

Bram Stoker Festival 2023

Pre Application Guide

**Bram
Stoker
Festival**



Bram Stoker Festival

Bram Stoker Festival celebrates the legacy of one of Ireland's most beloved and iconic writers. What started as a primarily literary festival in 2012 has become one of Dublin's biggest and most-anticipated festivals; more than 49,000 people experienced our events in 2022.

The festival has a broad programming focus, which draws from Stoker, his life, his work, the Dublin of his time and extends into the Gothic, the supernatural and the Victorian.

Over the years, we've presented major outdoor spectacles and installations; intimate experiences on hallowed grounds; world premieres of new scores for classic films; award-winning theatre productions; outdoor circus at night in dark, foreboding forests; comedy in nightclubs; choral ensembles in darkened libraries; food tours where participants dined on custom menus; elaborate banquets in sacred crypts; large-scale spectacles including parades, water-based installations and immersive experiences. We've taken over cathedrals, parks, castles, Georgian mansions and city squares and delved into Stoker's literary impact - dissecting everything from his life and city to his work as a critic. A core component of our festival is family friendly and we've entertained little monsters with kid-friendly discos, workshops, face-painting, performances and more at *Stokerland* and beyond.

At its core, the festival puts a contemporary spin on Stoker's legacy, but how this happens can take myriad forms. What follows are some guiding principles on what we're looking for, some examples of events presented in the last few years and some lesser-known information on the man himself.

Enter freely and of your own free will... and surprise us with your bold, adventurous and unique ideas!

What we're intrigued by

Regardless of your artform or discipline, we're looking for events which speak to the legacy of Bram Stoker and not just events which are rooted in Dracula. We're intrigued by...

Dublin's Victorian & Gothic Architecture

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

Bram Stoker Festival: Where We Operate

Bram Stoker Festival is an initiative of Dublin City Council. As such, all events in the festival must take place within the geographic area administered by Dublin City Council. The festival focuses primarily on activity in Dublin City centre. Events taking place outside the city centre must have a strong connection with Stoker's life or the Victorian era.



Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



In 2022, we presented Swiss artist Dan Acher's **BOREALIS** at Dublin Castle, where Stoker once worked. An immersive light and sound experience, it brought the fascination and superstition humans have experienced for millenia on viewing the Northern Lights right into the city centre for Dubliners and visitors of all ages to enjoy. More than 20,000 people snapped up tickets for this free experience within 24 hours!



We commissioned **Dreamgun** to point their satirical laser beam at Bram Stoker's titular 600-year-old demon man in a new Film Read based on the iconic novel and every vampire movie that it inspired. Audiences stepped across the threshold to a haunted pop-culture spook-fest comedy, written by Dreamgun and performed by actors and comedians who hadn't read the script beforehand but had seen Buffy.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



In collaboration with the National Gallery of Ireland and the Underthings, we presented **Warmbloods**, a darkly comedic tour of the gallery's Gothic works by two ladylike members of Dublin's vampire community, Anne and Winifred. Audiences were led astray by visions of exposed flesh, murder, darkened rooms, storms and a cruel-to-be-kind dissection of our 'warmblood' mortal nonsense and obsession with immortality.



Tours of all kinds are hugely popular at Bram Stoker Festival - from walking tours of the city with a particular focus to tours of buildings, galleries, institutions and more, our audience loves exploring the city and its links to Stoker. In 2022, **Donal Fallon** presented a walking tour which encompassed many sites of particular relevance to Stoker's life, career and the Dublin of his time.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



We presented the world premiere of new work by celebrated contemporary circus artists Loosysmokes, whose **Night of the Shifting Bog** was inspired by a passage in Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*. This outdoor work in St. Anne's Park, Clontarf (where Stoker once lived) wowed audiences with its mix of audacious circus skill and supernatural themes.



Irish composer Matthew Nolan worked with the internationally-renowned composer Andrea Mastrovito on the score for his work, **Nysferatu** - a rotoscope animation reimagining the Nosferatu story as if the character were a Syrian migrant in New York City. The screening and live-score event took place in the church where Stoker married Florence Balcombe. Bram Stoker Festival presented the Irish premiere of this incredible event.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



Mother Stoker's Sickly Stories was a stunning, site-specific theatre production which transformed a crumbling Georgian mansion, bringing to life imagined stories Stoker might have been told by his mother as a sick child. The show ran a number of times per night, for the run of the festival and was limited to a small audience per session who were transfixed by its haunting visuals and macabre tales.



