

Oxford-Grenoble Association



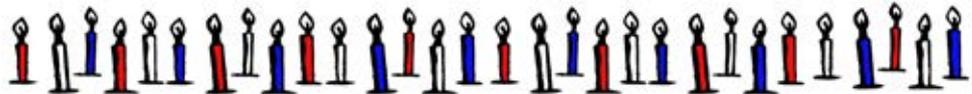
Newsletter

No 16: Autumn 2018

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2019 = 30



Next year we'll be celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the twinning agreement between Oxford and Grenoble.

Oxford hosted the events to mark 25 years of friendship and now it's the turn of Grenoble to invite citizens of both cities to come together to enjoy a series of events in and around the month of May 2019. The theme will be 'Gardens, nature, the environment.' (More details to follow)



Oxford will also be featuring a number of events contributing to the celebrations; in the planning stages so far are:

- ★ first visit here in April by the Grenoble Gospel Institute, who will join forces with the Oxford Gospel Choir to present a concert and workshop
- ★ in May an exhibition of artworks by Grenoble and Oxford artists in Headington Hill Park, an element of the 'Let's Grow' festival which picks up the 30th anniversary theme
- ★ a concert in early May by Grenoble choir Ensemble vocal Interlude + instrumentalists, who join East Oxford Community Choir to present an English work (Purcell's *Ode to St Cecilia*) and a French one (Charpentier's *Te deum*). The two choirs will perform the programme again in Grenoble in late May.

Events this autumn

- ⊙ In October (20-21) the traditional music and dance group from Grenoble Rigodons et Traditions were here again, joining up with Oxford Fiddle Group to present two concerts of music, dance and song, plus a workshop, in Kidlington and Islip.
- ⊙ Over the same weekend a delegation from Grenoble arrived in Oxford to be present at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by Oxford University and the Université Grenoble-Alpes. This first step will, it is hoped, lead to fruitful contacts and exchanges between academics in the future.



- ⊙ On 22 November Oxford International Links presents a concert of music from our link countries, including Poland and Italy. The cities of Wroclaw (pronounced 'vrotswav') and Padua are joining our twinning link family shortly.



Oxford-Grenoble 2017-18: Projects, visits, exchanges

DIY Theatre

In April this year Mel Houldershaw's DIY youth theatre, which has put on several hit musicals in the Oxford area, made its first foray to France to give two performances of West Side Story. A resounding success in many different ways, as the experiences related below demonstrate:

- I went to Grenoble with my sister Natalie and we stayed with a host family. The trip was really fun because it made me more independent and taught me more about travelling and meeting new people.

I went to a French school with my host family and I learnt about life in a French school. We also visited the Cat Bar and went out for pizza. My host family made 'lost bread' pudding which was delicious. Everyone was really friendly and nice and welcoming.

Taking part in *West Side Story* was great fun. We had full audiences and it felt exciting to put on

a musical in another country. I hope I get to go on another DIY trip again. (Isis Bell, 12)

- Sadly I was unable to go on the Grenoble DIY theatre trip myself, but my two children were keen to go without me!

I anxiously waved farewell at St Pancras station as they passed the ticket barrier with their DIY friends. One week later they returned confident young adults who rose to the challenge of new friendships, a new culture and language and navigating their way around a new city, as well as performing in a play. My 14-year-old daughter seems to have transformed, through her DIY experience, into a secure, confident, happy young adult with a strong friendship group of her own.

I spent some of the week on What's App with their 'host mother' who sent me reassuring photos and updates in her almost perfect English, even during the performance of the



DIY performers take a bow at Lycée Stendhal in Grenoble.



play! During our exchanges we discovered that we are both teachers of young children.

We look forward to welcoming the girls' host family in October as they are now planning a trip to Oxford. I know that we will also need a family trip to Grenoble so that we can be taken on a tour by our own children of what sounds like a fantastic city to visit.

