EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Edinburgh International Festival and The Macallan Launch Festival Season in Edinburgh with Spectacular Multi-Art Form Experience

Opening Event: Where to Begin, credit Edinburgh International Festival / Daniel Quirke

MEDIA IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE

2-25 AUGUST
eif.co.uk / @edintfest

- **Edinburgh International Festival** announce full details of a new event in Edinburgh's festival tradition, in partnership with **The Macallan** single malt Scotch whisky and created by **Pinwheel,** with additional support from **EventScotland**

- ***Opening Event: Where to Begin*** will welcome thousands to an immersive outdoor experience at iconic UNESCO World Heritage site **George Heriot's** to kickstart the festival season this August, running across three evenings from **2-4 August**

- Tickets are available at midday, Tuesday 18 June from www.eif.co.uk

- Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti's** second year as Edinburgh International Festival Director promises an exhilarating 24-day celebration of the arts in Edinburgh, featuring world-class artists spanning opera, dance, music, and theatre from **2-25 August**

18 June, Edinburgh: The Edinburgh International Festival, in partnership with The Macallan, today announces full details of ***Opening Event: Where to Begin,*** a large-scale, visually spectacular outdoor event opening the 2024 International Festival.

Responding to this year's International Festival theme, **'Rituals That Unite Us'**, *Opening Event: Where to Begin* welcomes visitors from near and far to discover and share in a new ritual together, for the International Festival and the city of Edinburgh.

Opening Event: Where to Begin will transform the grounds and architecture of **George Heriot's** in Edinburgh's Old Town, a never-before-used venue for the International Festival. Devised by an extraordinary creative team led by Creative Director **Katy Fuller** at **Pinwheel**, the production blends immersive installation, live performance, music, large-scale video projection and captivating storytelling for a large-scale communal experience, celebrating the creative force of the city and the International Festival.

To kickstart Edinburgh's festival season in style, *Opening Event: Where to Begin* takes place across three nights starting at dusk, from **Friday 2 August** to **Sunday 4 August,** with the final night audio described and captioned.

Opening Event: Where to Begin takes inspiration from Edinburgh's iconic landscape as a city built on layers and imagines what hidden power may be found in those vaults and tunnels. Visitors are welcomed to the grounds of George Heriot's, which comes alive with the flicker of flames. They will be taken on a journey through this extraordinary environment before congregating to experience the story of why they are gathered there, played out as a spectacular video projection.

The site-specific experience draws on a combined heritage between the incomparable single malt Scotch whisky The Macallan and the International Festival of celebrating the creativity, excellence and height of achievement that lies within the Scottish identity. Intricately weaving together stories of Scottish mythology and heritage, participatory moments of the event are anchored in Scottish history, such as the Scottish New Year tradition (Hogmanay) of First Footing and the people of Edinburgh's donations of coal to light up Edinburgh Castle for the very first International Festival in 1947.

Opening Event: Where to Begin is created by **Pinwheel**, in collaboration with Edinburgh International Festival and principal partner The Macallan with additional support from EventScotland. Led by creative director **Katy Fuller**, Pinwheel specialises in creating breath-taking outdoor events, underpinned by imaginative storytelling. Credits include projection festival "North of the Tyne, Under the Stars" which celebrated the landscape and legends of the region, "Land of Green Ginger" for Hull UK City of Culture which transformed all corners of the

city through a series of Acts of Wanton Wonder, and a portfolio of projects with artists ranging from dreamthinkspeak to Antony Gormley.

Pinwheel has brought together a creative team including theatre-maker **Simon Sharkey,** video by **Yeast Culture**, original score by composer **Roma Yagnik,** poetry and prose by writer and dramaturg **Davey Anderson**, fire installation by **AndNow,** production design by **Becky Minto** and lighting design by **Phil Supple.**

Edinburgh International Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti said:
"This year, we've invited everyone to participate in our 2024 theme, Rituals That Unite Us. Opening Event: Where to Begin in partnership with The Macallan, marks the first of a new ritual, both for our Festival and the city. We know audiences will be blown away by this spectacle, and we're proud to show the formidable creative power and potential of Edinburgh and its people to the world. It's an event that beckons us to find new ways to experience and appreciate our city."

Jaume Ferràs, Global Creative Director, The Macallan, said:
"I'm proud to see The Macallan's creative partnership with the Edinburgh International Festival come to life in August. Both the International Festival and The Macallan hold a deep commitment to excellence and artistic innovation, rooted in our shared, rich Scottish heritage. As The Macallan celebrates our 200th anniversary this year, we are proud to partner with the International Festival to create an unmissable start to the festival season. Where to Begin will captivate audiences with stories of Scotland's past, present and future, and will offer the inspiration that only a live event like this can offer."