The festival was thrilled to present the world premiere of Colin Dunne's **Whitby**, which was performed in the evocative Boys School in Smock Alley. This dance-theatre piece went on to win Best Movement Direction at the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards. The audience was immersed in the story, which focused on Dracula's journey aboard the Demeter and was performed with masterful subtlety and malice by Dunne.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival

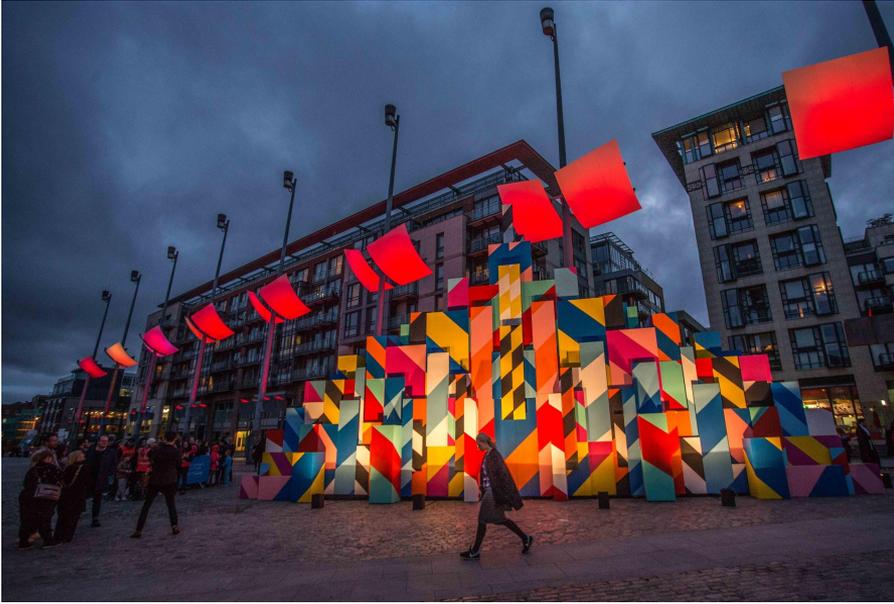


At **Sounds of Wood on Muscle**, some of Ireland's most inventive (and funniest) theatre makers took the 1938 Orson Welles radio play of Dracula and put an entirely modern spin on it... asking whether Dracula, radio plays, sound effects and even live audiences even matter anymore. Delivered with irreverent reverence, the show took place on the altar on which Stoker got married.



Some of Dublin's finest eateries created bespoke menus for those lucky enough to snag tickets for **Bite of Dublin**. A walking tour led by a leading historian, the event meandered through Dublin's streets over three hours, taking in spots of significance to Stoker, with indulgent treats along the way. This informative (and tasty!) experience focused on the lesser-known parts of his life - his fascinating family, inspirations, documented life experiences and insights into Victorian cuisine.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival

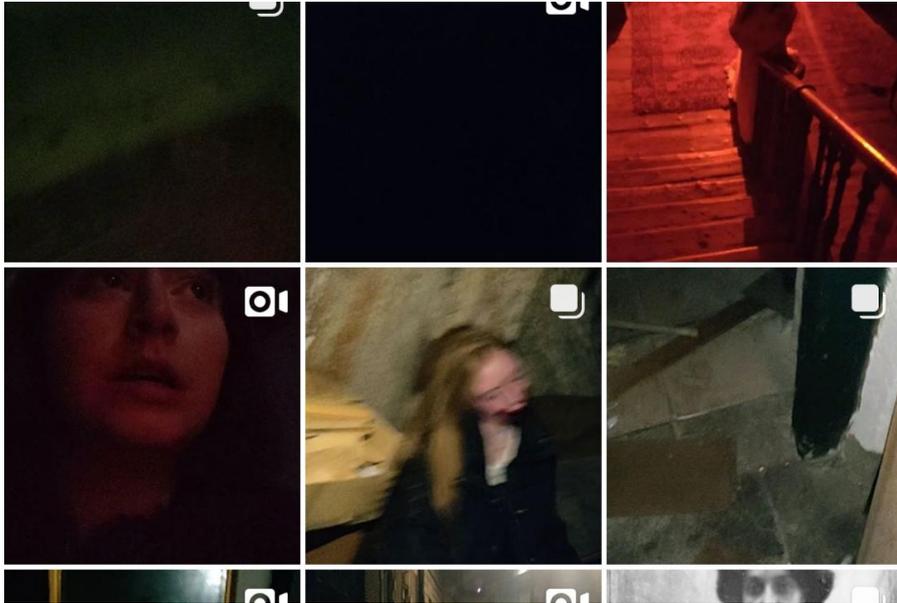


Bram Stoker Festival presented Dublin street artist **Maser's** first ever outdoor, large scale, interactive installation on Smithfield Square. Inspired by the life and times of Bram Stoker and Dracula's Castle, it asked viewers and participants to consider what lurks behind the shiny facade of progress, examining the facades of our society and the darkness within us all.



Transforming the Victorian glasshouse in the Botanic Gardens, **Nightmare Plants** was a promenade theatre piece, which told a story of dark deception, poison and Victorian isolation. Limited to very few people at a time, the event ran every 30 minutes for 4 hours per night. Those who attending needed to steel their nerves for the resident creepy crawlies, who only came out as the lights dimmed...!

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



InstaTerror was a first for Ireland - a terrifying tale told exclusively over Instagram. Three millennials met a grisly end over the course of a week after stumbling across a curse as old as time. Filmed and shot in advance of the festival, the story unfolded in the palms of people's hands and found a rapt audience for its images and videos which were released across three Instagram accounts.



