EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Edinburgh International Festival Announces First Performances and Theme for its 2025 Programme

Orpheus and Eurydice (opera) photo by Keith Saunders; Mary, Queen of Scots (ballet); photo by Gavin Smart, Carnegie Hall's NYO2 Orchestra, photo by Fadi Kheir

MEDIA IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE

1–24 AUGUST 2025
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- **'The Truth We Seek'** is the theme underpinning the **2025 Edinburgh International Festival**, inviting audiences to explore truth in all its forms.

- 2025 performances include *Mary, Queen of Scots,* a world premiere from Scottish Ballet, an Australian reimagining of opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* featuring acrobatics, and Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra 2 in their first-ever European tour.

- The Edinburgh International Festival will bring world-leading opera, music, theatre and dance to Edinburgh from **1–24 August 2025.**

14 November, Edinburgh: Edinburgh International Festival today unveils the first details of the 2025 Festival, the third from Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti**, taking place **1–24 August 2025**. The 2025 Festival invites audiences to examine their relationship with truth through a curated programme of music, dance, theatre and opera. The pursuit of truth is an essential part of being human, but today this search for meaning is precarious, fractured and abused. Through the lens of this year's theme **The Truth We Seek,** the International Festival presents contemporary reflections on the world alongside time-honoured tales, a place where fact meets faith and fiction.

The first performances announced feature a world premiere, European premiere, and a European debut: a brand new narrative ballet from **Scottish Ballet** telling the story of Mary, Queen of Scots; a European debut for the US-based **National Youth Orchestra 2**, inaugurating a new three-year creative partnership with **Carnegie Hall**; and the European production premiere of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, a modern reworking of Gluck's 18th century opera featuring world-class musicians and performers, and acrobatic artistry from Australian contemporary circus company, **Circa**.

The International Festival remains a champion of Scottish stories, creatives and companies during this uncertain time for Scottish arts, and its 2025 line-up features all five national performing companies. Supporting artists, creating jobs and showcasing homegrown talent on an international stage is now more essential than ever.

A highlight of the 2025 Festival's opera programme, **Opera Queensland**'s production of *Orpheus and Eurydice* breathes new life into the ancient myth, in a ground-breaking work exploring the enduring theme of true love and the depths to which our inner beliefs are challenged. Created in collaboration with renowned Australian contemporary circus company Circa, this reimagined staging of Gluck's *tragédie lyrique* opera makes its European premiere at the International Festival with **Opera Australia**.

Conducted by **Laurence Cummings**, the production features the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and a chorus from **Scottish Opera**, under the visionary direction of Circa's Artistic Director **Yaron Lifschitz**. British countertenor and Grammy Award winner **Iestyn Davies** stars as Orpheus, performing alongside rising Australian soprano **Samantha Clarke** as Eurydice and Amore. This imaginative production masterfully brings Gluck's score to life through a vibrant fusion of acrobatics, video projections and captivating visual storytelling.

Scottish Ballet's *Mary, Queen of Scots* is the first full-length narrative ballet from Scottish Ballet Resident Choreographer **Sophie Laplane.** The world premiere production is told through the eyes of Queen Elizabeth I, based on her perceived and imagined relationship with Mary. Blending history with legend, the production delves into the stories – the true and the fictional – that surround Mary's life and legacy.

Casting will be fluid and intergenerational, with various members of the company playing the part of Elizabeth I, including guest dancer **Charlotta Öfverholm** who will play her in her later years. The ballet will be performed in a conceptual but spectacular set, with striking, period-inspired costumes designed by **Soutra Gilmour**, the award-winning designer of recent Broadway and West End productions, including *Merrily We Roll Along* and *& Juliet,* with music by **Mikael Karlsson** and **Michael P Atkinson**, the team behind the stunning reimagined score for Scottish Ballet's 2022 International Festival hit *Coppélia*.