Creative Director of Pinwheel, Katy Fuller said:
"I'm thrilled to create a new Opening Event for Edinburgh International Festival in partnership with The Macallan. Our story pays tribute to this most remarkable of cities and the unstoppable creative energy which pervades it every August. We celebrate the alchemy that happens when exceptional artistry meets expectant audience and the connection, emotion and inspiration that characterises a festival in full force. We look forward to welcoming audiences to join us and play their part in igniting the 2024 International Festival."

Paul Bush OBE, VisitScotland Director of Events, said:
"The Edinburgh International Festival is one of Scotland's key signature events and cultural assets. EventScotland is proud to be continuing its support of the Festival's Opening Event, having supported it through our International Programme since its inception in 2015. Events play an important role in our communities, and as part of an enviable portfolio of annual events and festivals that deliver sustainable impacts and international profile for Scotland, the Opening Event: Where to Begin will provide the perfect stage for visitors and locals to unite and immerse themselves in a unique and memorable experience."
Opening Event: Where to Begin is a ticketed experience, with tickets at £15 and concessions from £7.50 available. The event runs from 2-4 August. Entry is between 9:45pm and 10:15pm. To purchase tickets and for more information, visit www.eif.co.uk.

- ENDS -

Media contact:
Isabella Feros, Media Manager, Isabella.feros@eif.co.uk
Hugo Mintz, Head of Communications and Digital, hugo.mintz@eif.co.uk
press@eif.co.uk / eif.co.uk

Join the conversation **eif.co.uk / #edintfest / @edintfest**

Media images can be found here

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Edinburgh International Festival
Edinburgh International Festival is a global celebration of performing arts, bringing the finest performers of dance, opera, music and theatre from around the world to Edinburgh for three weeks every August.

The next International Festival takes place 2-25 August 2024, under the direction of Festival Director and Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti. Benedetti's vision is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality of art, for the broadest possible audience.

Underpinning the International Festival is a real social mission to create a growing impact through the performing arts. It's our ambition to enable enriching connections between the people and communities of Scotland with our core art forms as well as the artists we welcome on stage. Our Discovery and Participation work offers year-round opportunities that empower the discovery of the arts, leading to a lifetime of opportunities to participate.

For more information visit www.eif.co.uk

Membership at Edinburgh International Festival
Membership starts from £60 and includes priority booking, plus access to backstage tours and rehearsals during the Festival. For more information visit www.eif.co.uk/membership.

About The Macallan
The Macallan is renowned worldwide for its extraordinary single-malt whiskies. Two centuries have passed since Alexander Reid, founder of The Macallan, distilled the first batch of whisky in his curiously small stills in Speyside, Scotland, in 1824, beginning the extraordinary legacy of the single malt Scotch whisky.

An obsession with quality and craftsmanship is the hallmark of The Macallan. The outstanding quality and distinctive character of each whisky is influenced by exceptional oak casks seasoned with sherry wine - a commitment to natural colour underpinned by mastery. Designed

by internationally acclaimed architects, The Macallan Distillery is located on a beautiful 485-acre Estate and takes inspiration from the surrounding ancient Scottish hills.

The past 200 years have been a prologue for everything that is still to come. This is a journey through time. This is The Macallan, 200 Years Young. Crafted without compromise. Please savour The Macallan responsibly. For further information visit https://www.themacallan.com/en and become a member of The Macallan Society to explore the stories behind the whiskies.

EventScotland
EventScotland is working to make Scotland the perfect stage for events by securing and supporting an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events. It provides funding opportunities and access to resources and information to develop the industry.

EventScotland is a team within VisitScotland's Events Directorate, the national tourism organisation, alongside Business Events and Development teams.

For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news visit www.eventscotland.org or follow Twitter @EventScotNews and follow us on LinkedIn.

About Pinwheel
Pinwheel conceives and creates breathtaking events which inspire curiosity, spark imagination, transform spaces and transport audiences. Working across artistic boundaries, Pinwheel brings together collaborative creative teams to dream up unique and adventurous audience experiences.

Recent projects include a Cultural Festival for the Rugby League World Cup - including an outdoor touring dance performance and a huge light-art and poetry project - and North of the Tyne, Under the Stars, a series of 6 hyper-local events culminating in a large-scale projection festival for an audience of 40,000 in Newcastle City Centre. Pinwheel works across a broad spectrum of projects including cross-artform festivals, large-scale public art commissions, festivals of projection and light, parades and processions, and mass-participation live performance, and has delivered events of significant national and international impact, as well as locally significant events deeply rooted in community and place.

For more information visit https://www.pinwheel.org.uk/about.