Our flagship family-friendly event, Stokerland, is packed with activities for little monsters. In 2016, **Dracula's Hair Salon** was part of the fun - a mobile caravan, transformed into a salon for kids to transform their look from child to zombie... or whatever they wanted! Stokerland is a great platform for family-friendly work; from street performance to music, theatre, storytelling, workshops, games and interactive learning experiences.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



The reading room at the National Library was the venue for **Anatomy of a Critic**, a panel discussion featuring Nadine O'Regan, Peter Crawley and Patrick Freyne among others, which took a scalpel to the entrails of cultural criticism: from restaurants to theatre; television to visual art; and film to music, which took Stoker's life as a theatre critic as its starting point.



Stokerface was a visual art exhibition, which was presented in Jervis St Shopping Centre, finding an audience of many thousands per day. The exhibition presented a series of 10 striking photographic portraits of some of Dublin's most creative people captured by Alex Sapienza using a camera and lens from the 1860s.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



Broadcaster and podcasting veteran Liam Geraghty delved into pop culture's representation of Dracula in film, animation, puppetry, music and more in **FANGS**, a series of four podcasts released weekly in October in advance of the festival. The series featured guests such as Bram's great-grand nephew Dacre Stoker, Anne Marie Pace, author of *Vampirina Ballerina* and Norman Stilee, the creator of *Count Von Count* on *Sesame Street*.



Created by MORB, three of Irish theatre's darkest minds came together to create a terrifying theatrical treat: **The Horrors In the Black Church**, which comprised three short horror plays within one show. Spirits of the ancient dead mingled with more modern horrors as demons, ghosts and unknown beasts surrounded the dark altar in a trio of terrifying stories made to stop hearts. A huge hit, the show sold out in advance of opening with more shows added to cater for demand.

Previous Productions at Bram Stoker Festival



The gothic and opulent Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle, Bram Stoker's workplace for over a decade, played host to an exclusive screening of the award-winning animated film **Abe's Story** by award-winning animator and director Adam H. Stewart. Telling the story of an overworked writer, Abe, who is inspired by his day job in the theatre to create a bloody brilliant novel in Victorian London, it won the Best Animated Sequence in a Short Film Award at the Galway Film Fleadh.



An after-hours Dublin boozier played host to a nest of vampires in **The Early House**, a new short horror-comedy from award-winning filmmakers Derek O'Connor and Ian Whelan, AKA Doris/Magee, created especially for Bram Stoker Festival 2019. The short film was screened in advance of Meeting House Horrors, a trio of cult classic horror films under the umbrellas in Meeting House Square.

Bram Stoker – Did you know...?

We know a lot about Bram Stoker, as you'd expect! Having trawled through numerous books, biographies and his lost journals, we've developed an appetite not only for his literary talent but also the fascinating life he led and the Dublin of his time. Looking for some inspiration on how to delve into his life and legacy? Read on...

- During Stoker's lifetime, he was better known as personal assistant to the actor Henry Irving and as business manager to the Lyceum Theatre
- Stoker loved to record snippets of overheard conversations in his journal and detailed a Dublin soaked in sardonic humour, strife, comedy and surreality
- Stoker's first published book was a guidebook for civil servants which was the go-to read for new civil servants until the mid 1950s
- In 1882, Stoker attempted to rescue a man drowning in the River Thames by leaping into the river... unfortunately, the man was not resuscitated
- He founded the Dublin Sketching Club, was a keen athlete and served as President of the Trinity College Historical Society
- Stoker's wife, [Florence Balcombe](#), outlived her husband by 25 years, previously dated Oscar Wilde and became embroiled in a legal dispute with the producers of Nosferatu – a fascinating person in her own right, much has been written about her and her life
- Stoker was witty and charming, popular in society and was said to part dancefloors during glittering balls of the age when he took to the dancefloor, such was his skill!

You'll find these and even more lesser-known facts in [The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker](#), edited by his great grand nephew Dacre Stoker.

Suggested Reading

Much has been written about Bram Stoker's life, legacy and his most enduring creation Dracula. Here's a list of some books and articles which have fed our passion for Stoker and influenced the broad programming decisions made in previous years.

[The Lost Journal of Bram Stoker](#), edited by Stoker's great-grand nephew Dacre Stoker. Excerpts from and context around Stoker's long-lost journals, written between 1871 and 1878, which offer intriguing new insights into the complex author behind Dracula.

[Victorian Dublin Revealed](#) by Michael Barry. An exploration of the surprising wealth of Victorian buildings throughout the city, including those hidden from the public gaze and how the era created the foundations of our modern city

[Something In The Blood: The Untold Story of Bram Stoker, the Man Who Wrote Dracula](#) by David Skal. A psychological and cultural portrait of Stoker, exhuming the inner world and strange genius of the writer who conjured an undying cultural icon.

[A Curious History of Sex](#) by Kate Lister. A fascinating book peppered with surprising and informative insights into the sexual and cultural mores of the Victorian era, among others.

Bram Stoker



With all of that in mind, we'd love you to delve into not just Dracula, but the man, his era and the stories, customs, traditions and tales of his time. We want to hear new and unique interpretations of Stoker's life and legacy, told in fresh and rigorous ways, across a multitude of disciplines and artforms. Our four days and nights of deadly adventures await your input!