The International Festival also announces a new three-year creative partnership with **Carnegie Hall** and its national youth ensembles, with the European debut of NYO2 (National Youth Orchestra 2), one of three resident orchestras in 2025. This residency model strengthens the orchestra's connection with Edinburgh, offering workshops and diverse performance styles to enrich the local cultural landscape. NYO2 is one of three acclaimed national youth ensembles from New York's prestigious Carnegie Hall, a venue renowned for its leadership in music education. Through this orchestra the institution – named after Scottish industrialist Andrew Carnegie – creates valuable opportunities for young people across the United States, including communities underrepresented in classical music.

The young performers, aged 14–17 and hailing from across the US, are celebrated as exceptionally talented musicians from diverse backgrounds who demonstrate remarkable artistry and represent a promising future for youth orchestral music in the US and beyond. On their first European tour, NYO2 join their Scottish peers on stage for a family concert, forming cross-border connections and sharing the perspectives of the next generation of musicians in both countries.

Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director, Edinburgh International Festival, says: **'***To be alive is to know the elusive nature of truth. Within our homes or workplaces, amongst loved ones or colleagues, we all experience trying to piece together indignantly expressed, absolutely believed, yet utterly contradictory truths. How often are we able to rise above our own bubble?'*

'From the weaving of myth and enduring truths in a bold reimagining of Orpheus and Eurydice*, to reconciling rival perspectives in Scottish Ballet's* Mary, Queen of Scots *or finding inspiration from the next generation of musicians with Carnegie Hall's incredible National Youth Orchestra 2, we invite you to join us for our 2025 Festival: The Truth We Seek.'*

The full programme for the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival including dates for these shows will be announced with tickets going on sale in March 2025, with priority booking for members. To become a member or sign up to the Edinburgh International Festival newsletter for the latest information, go to www.eif.co.uk.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Edinburgh International Festival
Edinburgh International Festival is the original festival. It's the one that started it all, the igniting spark that established Edinburgh as the world's Festival City.

The next International Festival takes place 1–24 August 2025, under the direction of Festival Director and Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti. Benedetti's vision for the Festival is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality art, for the broadest possible audience.

The Edinburgh International Festival was founded in 1947, 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.

Over the following 77 years the International Festival's 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, the International Festival's sister festivals have grown up around it – each of them contributing to the atmosphere of unparalleled excitement that transforms the city each summer.

Shining far beyond what you see on stage, the Festival also offers year-round pathways for people of all ages and backgrounds to discover and participate in live performance. Learn more at **eif.co.uk/about .**

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 Scottish Ballet
Scottish Ballet, founded in 1969, is Scotland's national dance company. Based in Glasgow, the company performs regularly across Scotland, throughout the UK and internationally – promoting Scotland's pioneering spirit far and wide.

Scottish Ballet is a National Centre for Dance Health delivering specialised programmes for those living with dementia, Parkinson's, MS and Long Covid.

Under CEO/Artistic Director Christopher Hampson, Scottish Ballet presents bold, adventurous performances rooted in strong classical technique, accompanied by the Scottish Ballet Orchestra. The company's broad repertoire includes new versions of the classics and ground-breaking commissions, both on stage and screen.

Scottish Ballet runs an extensive engagement programme, tailored to the needs of diverse communities, promoting confidence, fostering wellbeing, and encouraging creativity through dance. Scottish Ballet is funded by the Scottish Government.

For more information, visit: www.scottishballet.co.uk.

About NYO2
In 2023, Carnegie Hall celebrated 10 years since the establishment of its national youth ensembles, which invite America's top teen instrumentalists to come together for free intensive training and performances with the world's finest artists at Carnegie Hall and around the globe. As national ensembles, these programmes include a broad range of musicians that reflect the exceptional talent and diversity of the United States. These teens serve as dynamic music ambassadors for their country as they travel the world, taking part in youth exchange and cultural diplomacy activities.

