

City of London Festival 21 June to 9 July

City Bees

- brings bees and beehives into the Square Mile with music, art and poetry
- is the first urban bee project of its kind in the UK
- includes Olivier Darné's *The Honey House* installation by St Paul's

The Festival not only needs diversity and sustainability for itself but also is committed to their promotion in the round – in terms of the environment as well as economics and artistic practice. In 2009 our environmental focus was on climate change. In 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, we are alert to perhaps even more urgent human agenda: the extinction of species and loss of biodiversity. Einstein was once reported to have said: *“If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live. No more bees, no more pollination ... no more men!”* So we decided to support and celebrate the Honey Bee.

As we have seen financial structures collapse in recent years, so too have collapsing bee colonies aroused concern throughout the world. Bees have lived and worked in more or less the same way for tens of millions of years and for thousands of these have nourished humanity, both directly and indirectly. They are proof of the interdependence of different species and a model for social working. Therefore the City of London is the perfect place to nurture new bee colonies and prove that urban biodiversity is not only possible but also can be the source of delicious and distinctive honey.

Eight Festival beehives are currently being installed throughout the Square Mile on rooftops, terraces, gardens and courtyards at Middle Temple Gardens, insurer Canopus at the Lloyd's Building, Mansion House, the Museum of London, Sir John Cass Primary School, St Olave Hart Street, SEB Bank and St Paul's Cathedral. Urban bee expert **Brian McCallum** and a team of experienced City beekeepers are training volunteers from each host organisation to ensure they are competent and comfortable with the care of the bees. *City Bees* is designed to be a long-term, sustainable project and it is intended that the hives will stay at their locations for years to come. This is the first urban bee project of its kind in the UK.

The Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers, one of the City of London's most venerable livery companies, has been involved in bees since the Middle Ages. Their motto translates into *“Truth is the Light”* and indeed, among the hundreds of uses of beeswax over the centuries, the provision of light was perhaps the most important. With the Wax Chandlers' active support, with the Open Spaces department of the City of London Corporation planting in a variegated and bee-friendly way throughout the Square Mile, and with the participation of various City sectors – arts, banking, the church, education, insurance, law, the livery, local government and the mayoralty – this is a truly City-wide and diverse project!

Whilst most of our hives will be out of sight, a special art installation *The Honey House* will reside in Festival Gardens during the Festival in the shadow of St Paul's Cathedral to let the public observe bees at work and provide an unusual space for encounters and interactions, both bee and human! Christopher Wren, famed for his architecture and for St Paul's in particular, actually designed a transparent box beehive in the 1650s while he was a young scientist in Oxford so that he could study the behaviour of bees. Our modern installation has been designed by **Olivier Darné** of the French art collective *Parti Poétique*, whose work brings bees and beehives into urban landscapes. *The Honey House* will be launched at midday on 22 June with a ceremonial harvesting of honey – squeezing honeycomb from the Festival's hives – accompanied by fitting music and specially commissioned poetry.

Honey Ceremonies will take place at lunchtimes throughout the Festival giving the public the chance to taste and compare honey from the Festival's hives as well as enjoy music, poetry and visual art created as part of the City of London Festival's *City Bees* education programme.

On 26 June the Barbican Children's Library hosts *Honey, Honey, Honey!* Children can find out how honey is made, take a 'hands-on' look at a beehive, taste some of London's finest honey and make their own bee-house to take away. A bee-themed storyteller and face-painter will also be on hand.

The Festival has commissioned five leading British poets – **David Harsent, Luke Heeley, Fiona Sampson, Jo Shapcott** and **Matthew Welton** – to create *The Poetry of Bees*, a series of poems about bees and the City which will be presented in collaboration with *Poet in the City* and Gresham College on 1 July.

