EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Edinburgh International Festival Attracts New Audiences with Affordable Tickets and Innovative Experiences

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FESTIVAL SUMMARY VIDEO

- The 2024 International Festival was **more inclusive than ever:** more than twice the number of tickets were issued to under 18s, young musicians, and D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent audiences compared to last year.

- The **most expansive affordable ticket offer** to date saw over 50% of tickets for the 2024 International Festival sold at £30 or less, with over 5,000 £10 tickets purchased by those who needed them most — a 100% increase on 2023.

- **Scottish talent took centre stage**, with 50% of performers from or based in Scotland, all five national performing companies featured, and over 200 specialist freelancers, demonstrating the essential role of Scotland's arts sector in delivering the International Festival.

2–25 AUGUST
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26 August, Edinburgh: The 2024 **Edinburgh International Festival** concluded yesterday after an exhilarating 24-day celebration of opera, dance, music and theatre in Scotland's capital. With over **160 ticketed performances** and more than **125,000 attendees** across the city's venues, the Festival showcased **21 world, European, UK and Scottish premieres** affirming its role as an essential destination for arts and culture.

Under the leadership of Festival Director and Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti, the theme **Rituals That Unite Us** successfully brought together over 2,000 internationally renowned artists from 42 nations, exploring the deep connections which bind us all through live performance.

At the heart of this year's Edinburgh International Festival was a commitment to ensuring that cost is not a barrier to cultural discovery, making high-quality art accessible to the broadest possible audience. **Over 50% of tickets were sold at £30 or less**, and more than **5,000 targeted £10 tickets were sold — a 100% increase on last year**. **Double the number of free tickets were taken up by NHS staff, charity workers, and low-income benefit recipients** through the Tickets for Good programme, marking the highest uptake since the Festival signed up to the initiative. Additionally, the number of **D/deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent concession tickets doubled**, with twice as many people enrolling for the Access Pass, which provides a tailored experience for audience members with access requirements.

The International Festival reaffirmed its dedication to nurturing the next generation of artists and audiences, with a notable increase in young people attending and participating. This year saw more than **triple the number of free tickets to young musicians** issued through the Young Musician's Pass compared to 2023 and **U18s ticket purchases rose by 100%** from 2023. Over **half of all bookers were new to the Festival** this year, the highest level since the pandemic. The International Festival also focused on talent development, with initiatives like Rising Stars providing early career artists with invaluable opportunities to work and perform alongside professional mentors such as the Leonore Piano Trio and Yura Lee.

As an international festival deeply rooted in Scotland, an impressive **50% of the artists were from Scotland in 2024**, highlighting the exceptional calibre of local talent alongside their international peers. This included approximately 250 multigenerational performers in the world-first **Healing Arts Scotland Opening Celebration** at the Scottish Parliament, and representation from **all five Scottish national performing arts companies**—National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

The International Festival also **employs over 200 specialist freelancers** and relies every year on a pipeline of talented writers, actors, musicians, dancers, singers, producers, facilitators, technicians and cultural workers. In the precarious funding landscape currently faced by the Scottish arts sector, the Festival remains committed to supporting and advocating for the indispensable community of creative individuals and organisations of which Scotland can rightly be proud.

Under the theme of **'Rituals That Unite Us'**, the 2024 International Festival programme also reimagined ways in which live performance could bring audiences and artists closer together. Audiences sat in beanbags to enjoy six informal concerts at the Usher Hall, including Brazil's Ilumina, The Hallé, and the European Union Youth Orchestra, while The Hub series once again welcomed audiences into the home of the International Festival for intimate and unforgettable performances from around the world.

Six artist rehearsals were made accessible to the public and schools, offering a unique behind-the-scenes glimpse into the creative process, while 20 Q&A sessions were offered by artists after their performances to deepen the experience for attending audiences.