Outstanding young American instrumentalists form NYO2, a free orchestra programme that comes together alongside the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America (NYO-USA) and NYO Jazz each summer for intensive training and performance opportunities. NYO2 has a particular focus on recruiting musicians from communities underrepresented in classical music. Participating musicians have the opportunity to work closely with top players from American orchestras and conservatories during a residency at Purchase College, State University of New York.

For more information, visit https://www.carnegiehall.org/.

About Opera Australia
Opera Australia is one of the world's most celebrated opera companies with an ambition to bring an Australian stamp to telling great stories through music and song, and a commitment to develop and nurture new generations of Australian talent on and off the stage.

Opera Australia is the largest and busiest performing arts organisation in Australia, with over 800 opera performances a year, including opera seasons in Sydney and Melbourne, Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour, musical theatre, opera concerts and a range of other activities. Through its touring arm, the Company reaches out to communities in regional Australia, and also delivers an extensive program to school students. Opera performances are broadcast and distributed nationally and internationally.

The Company manages the Opera Australia Orchestra and also works in partnership with Orchestra Victoria. The Company works with leading directors and designers, and employs a large number of highly skilled people in the areas of scenic construction and painting, wardrobe and wig-making, stage production, and management and administration. Overall, the Company plays a vital role in developing and sustaining a specialist skills base in this unique area of the performing arts.

For more information, visit www.opera.org.au

About Opera Queensland
Established in 1981, Opera Queensland delivers a diverse, complex and accessible program of opera and related activities for all Queenslanders.

Under the direction of CEO & Artistic Director Patrick Nolan since 2017, Opera Queensland is committed to celebrating the inherent strengths of the canon, actively engaging artists of the highest calibre to develop and reinvigorate the art form through a contemporary lens. Celebrating and interrogating the extraordinary energy that opera creates, Patrick Nolan's programming features a balanced repertoire of Classic, Contemporary and Future works.

Serving Australia's most decentralised state, Opera Queensland connects with regional and remote centres through a rich array of performances, education activities and community programs. Our annual program serves our audiences from first time opera goers, primary and secondary school students, First Nations communities, people with disability to diehard supporters, passionate about the power of opera to transform the way we understand ourselves and each other.

For more information, visit https://www.oq.com.au/

About Circa
Circa Contemporary Circus is one of the world's leading performance companies. Since 2004, from its base in Brisbane, Australia, Circa has toured the world –- performing in 45+ countries to nearly 2 million people. Circa's works have been greeted with standing ovations, rave reviews and sold-out houses across six continents.

Circa is at the forefront of the new wave of contemporary Australian circus – pioneering how extreme physicality can create powerful and moving performances. It continues to push the boundaries of the art form, blurring the lines between movement, dance, theatre and circus. Compelled by the question 'what is possible in circus?' Circa is leading the way with a diverse range of thrilling creations that 'redraw the limits to which circus can aspire' (The Age).

Under the direction of circus visionary Yaron Lifschitz, Circa features an ensemble of exceptional, multi-skilled circus artists who have been a regular fixture at leading festivals and venues in New York, London, Berlin and Montreal with seasons at Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Barbican Centre, Les Nuits de Fourvière, Chamäleon Theatre as well as major Australian Festivals.

For more information, visit www.circa.org.au

About Scottish Opera
Scottish Opera is Scotland's national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson with the goal 'to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland', opening with performances of *Madama Butterfly* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The 2022/23 season marked its 60th Anniversary.

Scottish Opera's performance repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly commissioned world premieres, balancing favourites with under-explored works. The Company collaborates with the world's finest singers and creatives, together with The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and choruses for each opera.

Recent accolades include an International Opera Award 2023 Nomination for *Il trittico*, a South Bank Sky Arts Award, a Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards, a 2017 UK Theatre Award, and a 2020 RPS Award. The Company also won Outstanding achievement in Opera at the Critics' Circle Awards 2023, for its production of *Il trittico*.

For more information visit https://www.scottishopera.org.uk/.

About Scottish Chamber Orchestra

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive.

Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works and cross-art form collaborations, and each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

For more information visit: https://www.sco.org.uk/.