

## OPEN ARMS FESTIVAL IN TOTNES IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

### Background

The ongoing crisis in the Middle East and the civil war in Syria have brought issues of exile, migration and immigration to the fore with daily stories in the media. Debates about refugees and asylum seekers abound. In South Devon there has been an enormous movement of support for the people caught up in the crisis. And so South Devon Refugee Support Network (SDRSN) are delighted to be hosting OPEN ARMS week.

The festival runs from May 13<sup>th</sup> to May 22<sup>nd</sup> in and around Totnes, raising funds for local refugee support initiatives, highlighting debates around the subject and showcasing the literature and music of exile and immigration from around the world.

### The programme in Totnes

The week kicks off with **CHANGING PLACES**; Crossing borders with words and music, at St. John's Church on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm, a performance by Visible Ink and Sam Richards. Poetry and prose will be augmented with music on hang drum, cello and Appalachian dulcimer and Sam Richards on piano.

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 8.00pm Playback Theatre present **WHAT SETS YOU ON FIRE?** by Tarte Noire, a piece for a women-only audience which evolved from work with middle eastern refugees in Plymouth.

On Friday May 20<sup>th</sup> at The Methodist Church, Totnes, Ashburton Refugee Support Network will be running **REFUGEES: FACTS & FEARS**, a 'Myth Busting' evening; a friendly opportunity for people to challenge both their own assumptions about refugees, and the assumptions of others through workshops and discussions.

The final performance will be **UNITY IN MUSIC**, Dartington Chamber Orchestra presenting a celebration of Arab and British musical cultures featuring Merit Ariane Stephanos and other guest soloists in The Great Hall, Dartington.

Tickets for CHANGING PLACES and UNITY IN MUSIC are available from Dartington Box Office. Other events are by donation on the door.

As part of the week's activities, SDSRN are organising an **invitation-only children's activity day** at White House on the Dartington estate, bringing together local children with asylum seeker and refugee families from Plymouth for a fun filled afternoon.

### About South Devon Refugee Support Network (SDRSN)

The Network includes: Ashburton Refugee Support Network; Beyond Borders Totnes and District; Citizens UK Totnes; The Dartington Hall Trust; and Embracing Refugees

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