

Salisbury International Arts Festival

1973 – 2017

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Since 1973 the Salisbury International Arts Festival has fired the city's creative life with an annual programme of world-class arts. The spectacular events have brought energy to our beautiful, medieval city and the surrounding area, creating and curating experiences that transform people and places, and connect us with our times and the world around us.

Although there was a one-off Festival in 1969 (which lost £1,000!), it was after a meeting in The Red Lion Hotel in 1972 that the idea firmly took root and a Festival was held every year from 1973 for 45 years.

It was the idea of Antony Hobson, who appointed two London-based artistic directors, Geraint Jones and Elizabeth Jane Howard, and an administrator, John Wright, who commuted from Cumbria. The local government representative was Roger Townsend, who remained involved with the Festival for over thirty years – chairing the committee three times.

An illustrious list of Festival Directors followed:

1973-77	Geraint Jones and Elizabeth Jane Howard
1978-86	Richard Gregson Williams
1987-88	Mark Eynon
1989-94	Simon Halsey
1995-99	Helen Marriage
2000-04	Trevor Davies
2005-08	Jo Metcalf
2009-13	Maria Bota
2013-17	Toby Smith

Everyone will have special memories of these Festivals, which have come full circle in a remarkable way. It was in the first 1973 Festival that the 'Guinness Lecture' was on the 'Sounds of the Whale', which was, of course, the theme of the last Festival Chorus concert in the Cathedral in 2017.