Thanks to the sister cities link, DIY theatre and of course Mel. *(Lucy Ginsburg)*

- Travelling to Grenoble for the production of *West Side Story* in April was a great adventure for me and my mum Gina. Neither of us had been to Grenoble before. We were struck by its physical shape - the city spread on the plain and surrounded by beautiful mountains.

We were met from the bus stop by our host Cécile, who took us to her stylish modern house, where we met her husband Julien and two of her children. Our hosts were very welcoming and generous and for that we are extremely grateful.

Our stay was action-packed. We were very busy with a cultural programme (including riding on the téléphérique up to the Bastille), with rehearsals and then the two performances. During my trip I particularly enjoyed the music and dancing in *West Side Story* and having a guided walking tour around 'hidden Grenoble'. We hope to return to Grenoble in the future to get to know the city better and to meet up again with those who welcomed us there so warmly. *(Elsie Cheetham, 13)*

The DIY experience also seems to have made a big impact on Tom Clouaire, teenage son of Grenoble city councillor Pascal (Adjoint démocratie locale). He came to Oxford early in the year on a work placement at the city council offices, where he spent some time in the planning department. However, when he was asked to write something about his time here it was 'all about DIY':

- My experience with DIY theatre started when I travelled to Oxford for a work experience in February. I had the possibility to be present at the representation of *Calamity Jane* which I



Tom Clouaire in DIY theatre production of *Kiss Me Kate*.

found really nice! It's where I met Mel, a part of the team, and got invited to participate in the show *West Side Story* in Grenoble, followed by *Kiss Me Kate* in Oxford.

I have never been involved in drama events before. It was a great opportunity! I don't regret accepting this proposal. I had memorable encounters, discovered a new world which I love. I've really appreciated being part of this fabulous team; it made me able to discover lots of good things and I shared really good moments with other young people.

A concert planned to raise funds to help DIY young people travel to Grenoble, and organized by OGA, was 'snowed off' in March but was finally held in the town hall in September. It featured many talented soloists as well as choirs, but the centrepiece was Tallis's mindblowing motet Spem in alium for 40 voices. The large audience gave the concert a standing ovation and the collection buckets harvested a goodly sum in donations.



Dialogue in images: *I love your city, I love my city*

This ambitious photography project, involving 5 primary schools in Oxford and 6 in Grenoble, started work in early 2018, after considerable preparation by project lead Cathy Lewis in the previous few months. Each Grenoble school was paired with an Oxford one. Cathy explains how the project proceeded:

After a talk in school by professional photographers (Hugh Warwick and myself in Oxford and Aurore de Sousa in Grenoble), the children took photographs of their city then swapped them with their opposite number school. Finally they chose their top 3 photos from their paired school, which were exhibited in the town halls of both Grenoble (in June) and Oxford (in July).

The project aimed to introduce the children to imagery, twinning, and some French or English phrases. The feedback on the exhibition and the project has been very positive. Here are some quotes from the comments book:

● Instead of unlucky Friday 13th I had the luck of seeing the delightful artwork of schoolchildren starting on their journey of photography. What imaginative ways they had played with light and shade or subject material. (*Lucille, 13 July*)

● These talented photographers/artists have stopped and looked at the world around them and seen it in new ways and challenge us to do the same. May this creativity stay with them. (*Julian, 21 July*)

● Fabulous photos! I can't believe they weren't taken by a professional. (*Andrew, 23 July*)

● Colourful and creative, great photos from young photographers. (*Anna, 28 July*)

● I liked the Europôle photos - now I want to visit Grenoble! (*Sally, 30 July*)

This Oxford-Grenoble Association project was supported by Oxford City Council, Oxford International Links and individual city councillors.



Viewing the Oxford Town Hall exhibition.



Grenoble architecture students in Oxford

Former Oxford City councillor and Labour group leader Bob Price writes about a link between our two cities which may be productive of new town planning ideas for them both:

Over the past 18 months, the City Council has developed a strong working relationship with the Laboratoire de Cultures Constructives from the National School of Architecture at the Université Grenoble-Alpes.

