

REPORT FROM Two Sisters Arts Centre

Two Sisters Arts Centre was opened in April 2019 in the now redundant church of St Mary's in Trimley as a community arts centre for the Felixstowe peninsula. In spite of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and no regular funding we have gone from strength to strength – facilitating a space for local groups and organisations to perform, create and rehearse as well as bringing touring quality artists to the community at a fraction of the cost of larger theatres.

2024 was a successful year for Two Sisters. We signed a new five year lease with the diocese, managed to obtain a number of funding pots to keep us going, facilitated a successful Folk & Shanty Festival, and maintained a steady output of exciting entertainment and workshops for people to attend.

Over a 40 week season we produced in excess of 100 events including jazz, folk, willow workshops, improv workshops, poetry and drama including Black & White Productions *Writing Crime in Akenfield* focusing on the strange relationship between Patricia Highsmith and Ronald Blyth, and *Christmas Ghosts & Other Stories* set at Felixstowe Ferry and featuring writers MR James and Henry James.

At Two Sisters we believe in the arts as a way to maintain good mental health, companionship and community. We also believe in repurposing our lovely heritage building in order to continue its use at the heart of the community. We exist to support local music and poetry groups, arts workshops and local talent and we are determined to find ways and means to keep going. We also bring in quality entertainment at a fraction of the price of bigger venues – and to the doorstep of those who live on the Felixstowe peninsula so they can enjoy it without having to travel too far – something we also feel is very important as environmentally that makes us very eco friendly. Less travel for more people means less carbon footprint. And if you want to be even greener, there's a bus stop right outside the building!

These are of course still challenging times for live performance venues. It has probably never been easy, but in the wake of the continual fall out from the pandemic, plus a difficult economic climate -it continues to be a

struggle to keep going. And in fact many venues have fallen by the wayside, even in the last year.

Hence we are very grateful to the Felixstowe Town Council for awarding us a grant in 2024/25. This is earmarked to support our second Folk & Shanty Fest – this year scheduled for June 21st/22nd - a chance to celebrate the maritime and rural heritage of our lovely part of the world which will include live music and morris dancing in the town centre on the Saturday and live entertainment on Sunday at Martello P tower including a living history promenade tour inside the Tower.

We opened for the new season in March 2025 with internationally acclaimed jazz group The Art Themen Organ Trio, who launched their most recent album at Ronnie Scotts in London.

May – July sees a host of both returning performers and new acts scheduled including local quartet Quattro Amici whose fabulous voices cover a range of music from classical through musical theatre to contemporary charts, Finland based folk singer Frans Koslonen, award winning performance poet Luke Wright with his new show *Joy* and author and singer Louis De Berniers, famous for his novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. And a new play from Black & White Productions celebrating the 80th Anniversary of VE day and the vital work done at Orfordness and Bawdsey on RDF (later called RADAR) .

More information can be found on our website <http://twosistersarts.co.uk/>

Or at www.ticketsource.co.uk/two-sisters-arts-centre