EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Edinburgh International Festival Breaks Boundaries in a Year Exploring 'The Truth We Seek'

Laura Beth Salter, Nicola Benedetti, Mia Habis, photo by Laurence Winram

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1–24 AUGUST 2025
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- Edinburgh International Festival's 2025 programme offers **opportunities to experience world-class artists in thought-provoking and unconventional ways –** including an eight-hour choral extravaganza, a distinctive outdoor promenade dance piece and a circus infused opera. Audiences can also get involved in many Festival performances, from an outdoor mass-singalong to interactive concerts where the audience chooses the repertoire.

- **The Truth We Seek** is the timely theme underpinning the 2025 International Festival, as contemporary reflections on the world are presented alongside time-honoured tales, a place where fact meets faith and fiction.

- The International Festival is the ultimate destination to experience world-class performances, with an exciting lineup of 133 performances, bringing **7 world premieres, 8 UK and Scottish premieres,** and **2**

European premieres to Edinburgh this year. Programme highlights include the world premiere of a gripping new play by **James Graham** starring **Brian Cox**, a new narrative ballet from **Scottish Ballet,** and Festival debuts from rising classical stars—violinist **María Dueñas**, mezzo-soprano **Emily D'Angelo,** and 2024 BBC Young Musician of the Year **Ryan Wang.**

13 March, Edinburgh: From **1-24 August 2025**, Edinburgh International Festival presents a hand-picked selection of leading international and local artists in the world's Festival City, with 24 days of world-class opera, dance, music and theatre.

The 2025 programme is defined by world-class artists bringing audiences and artists closer together in creative and unexpected ways. Audiences can experience an opera incorporating circus performers for a breathtaking fusion of music and acrobatics in ***Orpheus and Eurydice,*** a site-specific promenade dance work that transforms Edinburgh's Old College Quad into a stage for ***Dance People,*** and enjoy Bach through a new lens in ***Breaking Bach,*** where hip-hop meets 18th-century period instruments.

Audiences can also actively participate in performances—whether by shaping the repertoire in a real-time Classical Jam or sharing their dreams to inspire **Hanni Liang's** piano recital, ***Dreams***. For those seeking deep immersion, eight-hour choral epic ***The Veil of the Temple*** invites audiences to sit on beanbags and lose themselves in waves of harmonies, and a choral workshop welcomes amateur singers that will preview a powerful performance at the Festival's Closing Concert, Mendelssohn's ***Elijah***.

Now in its third year under Festival Director and celebrated Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti,** the 2025 programme welcomes over **1,700 artists from 42 nations** to Edinburgh —including 600 from Scotland—across 133 performances. **The Truth We Seek** is the theme underpinning the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival, inviting audiences to explore their relationship with truth - within themselves, between one another and in understanding our place in the world.

Ensuring that cost is not a barrier to live performance, **over 50,000 tickets** (more than half of all tickets available for the 2025 International Festival) are priced at **£30 or under.** Thousands of free tickets are available for young musicians, NHS staff and community groups, and **£10 Affordable Tickets are available for all performances** for anyone who needs them.

Programme highlights include:

- Two major world premiere productions in UK theatre and dance: ***Make It Happen*****,** an eye-opening take on the 2008 financial crisis set in Edinburgh, starring **Brian Cox** (Adam Smith) and **Sandy Grierson** (Fred Goodwin)**,** written by one of Britain's most in-demand playwrights, **James Graham**; and ***Mary, Queen of Scots,*** an iconic story of one of Scotland's most famous women, unconventionally told with choreography by **Sophie Laplane** that blends classicism with modernity, and costuming that nods to haute couture and punk.

- In a landmark year for choral music, marking the 60th Anniversary of the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus,** this renowned chorus of singers from around Scotland performs at the monumental Opening Concert, as well as Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (this year's grand Closing Concert). The programme also includes the **Monteverdi Choir** and **English Baroque Soloists** performing works by Handel and Bach.

- This year's Opening Concert features the aforementioned Edinburgh Festival Chorus, Monteverdi Choir and the **National Youth Choir of Scotland**, offering a rare chance to hear John Tavener's *The Veil of the*

Temple in all its eight-hour glory, a colossal universal prayer performed in full for the second time ever in the UK.

- The International Festival's opening weekend welcomes all to Princes Street Gardens' Ross Bandstand for *The Big Singalong,* a free event led by **Stephen Deazley**, artistic director of Edinburgh's Love Music Community Choir. The following day, Norwegian folk ensemble **Barokksolistene** returns to lead *The Ceilidh Sessions*, an afternoon of music and storytelling inspired by the Gaelic ceilidh tradition.

