**Canterbury Shakespeare Festival CIC, BID funding report:**

Hi Rachel and the BID team. This is our report as requested on the outcome of our 2018 season. I am really pleased to say that across the entire festival we have had huge success and your support and contribution has made this possible.

Below I have answered some key questions which I hope will paint a picture of this year’s results for you. Of course, if you have questions or require more information then I would be happy to answer them for you.

**What is the Canterbury Shakespeare Festival and what are its values?**

I want to briefly just go over where we began and where we are now to give you a clear picture of our growth. In 2015 we performed two productions over the space of a week. Both these productions took place at The University of Kent. As of the end of the 2018 season, we performed 22 separate productions and over 70 individual performances across venues in Canterbury.

This year we have fulfilled my goal of seeing a mix of both students and local theatre people coming together to create the work. We have seen a nice balance of both groups this year and achieved these two groups working together to produce all 4 of our main shows.

The support from local organisations and businesses (such as yourselves) has allowed to spread our reach and get many more performers and volunteers involved this year. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that 65% of our cast for this year were completely new to the festival and this made a huge difference to the quality and quantity that we could produce.

Finally, with your support, we have been able to connect to a much wider audience. Platforms like My Canterbury produced obvious ticket sale results. The Banner in the high street (which had the BID logo on it) allowed us to reach thousands of people. One of the biggest responses that we have had in previous years of the festival was people saying, “We didn’t know it was happening”. This year I am confident that we have really put ourselves out there, both across social media and in Canterbury physically. We have now had people respond with “Oh yes, we’ve seen something about that”. With continued support this response is only going to grow.

**What activities did your event engage in for 2018?**

The Canterbury Shakespeare Festival 2018 season

This year we performed 5 productions and launched our ‘Activity Day’, which was sponsored directly by BID.

Our productions were performed across Canterbury, with our first ever performance to a school at their venue and at our free show we often had over 100 people at performances. This is a huge leap for us as we have never seen such numbers at our performances save at the Free Production of Macbeth we did in 2016. This year all our productions performed well.

We are proud to have taken the festival back to some well-loved venues such as Greyfriars Gardens, Eliot College and The Canterbury Tales. As well as taking our productions to new places like a beautiful private Garden on Tyler Hill which perfectly matched the summertime feel of our production of Much Ado About Nothing.

Our Activity Day did very well for a first time around. Our fight workshop was excellently attended, and the lecture and the writing workshop also had a good turnout.

Our children’s activity was mixed. Some of our stations along the high street had high attendance and interest from children and members of the public. Whereas Westgate Hall only had a few children complete the course with all the stickers.

Next year if the Activity Day is repeated then we would rework the course so that everything is much closer together and the ‘home’ point is much easier to reach. We received strong feedback across the board for the event and people thoroughly enjoyed all the elements that we could offer for free. I hope the festival continues to offer these free/ low-cost auxiliary elements to our programme to continue to engage with the community. With continued support from local groups, businesses and organisations we will only continue to see the growth of the festival.

**How successful was your event and how did it engage with community and businesses in Canterbury?**

As mentioned in the introduction and throughout the report we achieved a lot of success in all areas of the festival. I have written here a few more of the headline stats to show this.

* Ticket income and customer numbers more than double 2017 from 319 to 778. With our on the door sales and attendees at our free shows, we think we have been able to present our performances to over one thousand people this year.
* As a result, our online ticket sales income also more than doubled and our overall income with patrons and sponsorship income included grew by 55% from £8,500 to £13,250. All this means that for the first time in our history we have recorded a financial surplus for our season.
* We developed our profile: city centre banner, city venues, and we used boosted posts on Facebook this year and reached nearly 80,000 people, including 10,000 who saw a post for our free show: Romeo and Juliet, with just over 10,000 of them interacting in some way with our posts. A total of 5,000 leaflets were dropped through doors or left in local places for tourists and residents.
* We were really pleased to engage a few Sponsors this year from the local area: Tarvos Wealth and The Pound sponsored shows as well as Canterbury Connected BID and Canterbury Arts Council also gave the festival some sponsorship support. More importantly, we have engaged a lot more support for the festival family and there are other organisations and businesses that have registered their interest in sponsoring us next year. One of the big aims will be to get a keynote festival sponsor.

We also managed to engage many audience members from outside Canterbury coming into the city. These were split into two groups; the first being a tourist who saw us on websites like Visit Kent, Visit Canterbury and event and travel websites. The second group were from places all over Kent, encouraged, we think by our expanded social media presence.

Overall it has all been about profile and brand development this year and it is abundantly clear that we have gone beyond what we thought possible for the festival.

**What plans does the Festival have for the future?**

The future of the Festival is strong and healthy. There is money left to help begin next year’s preparations and several contacts who we will be engaging with a look to bring in more sponsors.

Bitter-sweetly, I will be stepping down this year as Artistic Director of the Festival. I will be moving to London this month and so running the festival at such a distance is not possible. Thankfully the team in Canterbury is already formed and ready to take on the festival to new places. We are excited about the future.

We will continue to focus on the city of Canterbury, this will be demonstrated most clearly through the continued use of city venues like The Canterbury Tales and Greyfriars Gardens and maybe engaging some new venues (like The King’s School) which are more central.

We will be developing new sponsor links to local businesses and organisations which are centred in the City of Canterbury. We will also continue to build on the great success of this year by building on the awareness of the festival. Banners, Poster and much more social media advertisement will help build the excitement for next year and I would expect to see another growth across all aspects of the festival (save cost).

I thank you again for all your support and advice over this year. It has really helped the festival grow and flourish and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you,

Kind regards,

Benjamin Chamberlain

Festival Producer and Artistic Director