of those who attend events at night, that rises to 40% going to pubs
 - Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival's footfall positively impacts businesses over the October Bank Holiday weekend

Our Audience (2022 Audience Survey)

- 50% men / 50% women
- 16% are aged between 18 and 34 | 36% between 35 and 44 | 2% between 45 and 54 | 14% are aged 55+
- 76% come from Dublin, with 13% from elsewhere in Ireland and 12% visiting from another country
- People come from **every postcode in Dublin**, with 36% living close to the city centre in Dublin 1, 2, 4, 6 6w, 7, 8 or 9.
- Families are a core part of our audience - our free, family friendly events attract more than 30,000 people to the city centre over the bank holiday weekend

How We Got Here – Programming

- **Art by stealth**
 - High quality arts programme cloaked in irreverence, fun and intrigue
 - Designed to be accessible for all Dubliners, regardless of socioeconomic background, with a focus on accessibility
 - Mix of artforms and different types of events including; theatre, circus, visual arts, film, music, spectacle, walking tours, literary and academic focused events, family friendly events
- **Open Call**
 - Started in 2018
 - Now a part of the programming mix annually
- **International artists**
 - Presenting world-class international artists alongside Irish artists e.g Darkfield, Lantern Company and Dan Acher
- **Methods of programming**
 - **Direct approach / fostering long term relationships**
 - Presented work by artists with a track record of delivering quality events popular with our audience
 - **Working with key national cultural orgs and institutions**
 - National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts and History | National Gallery of Ireland | Smock Alley Theatre | Abbey Theatre | The Ark | The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland
 - **Long term relationships**
 - Developing work with artists over a long period of time for presentation/premiere at the festival
- **Focus on site specific and interesting venues**
 - Work has been presented in venues such as; St. Anne's Park, National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, St. Patrick's Park, Pepper Canister Church, St. Ann's Church, Royal College of Surgeons, National Library of Ireland, Mount Jerome and Glasnevin Cemetery, Meeting House Square.

How We Got Here - Marketing & Audience Development

Marketing & Audience Development

- **Media partnerships**
 - 2017 - 2020 - 98fm & The Herald to access C2DE audiences
 - 2021 onwards - RTE Supporting the Arts to access nationwide audiences, with C2DE audience included / within our access
- **Accessible marketing**
 - Reading age & copy rooted in “Art by Stealth” policy
 - Striking visual communications in all marketing and PR materials
 - From logo to show imagery and out-of-home assets, the festival always presented as accessible and easy to enjoy
 - High quality graphic content which can be used annually without it dating
- **Accessible pricing**
 - A variety of ticket prices (in 2023, tickets available at €4, €12, €14, €15, €18, €21, €25)
 - A significant amount of events are free to attend

Accessibility

C2DE Audiences

- Low ticket prices
- Accessible imagery and event descriptions
- Providing all relevant information at point of information
- Ensuring a welcoming tone at all events

Venue Accessibility

- Where possible, all venues are wheelchair accessible
- Transport options and accessibility information readily available on each event page

Neurodivergent Accessibility

- Piloted at Borealis in 2022
- Implemented at Stokerland and Macnas in 2023

Irish Sign Language Interpreted Performances

- Piloted in 2023 at two events

Accessibility

Borealis - 2022

- Worked with external consultants and sought advice from other cultural organisations with a track record in this area
- Introduction of Relaxed performances at spectacle event in 2023
- Cross marketed with relevant organisations to ensure appropriate audience reach
- Hugely positive public reaction and feedback
- Information packs and full briefing of all event staff

Stokerland - 2023

- Relaxed session at St Patrick's Park on the Monday morning
- Information pack and full staff briefing on this session
- Inclusion of Dublin City Council's mobile sensory unit

Irish Sign Language Interpreted Performances

- Introduced in 2023 at Revenant (Smock Alley Theatre) and Three Castles Burning Live (Trinity College)

The Future

Maintain audience enthusiasm

- Loyal audience who are eager to get involved annually
- Delivering world-class arts experiences in Dublin for all Dubliners

Further development of accessible events

- Continue to present ISL, relaxed and accessible events
- Introduce programme notes, audio described performances and touch tours

Further develop relationships with artists and cultural organisations

- Provide employment within the arts sector and event-associated industries

Secure increased buy in from citywide businesses

- Harness the major growth in audience numbers for economic impact in the city

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