

Fertility Fest 2019!

Stop press! Stop press! Fertility Fest is back next year for the biggest festival yet.

Founded in 2016 by arts producers and former IVF patients, Jessica Hepburn and Gabby Vautier, it has now grown from a two-day festival to four weeks at the world-renowned Barbican arts centre with a series of smaller satellite festivals taking place nationally and internationally including The Fertility Show in Manchester and London and ESHRE Vienna - the biggest fertility industry conference in the world!

The full festival programme will be announced on Monday 14th January but *Fertility Road* is delighted to bring you a sneak preview of what's in store.

Fertility Fest showcases leading artists from all disciplines - theatre, dance, music, visual art, film and literature - who are making work about the multi-faceted subject of fertility, infertility, reproductive science and modern families. Bringing them together with fertility professionals - scientists, doctors, embryologists, nurses, counsellors, academics and charity workers - plus fertility patients and the general

public, the festival has quickly become a unique event in the fertility calendar, giving the opportunity for people to share experiences in a special and supportive environment.

The festival organisers - Gabby and Jessica - also have a big social mission: to bring about change in the field of fertility by using the power of the arts to promote the need for better fertility education; to improve mental health care for IVF patients; and raise all levels of public discourse about reproductive science and modern family making.

2019 will be a major milestone for Fertility Fest. From 23 April to 18 May there will be a four week programme of events at London's Barbican Centre as part of 'Life Rewired: a season of events exploring what it means to be human when technology is changing everything'. barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/event/fertility-fest

There will be performances, film screenings, talks, debates and hands-on workshops featuring a range of art-forms, fertility journeys and a diversity of voices. These events will



Fertility and Celebrity; and Fertility and the Environment.

And once again the festival's Quiet Room hosts and counsellors will be available to support people attending the events if you need a moment of retreat or reflection.

And if all that wasn't enough at the heart of the festival this year, will be the world premiere of a stage adaption of Australian writer Julia Leigh's beautiful IVF memoir *Avalanche* (co-produced by Fertility Fest, the Barbican and Sydney Theatre Company).

This heart-breaking love story will be performed alongside Fertility Fest from 27 April - 18 May at the Barbican and will then transfer to the other side of the world to perform at the Sydney Theatre Company in Australia. barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/event/avalanche-a-love-story

Fertility Fest is a charitable organisation financially supported by Arts Council England, the Wellcome Trust and a consortium of forward-thinking fertility clinics and organisations including Agora, Create, CRGH, Fertility Plus, Gennet City Fertility, IVF Matters, Lister and London Women's Clinic.

Jessica and Gabby said: 'We've been overwhelmed with the level of interest and support the festival has received since its inception and best of all it seems to be starting to have a tangible impact on public understanding of what it's like to struggle to conceive and patient care within the industry. Our supporting clinics tell us that because of their involvement with the festival they have now embedded emotional support calls during the IVF 'two week wait' process; have improved facilities and support for men; and are improving their follow up support after successful and unsuccessful treatment. We want to see clinics across the country implementing this sort of patient care. It's what drives us as we prepare for our biggest festival yet as we can see the impact it is having on patients, professionals and the general public. Please put the dates in your diary and join us at the Barbican or at other events across the UK. Full programme details will be announced in January!



explore some of the key themes that have emerged through the festival's work over the last few years including: Struggling to Conceive and the IVF Experience; The Male Experience of Infertility; The Gift (Egg/Sperm/Embryo Donation & Surrogacy); Miscarriage and Baby Loss; Pregnancy and Parenting after successful IVF; Unsuccessful IVF & Involuntary Childlessness; Modern Families including adoption, fostering, step and childless families; The Queer Family; Race, Religion and Reproduction and the Future of Fertility.

One of the most unique things about the festival is that it has become an opportunity for everyone to join together, regardless of where they are on their fertility journey. The 'Big Fat Festival Day' planned for **Friday 3rd May** will be one of the highlights of the programme next year - a full day of events and discussions putting IVF in the 21st century under the spotlight and involving a whole host of artists and fertility experts and a few well-known faces!

And this year, alongside The Big Fat Festival day, there will be a range of bespoke evening and day-long events including:

Saturday 27 April: **'There's More to Life Than Having Children'** for people considering a life without children for whatever reason.

Sunday 28 April: **'Trying to Conceive'** for people who are slap bang in the middle of treatment.

Saturday 4 May: **'What comes first the Career or the Egg?'** especially for women in their thirties who are considering their options for parenthood including egg freezing and solo motherhood alongside balancing meeting the perfect partner and climbing the career ladder.

Sunday 5 May: **'The Gift; a creative and fun family workshop for parents and their children created with help from another - through egg, sperm and embryo donation or surrogacy.'** Expect messy play and lots of fun!

"We've been overwhelmed with the level of interest and support the festival has received since its inception and best of all it seems to be starting to have a tangible impact on public understanding of what it's like to struggle to conceive and patient care within the industry."

There will also be events for LGBT families; people who have experienced premature ovarian failure or miscarriage; and WATCH THIS SPACE for an exclusive evening of events entitled *The Invisible Man* - all about the male experience of infertility, programmed in association with *Fertility Road* magazine!

The festival's signature 'Fertility Fight Clubs' will be back with more feisty provocations from artists and fertility professionals about what gets them fired up about the world of fertility and these will be live streamed via facebook for people to access live or online.

Plus new this year will be a range of events with high profile guests talking about subjects as diverse as Food, Family and Fertility;