Three of the Festival's lectures relate to the Bee. On 22 June at Gresham College, **Chris Watson**, renowned for his sound recordings of bees and the natural environment, will describe and illustrate his work. On 6 July at Wax Chandlers' Hall, **Peter Tompkins** will give a talk entitled *Truth is the Light*, the motto of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers, explaining the importance of beeswax in the history of the City. On 8 July at Gresham College, the Right Reverend **Richard Chartres, Bishop of London**, will present *A Land Flowing With Milk And Honey*, posing the question as to whether the City can be a Promised Land.

Bees have been pollinating several of the Festival's classical and contemporary music concerts. One of the programme's main commissions is a new work by Portuguese composer **Miguel Azguime**, which draws on texts old and new relating to sea journeys, storms and the environment, including Shakespeare's "*Where the bee sucks ...*". There will also be performances of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* and Pujol's *The Bumble Bee* at the Innholders' Hall on 2 July, Arvo Pärt's *If Bach had been a Beekeeper* at LSO St Luke's on 9 July, plus an evening of bee-inspired new works for voice and piano from post-graduate students on 7 July at the Music Hall at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

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Press contact Sue Lancashire or Martha Oakes at Martha Oakes PR on 020 8854 5460 / Martha.oakes@btconnect.com / 07798 626555

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Listings Information

Tuesday 22 June 12.30-2pm
Festival Gardens, Nr St Paul's Cathedral EC4
Opening Honey Feast

Tuesday 22 June to Friday 9 July All day
Festival Gardens, Nr St Paul's Cathedral EC4
The Honey House

Tuesday 22 June 6pm
Gresham College, Barnard's Inn Hall, Holborn, EC1
Chris Watson *Songs of Summer* lecture

Thursday 24 June 1-2pm
Corner of London Wall and Moorgate EC2
Honey Ceremony

Saturday 26 June 10am – 12noon
Barbican Children's Library, Silk Street EC2
Honey, Honey, Honey!

Sunday 27 June 12-6pm
Parliament Hill, Hampstead Hill, NW3
A Day of Discoveries
Family day – a chance to get up close to a beehive, try on a beekeeper's outfit, taste some delicious local honey or have your face painted like a bee

Tuesday 29 June 1-2pm
St Mary-le-Bow Churchyard EC2
Honey Ceremony

Thursday 1 July 1-2pm

Finsbury Circus Gardens EC2
Honey Ceremony

Thursday 1 July 7pm
Gresham College, Barnard's Inn Hall, Holborn EC1
The Poetry of Bees

Friday 2 July 6pm
Innholders' Hall, College Street, EC4
Adam Walker (flute), Morgan Szymanski (guitar), O Duo: Oliver Cox & Owen Gunnell (percussion): programme includes Pujol's *The Bumble Bee* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumble Bee*

Tuesday 6 July 1-2pm
Museum of London EC2
Honey Ceremony

Tuesday 6 July 6pm
Wax Chandler's Hall, Gresham Street, London EC2
Peter Tompkins *Truth is the Light* lecture

Tuesday 6 July 7.30pm
Mercers' Hall, Ironmonger Lane, EC2
Sond'Ar-te Electric Ensemble, including the UK première of a new work by Miguel Azguime (City of London Festival commission, funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation)

Wednesday 7 July 7pm
Music Hall, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Silk Street, London EC2
Creative Voices – an evening of new works for voice and piano exploring the Festival's theme of Bio-Diversity and Bees created during this year's collaboration between post-graduate singers, pianists and composers.

Thursday 8 July 1-2pm
Leadenhall Market EC3
Honey Ceremony

Thursday 8 July 6pm
Gresham College, Barnard's Inn Hall, Holborn EC1
Right Reverend Richard Chartres, Bishop of London *A Land Flowing With Milk And Honey* lecture

Friday 9 July 7.30pm
LSO St Luke's, Old Street EC1
Aurora Orchestra, Mestro Ponciano and Cordão de Ouro
Programme includes Arvo Pärt's *If Bach had been a Bee-Keeper*