Last year 20 Masters students visited Oxford to learn about the architectural and planning issues that have featured in the development of the Barton Park Estate. Four of the students wrote their final dissertation on topics related to Barton, and returned to Oxford twice to interview residents, planners and community leaders about the project.

They were particularly enthusiastic about the strong emphasis on environmental and social sustainability that has been the guiding light for the project since its inception.

In November 2017, Councillors Bob Price, Ed Turner and Alex Hollingsworth were all invited to Grenoble to contribute to a three-day symposium, organized by the Laboratoire de Cultures Constructives, on how public health outcomes can be improved through thoughtful

urban planning and effective cooperation between health services and local authorities.

And this September, the group visiting Oxford was 30 strong, including two of the recent graduates from the previous year's cohort who had written about Barton Park. Led by the Directeur of the Lab, Stéphane Sadoux, they spent a day in Oxford looking at some contemporary buildings in the city centre, also taking several hours to visit Barton. Jane Winfield, Head of Property at the City Council, and Azul Strong, the Community Manager for Barton, gave the students an excellent presentation at the Community Centre. Then they were able to visit the new development, meet colleagues from the City's development partners and see on the ground how the new community is developing. The students were particularly interested in the sustainable design features in the new homes, and the integration of social and private homes throughout the site.

I hope that we might be able to encourage a similar group of students from Oxford Brookes Architecture and Planning Department to visit Grenoble to see the mayor's ambitious plans to reduce traffic by increasing areas of pedestrianization, and visit the new quarters that are being developed to the south of the city centre.

The Big Question Mark visits Grenoble

Oxford artist Diana Bell has travelled far and wide with her public participation projects. She was in Grenoble this May and takes up the story:

As part of Europe Month *Grenoble vit l'Europe* I was invited to bring my public participation project 'The Big Question Mark', an installation that has already been shown in Edinburgh, Bath, Birmingham, Liverpool, Bonn and Cologne. It is a philosophical work asking the public to engage with questions about where they come from and where they feel at home, as well as thoughts about their aims in life and what they have learned. It is a completely open, free work of art

and people are invited to write in their preferred language. All the contributions are anonymous (a selection can be viewed on the website www.thebigquestionmarkartproject.com)

The installation was on the Parvis des Droits de l'Homme next to the Maison de l'International, where people pass through and visit the Jardin de Ville. The title *Grenoble vit l'Europe* was very appropriate, as many people have complicated beginnings and many travel and move around the world. The Parvis des Droits de l'Homme is not too busy so there was time for many fascinating conversations using my limited French, quite a lot of English and some German.



Diana's art project in action.

The Maison de l'International was hosting an exhibition of photographs, text and film *Migration en Images* which included photographs by Fran Monks from Oxford. Grenoble mayor Eric Piolle and deputy mayor Pascal Clouaire opened the event and a young group of brass players, Batuka VI, introduced the project. Fraser O'Donovan, a professional dancer from Oxford, gave a solo performance as part of the installation. He was also invaluable with the participation. This is his account:

'Grenoble is a fantastic city with an incredible atmosphere and a very diverse community. I really felt the joy of summer and all the warmth from all the art events taking part in Grenoble's busy May calendar. The people were open in their response to the work, even though some people came upon the work accidentally and needed time to digest what was being presented. Dancing in such a city was really an honour, knowing its rich arts and dance history. To become part of this community for

a short period of time and get a glimpse into its solidarity, kindness and forward thinking was very special.'

As always I felt very welcome in Grenoble and the people who participated were friendly and very genuine in their response. It was a week of strong wind from the south so we had a few challenges with the display boards and trying to keep the question mark on the ground! Even so it was a wonderful time meeting the people of Grenoble, including some recent young immigrants who came with Christel Brink-Przygodda and performed a spontaneous dance on the question mark. For these young immigrants the questions were very emotional.

As in every other city that I have visited I find how interesting people's lives are and that all cities are very diverse. Humans have always moved around the world and Europe has always been a centre for trade and communication.



