

Positive Images Festival

Secretary's report for 2021-2022

Covid-19 and the accompanying lockdown restrictions had a drastic effect on Positive Images Festival. We had to make a transition from face to face to face meetings and events to online meetings and events.

In early 2021, we made a conscious decision to continue our celebrations right up to the end of Coventry's Year as City of Culture UK.

We participated in the City of Culture Trust-led **Coventry Welcomes Festival** by contributing 3 events: Blackout Poetry; Putting the Flags Out for Coventry Welcomes – a fun session for making decorative flag bunting; and a poetry workshop.

The hugely talented Year 5 pupils of **Manor Park School** spent a day with Emilie Lauren Jones as part of this year's Positive Images Festival and created Blackout Poems.

Positive Images Festival got off to a flying start on Saturday 31st July, with a phenomenally successful **Concert of Music and Dance** at the Ukrainian Hall in Leicester Causeway. Attendees enjoyed the programme, comprising performances by Juliet Mamajay, Ukrainian Bayan King Singers, Sahyadri Friends Group, Chitrakalaimanram – Centre for Performing Arts, Kadence Drummers and Sojourners. The compere was Kate Hills of Hillz Radio.

The next high profile live event was the joint **Multicultural Craft & Food Fair** and the **Community Information Fair** in Broadgate on Saturday 4th September. The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress graced the occasion. The entertainment programme was well-received. We lost some of our regular participants because of uncertainty about lockdown regulations. But we also attracted new participants. All stallholders completed the evaluation questionnaires. Suggestions made were followed up. We thank all our volunteers for their assistance on the day.

On the same day, **Canley Big Lunch** was held in Prior Deram Park, where 700 visitors supported the event. The most remarkable feature of the event was the presence of large numbers of young people. The assault course proved to be an exceedingly popular activity.

Our poetry events:

Positive Images Festival congratulates our Publicity & Promotions Officer – **Emilie Lauren Jones**, on being named Coventry's first **Poet Laureate 2021-2023**.

Emilie has conducted poetry **workshops** every month. We continue to receive very positive comments from participants.

The hugely talented Year 5 pupils of **Manor Park School** spent a day with Emilie Lauren Jones as part of this year's Positive Images Festival and created Blackout Poems.

Our **free poetry night**, with a galaxy of national and local poets, was held on Saturday 23rd October. It was compered by Coventry Poet Laureate, Emilie Lauren

Jones. The open mic session unearthed emerging talent in Coventry. An attendee, who had travelled a fair distance to attend the poetry night, remarked how enjoyable the poetry event had been. **Positive Images Peace Festival Poetry Competition 2021**

Positive Images Festival's poetry competition on the theme of *Faith, Hope and Love* attracted a record 93 entries, one of them from as far as The Republic of Ireland. The judging panel, comprising Emilie Lauren Jones – Coventry Poet Laureate, Kate Hills - Vice Chair of Positive Images Festival and Joe Reynolds – the 2020 Competition winner, was highly impressed by the incredibly high quality of poems submitted.

The award ceremony, held at the Central Methodist Hall on 20th November, was very ably compered by Emile Lauren Jones.

Attendees thoroughly enjoyed the event and provided a lot of feedback.

Music meets poetry workshops at Fargo Village

2 evening workshops on the theme of “When music meets poetry”, were facilitated at Fargo Village by Raef Boylan.

Participants of both workshops were invited to be part of the event on 21st November.

An attendee described this as “an excellent opportunity for collaboration between professional artists and non-professional creatives.”

Artist in Residence Workshops:

Funding from the Arts Council of England enabled us to appoint Mary Courtney as Positive Images Festival's Artist in Residence at the Central Library. Mary was on hand to advise people interested in developing their own art form. She also arranged free drop-in art workshops for children and adults for the *Making Faces Project*, inspired by gargoyles and green men on buildings in the city. This successful residency saw 380 people take part in 24 afternoon sessions.

Our ongoing events:

We commissioned 10 local, emerging artists to create a piece of work of the **Positive Images & Words Project**, led by Emilie Lauren Jones and Kate Hills. The theme was eco-friendliness. The use of recycled material was encouraged. The exhibition of items created by participants can be viewed at The Litten Tree, 1 Warwick Road, CV1 1EX from 26th March to 8th April.

Kate Hills has been running free monthly **Arts & Crafts Workshops** for women at the WATCH Centre.

Events arranged by members:

In partnership with acclaimed theatre company Paines Plough, **Belgrade Theatre** presented Roundabout 2021 – a festival of 4 brilliant new plays – *Really Big and*

Really Loud, Hungry, Black Love and *May Queen*, in a unique pop-up theatre located in the grounds of Moat House Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre.

Coventry Against Racism's zoom meeting

Highlife Centre celebrated African culture and heritage through a number of events forming part of This is Africa series: *We are Warriors* Cultural event; *Beatz Africa*; *Coloured Synergy Festival*; *Unity Through Sports*, and exhibitions.

Singing for the Brain group has been holding zoom meetings every Wednesday. Its members sing/hear vintage Bollywood and Lollywood songs, ghazals, etc. Each session includes discussion and information-sharing.

Exhibitions:

Our Environmental Ambassador, **Gabrielle Back**, arranged a *Climate Change* poster competition, which attracted 500 entries. An exhibition was arranged at Holy Trinity Church.

Students of **Hereward College** contributed 2 photographic exhibitions: *Capturing Coventry* and *Getting through This*, which chronicles people around Coventry and their emotions in connection with Covid-19.

Representation at events/meetings:

Positive Images Festival has been represented at: The Holocaust Memorial Day; Discover Bulgaria event; International Women's Week events arranged by Godiva Trust and Wellness Junction; Ekta-Unity's Welcome Back event; international zoom meetings to mark the 80th anniversary of the initiation of twin cities movement; and Sacred Music Festival.

Meetings attended by us include Coventry Welcomes Festival planning meetings; City of Culture Trust's Collaborative Team and Local Sector briefings and South Asian Leaders' Network meetings, etc.

Some members of our Executive Committee attended City of Culture Trust's *training* sessions re: event management and funding.

Individuals and organisations continue to contact us for information re: performers, training, constitution and policy documents. And some have expressed an interest in arranging events in collaboration with us.

Colin Scott, the Chair, and I thank our Executive Committee, our funders, our volunteers for their valuable assistance and member organisations for coming up with innovative events year after year.

Mehru Fitter

Secretary

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