- The most substantial programme of Polish artists in the International Festival's 78-year history is featured in celebration of the UK/Poland season 2025. Performances include two concerts from one of the Festival's resident orchestras in 2025, **NFM Leopoldinum Orchestra,** and a showcase of Polish artists and repertoire from the **Wrocław Baroque Ensemble, VOŁOSI, Piotr Anderszewski, Bomsori Kim** to 2024's BBC Young Musician of the Year, **Ryan Wang.**

- Operatic works include a fully staged Australian reimagining of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* featuring acrobatics; the UK premiere of *Book of Mountains and Seas* from Chinese composer **Huang Ruo**, puppeteer **Basil Twist** and **Ars Nova Copenhagen,** and two operas in concert: Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* with the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and **Chorus** and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* with the **London Symphony Orchestra,** with a line-up of international soloists.

- Residencies bringing leading orchestras to the International Festival for an extended, more sustainable stay that features multiple performances and community engagement. This year, three outstanding orchestras provide distinctive insights into their collective sound and ambitions: Carnegie Hall's **National Youth Orchestra 2,** Poland's **NFM Leopoldinum,** and the **London Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of new Chief Conductor **Sir Antonio Pappano.**

- Intimate morning recitals at The Queen's Hall feature International Festival debuts from on-the-rise young virtuoso **María Dueñas** and Canadian mezzo-soprano **Emily D'Angelo,** as well as a cohort of exceptional Scottish artists including the **Dunedin Consort** with **John Butt** and Scottish percussionist **Colin Currie** with peerless vocal group **The King's Singers.**

- A wider orchestral programme that stretches the globe to welcome the **Melbourne Symphony Orchestra,** the **Budapest Festival Orchestra,** and the **NCPA Orchestra** from Beijing, with conductor **Myung Whun Chung** and **Bruce Liu** as piano soloist**. The London Philharmonic Orchestra** returns to the International Festival for the first time in a decade under the baton of **Edward Gardner** with a stunning programme that features pianist **Beatrice Rana** performing Rachmaninoff's inspired *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini,* and Holst's *The Planets,* a seven-movement orchestral suite journeying through the cosmos to explore our true place in the universe.

- **Aurora Orchestra** makes its International Festival debut with Shostakovich's *Fifth Symphony,* in the 50th anniversary of the composer's death. A work that grapples with the pursuit of truth under oppression, audiences are seated on beanbags as Aurora delve into the symphony from the inside out with a conversational presentation in the round, and then in full later that evening, performed entirely from memory.

- The Scottish premiere of *Figures in Extinction* from the internationally acclaimed **Nederlands Dans Theater**, visionary choreographer **Crystal Pite** and ground-breaking theatre-maker **Simon McBurney** (Complicité*),* which confronts powerful truths about humanity's impact on the world and art's meaning

in the face of mass destruction.

- A stellar dance offering continues with works that expand the experience for audiences: **Maqamat** and **Omar Rajeh** take performance outdoors to Edinburgh University's College Quad in promenade with *Dance People*; **the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** combine hip hop with Bach in *Breaking Bach* with choreographer **Kim Brandstrup**, and an International Festival debut from Australian disabled dancer **Dan Daw** about identity and kink.

- Leading theatre-makers exploring truth via the climate emergency, colonialism and politics, with **Cliff Cardinal's** take on Shakespeare in *As You Like It A Radical Retelling*, a spectacular nonverbal work from Belgian theatre collective **FC Bergman** in *Works and Days* and a remount of acclaimed play *Faustus in Africa!,* 30 years after its original premiere, from **Handspring Puppet Company** and **William Kentridge.**

- **The Hub,** the International Festival's headquarters on the Royal Mile, brings together a hand-picked variety of global musical styles and traditions, experienced up close in an intimate performance space, including Up Late gigs from artists such as **Kathryn Joseph** and **Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith.** In a truly international programme, musicians from 16 countries including Australia, China, Poland, Norway and across East to West Africa come to the home of the Festival.

This year, for the first time, a Dementia-Friendly concert will be presented for people living with dementia, their caregivers, family and friends. This performance from the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**, in association with Alzheimer Scotland, enables those who have dementia to enjoy familiar repertoire in a relaxed and flexible environment. The wider 2025 programme features **33** accessible performances, including nine audio described performances, seven BSL interpreted performances, thirteen captioned performances and four relaxed performances.

Available online, the Access Pass is a free scheme that provides a tailored Festival experience for anybody who needs additional support. The concession for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people remains at **50% off all full price tickets**, with the option to add a free essential companion ticket where required.

General booking for the 2025 International Festival opens on **Thursday 27 March**, with tickets currently on-sale to Members and supporters.

Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director, Edinburgh International Festival said**:** "*Our 2025 Edinburgh International Festival invites you to explore The Truth We Seek—a journey into the elusive nature of truth, in our personal and public lives. In an era of 'alternative facts' and manipulated narratives, the arts offer us something deeper: a poetic and metaphorical wisdom that is both more nuanced and more precise.*

This Festival—born in the city of the Enlightenment—has championed artistic expression as a means of discovery, insight, and mutual understanding. This year, we proudly present seven world premieres, exceptional international and Scottish artists, and celebrate 60 years of our Festival Chorus as well as the brightest emerging talent.

