

From: Benoit Maubrey mail@benoitmaubrey.com
Subject: Benoit Maubrey's Arena: reference from Hillside Festival,
Date: 5. Mar 2026 at 15:12:10
To: Benoit J Maubrey mail@benoitmaubrey.com

From: Marie Zimmerman <executivedirector@hillsidefestival.ca>
Subject: Re: Reference request for Benoit Maubrey's Arena
Date: 20. March 2019 at 19:32:24 CET
Reply-To: marie@hillsidefestival.ca

We had a very positive experience showcasing "Arena" outside of Guelph City Hall. The population of our city is roughly 132,000, so we are a small city, compared to London. We situated the sculpture next to the outdoor skating rink where it sat for just over one month. Skaters would often bring their own music to plug into the sculpture so they could skate to it. The interactive component of the sculpture was wildly popular with everyone. We have not heard of a single negative experience that either participants or passersby had with the sculpture. On the contrary, people felt free to experiment and improvise with music and voice recordings. For instance, one family sang Happy Birthday into a smart phone, and amplified it on a loop through the sculpture. They then called a family member in Australia via Facetime and sang Happy Birthday over top of the looped version. Another example is of an electronic composer who played her music through the sculpture while a stranger sang a song to it. We staged events at the sculpture, which included a cappella performances by a Gospel choir and a youth group as well as an energetic drag queen song-and-dance performance that made hilarious use of the seating areas of the sculpture's amphitheatre.

The City of Guelph worried that the sculpture would attract vagrants and would be used to amplify offensive sounds, but this never happened as far as I know. The Manager of Culture and Tourism for the City told us she thought it was a mistake that the sculpture was not live 24 hours a day. The hours that the City would allow were 5pm-10pm on weekdays and 10am-10pm on weekends. Many were of the strong opinion that the weekday hours were far too limiting.

The sculpture is easy to transport and install. It came in four parts on a flatbed truck. The four parts were put in place with a forklift. This took less than an hour. And then the technicians put it together in about an hour. It has one plug. We posted instructions about how to interact with the sculpture, and the only word of caution I have about that is that the sign kept blowing over.

Overall, the sculpture was a source of wonder and curiosity for people of all ages that inspired them to make art in their own ways. Because the piece is in the shape of an amphitheatre, the acoustics are good. The piece is also aesthetically startling. Sincerely,

Marie Zimmerman

Marie Zimmerman

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