Divercities Music Festival

The Oxford band Self Help travelled to Grenoble in July to take part in the annual youth music festival which brought together 10 groups from Europe, Africa and Asia for a

week of workshops and public performances. Divercities is supported by the European Commission, the French Foreign Ministry and the Isère department.

Interlude & EOCC singing together again

In May it was East Oxford Community Choir's turn to welcome members of Grenoble partner choir Ensemble vocal Interlude. On the menu this year was Elgar's 'Dream of Gerontius', a somewhat daunting work featuring double choir, semi-chorus and soloists. And as the French choir regretted not having had the chance to perform the work with an orchestra, they arrived in Oxford in large numbers.

The first rehearsal with orchestra in Cherwell School hall left much to be desired. However, after a day spent enjoying a choice of mini-visits to Oxford sites of interest led by EOCC members, the choirs pulled off a triumphant Friday performance at SJE Arts. Saturday brought a late afternoon repeat in Abingdon. On Sunday the visitors toured the Cotswolds by coach before a farewell evening party and ceilidh.



The Dream of Gerontius at SJE, Oxford.

Rencontre internationale du jeune théâtre July 2018

Once again Yasmin Sidhwa, director of Oxford youth theatre group Mandala, took some of her young members to the festival in Grenoble with support from Oxford City Council, Oxford International Links and OGA. Here are excerpts from two of their blogs:

- Cultural exchanges like the Rencontre allow us to be completely immersed in more than one

culture. The experience shows us why unity among everyone of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds is the key to the peaceful and progressive world we all want to live in.

I have made such extraordinary friends from places I've never visited and the friends you make prove to be extremely special because you created something amazing together. The



Rencontre has opened my eyes to how much more we can be doing. In my view the performing arts are such an under-rated platform for inspiring change; a play with a message can reach so many people in one sitting. *(Anusha Abbas 18)*

- This festival is like no other; you rarely get the opportunity to discuss what culture, theatre and being European mean in such an informal and naturally flowing setting. On the first day, listening to the mayor's speech, we all shout out at different times but with the same emotion - we're all grateful to be here.

Each afternoon brings the café-debate where participants get the chance to discuss the previous day's plays. Some might expect these events aren't the most popular but people's curiosity clearly shows as the small room quickly

fills up with youngsters speaking parallel English, French, Italian and many more languages. As we move through the week it matters less and less who comes from where.

This year's Greek team from Thessaloniki raised the bar, giving a moving performance portraying disability, with members of the group having various disabilities themselves. Personally I found a place of belonging through Mandala's open workshops; I learned what it means to be British and how as an immigrant I can find a place here.

Hot afternoons and breezy summer nights pass as we talk with each other in every way we can - through music, hand signs, shared love of food. Century-old (or painfully present) differences disappear, whether it's a cake, or a play we all love, or a dream we all have. *(Ildi Nagy 23)*

For more twinning news:

See <https://oxfordtwincitylinks> and Facebook page *Oxford International Links*

Former Oxford-Grenoble Association chair **Peter Schofield died in April**

Peter was a physicist who spent most of his working life at AERE Harwell. In 1991 he was appointed British assistant director at the Institut Laue-Langevin in Grenoble, where he worked till 1994. When he returned to Oxford on his retirement he took up the OGA reins. He was a talented musician and lover of the arts, instrumental in getting the Ashmolean to stage an exhibition of Grenoble-born artist Fantin-Latour, and for his 80th birthday he hired the Phoenix cinema and invited friends to a showing of the classic French film Les Enfants du Paradis (his all-time favourite, he said).



OGA membership subscription

Please complete the form and return to: Jean Burrell, 59 Bedford St, Oxford OX4 1SU.



I wish to join/rejoin the Oxford-Grenoble Association for the calendar year 2019

Title: _____ First name(s): _____ Surname(s): _____

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(Please enclose a cheque payable to Oxford-Grenoble Association: £10 individual or £15 household. or email: jean.burrell@ntlworld.com or phone 01865 249062, to ask about a bank transfer.)