Offering a deeper look into the Festival's inner workings, 36 audio introductions, hosted by Kate Molleson and Nicola Benedetti, featured insights from artists, programmers, and creatives behind the programme's performances. Listened to 32,794 times by audiences, *The Warm Up* invited artists to discuss the unique rituals they undergo before creating a piece or stepping onto the stage.

Nicola Benedetti also made her BBC Radio 3 presenting debut in a six-part series focusing on the origin story and impact of the International Festival, which continues to broadcast until 7 September. Additionally, nineteen concerts from the Festival were recorded for BBC Radio 3 and will be available on BBC Sounds. More than 130 behind-the-scenes videos shared across the International Festival's social media channels garnered 1 million views from online audiences.

Additionally, over 300 people enjoyed a free VR experience with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Festival's inaugural Community Connections Hub, held this year in the Edinburgh suburb of Broomhouse. Following this, 2,000 attendees attended a Family Concert at the Usher Hall, where young music lovers had the chance to experience the Philharmonia Orchestra in person, with Festival Director Nicola Benedetti performing on violin.

Over 7,000 people joined together for a new ritual for the city and the International Festival at the highly anticipated *Opening Event: Where to Begin,* presented in partnership with The Macallan. *Where to Begin* launched Edinburgh's festival season with an immersive experience at the historic Old Town site of George Heriot's, brought to life by the creative team at Pinwheel.

Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti said, *"Our Festival has been an outstanding success this year. The theme, Rituals That Unite Us, resonated in profound ways with our visiting artists and home community. Although we bring stories from around the world, they change when they interact with the unique spirit of Edinburgh, artist upon artist expressing their awe and desire to return."*

"We diversified the experiences in our venues, making the Festival as accessible and affordable as possible. Beanbags returned, as did the intimacy of our home, the Hub. We programmed exceptional international premieres, doubled the number of Under 18 tickets on last year, and tripled the Young Musician's Pass attendees - an initiative that offers free Festival tickets to young musicians."

"Against a tumultuous backdrop of funding crisis, two aspects of our identity were reinforced and strengthened. We are deeply rooted in Scotland, and will continue to present the best of Scottish talent alongside our international counterparts. Most importantly, we are making an indelible impact on access to culture for our local community. To present the world's greatest art to the broadest possible audience is what we are here to do."

Chief Executive, Francesca Hegyi said "*Our theme for this year's programme, Rituals that Unite Us, beautifully captured the sense of togetherness felt throughout this past month.*

There's something profound and powerful about this shared experience that brings people from every corner of the world and all walks of life together.

"As we celebrate this year's Festival, we must also recognise the current fragility of the Scottish cultural sector. With 50% of our 2024 artists hailing from Scotland, the Festival relies on exceptional local talent both on and off the stage and we are deeply concerned about the ongoing survival of our creative community.

"The International Festival is the original spark that lit this city's path to becoming the world's Festival City. Now, 77 years later, we thank you for joining us once again for the ritual that we look forward to each year: the Edinburgh International Festival."

- ENDS -

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Media images can be found here.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Edinburgh International Festival
The original festival. We're the one that started it all, the igniting spark that established Edinburgh as the world's Festival City. Founded in 1947, the International Festival was the inspired idea of Rudolf Bing, a cultural pioneer and Jewish refugee, working with a group of civic and artistic leaders. Together, they created a festival that transcends political boundaries through a global celebration of the performing arts.

For 77 years, our hand-picked programme of world-leading dance, opera, music and theatre has continued to bring people of different cultures and viewpoints together every August. Meanwhile, our sister festivals have grown up around us – each of them contributing to the atmosphere of unparalleled excitement that transforms the city each summer.

The next International Festival will take place in August 2025, 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.

Shining far beyond what you see on stage, we also offer year-round pathways for people of all ages and backgrounds to discover and participate in live performance, focusing on youth, community and industry connections.

Edinburgh International Festival is supported by Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council. This year's programme was also supported by the UK Government.

You can support the Festival as a member and gain access to priority booking, backstage tours and rehearsals.

For more information visit www.eif.co.uk.