Join us this summer as we seek and find truth together. Your curiosity will be rewarded with thought-provoking, and potentially transformational, experiences that you simply won't find anywhere else."

Culture and Communities Convener, Councillor Val Walker said: *"I'm delighted to see the 2025 programme for the Edinburgh International Festival be unveiled. This promises to be an exciting new chapter in the*

Festival's rich history with nearly 2,000 artists from around the world returning to Edinburgh this August. The fact that over a quarter of these artists are from Scotland is also a cause for celebration.

It's particularly encouraging to see that accessibility for all continues to be championed with initiatives such as free tickets for young musicians, NHS colleagues and community groups, along with £10 Affordable Tickets for all performances. Everyone deserves to be able to enjoy our world class cultural offer regardless of circumstance. Opening weekend of the International Festival will see a fantastic free event held in Ross Bandstand where all are welcome to the Big Singalong.

From dance to classical music, opera to theatre and beyond there is an absolute wealth of talent, intrigue and spectacle on display this summer and I'd encourage all our residents and visitors to make the most of it. The International Festival is a stalwart of the Capital's cultural calendar and as a Council we're proud to continue our support."

Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said: "*The Edinburgh International Festival has stood as a global celebration of the performing arts, and their power to bridge cultural and national differences since 1947. That role is as relevant as ever, so I very much welcome the Festival's commitment to affordability and accessibility in this year's programme.*

"The International Festival is where it all began for Edinburgh's Festivals so whether you are coming from near or far, I encourage everyone to enjoy the best of what Scotland and the world has to offer, across the genres of classical and contemporary music, dance, theatre, and visual art.

"The Scottish Government's Expo fund is designed to help showcase Scottish artists and our festivals to the world, and I'm very proud to continue that support with £80,000 for this year's International Festival."

Dana MacLeod, **Creative Scotland's Executive Director of Arts, Communities and Inclusion** said: *"Congratulations to the International Festival team for this imaginative programme which brings important conversations by world-leading artists and extraordinary creative experiences for audiences to the capital city. Borne out of a belief in the power of the arts to connect and provide hope in a divided world, the International Festival's original ethos remains true today, with international and homegrown talent presenting stimulating work, reflecting and celebrating the world we inhabit. A long-time supporter, Creative Scotland is happy to have been able to confirm a funding commitment to the International Festival for the next three years".*

Further programme information by genre:

Opera

In 2025, the International Festival's operatic highlights reflect a consideration on how opera can be presented in imaginative ways, with top quality casting and musicianship.

Opera Queensland's production of *Orpheus and Eurydice* in association with **Circa** is an electrifying staging of Gluck's *tragédie lyrique* opera, bringing together acrobatics and video projections to breathe new life into the ancient myth. Australian contemporary circus company **Circa** joins with the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and a chorus from **Scottish Opera** for the European premiere of this inspired production of Gluck's seminal opera, with British countertenor and Grammy Award winner **Iestyn Davies** as Orpheus, performing alongside rising Australian soprano **Samantha Clarke** as Eurydice and Amore.

A UK premiere of a spectacular cross-genre stage work, *Book of Mountains and Seas* fuses opera with puppetry, composed by **Huang Ruo**, one of the most exciting figures of contemporary opera. This 21st-century adaptation explores our complex relationship with the natural world, reflecting on humanity's role as

caretakers of the Earth. Directed and designed by **Basil Twist**, designer of the Olivier Award-winning *My Neighbour Totoro*, the performances feature the Danish choir **Ars Nova Copenhagen**, joined by an exceptional ensemble of percussionists and puppeteers.
With no pit to divide the orchestra and on-stage cast from the audience, operas in concert make room for an intimate exchange of pure performance and focused listening.

As part of their International Festival residency, the **London Symphony Orchestra** perform *Suor Angelica* joined by their Chief Conductor, **Sir Antonio Pappano**, an unparalleled interpreter of Puccini's music. Bringing to the fore the drama and sorrow at the heart of this opera, international soloists are joined by the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** and **RSNO Youth Chorus.**

La clemenza di Tito continues the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and its Principal Conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev**'s exploration of Mozart's operas, now entering its third year following last year's acclaimed *Così fan tutte*. The SCO and its Chorus unite with a cast of celebrated singers, including **Tara Erraught** and **Hera Hyesang Park.**

See www.eif.co.uk/opera for information on individual performances.

Classical Music
The world's finest orchestras and musicians gather in Edinburgh for 18 spectacular concerts at Usher Hall and 19 intimate morning recitals at The Queen's Hall.

A popular staple of the programme, International Festival residencies invite leading orchestras to the Festival for an extended stay, in a more sustainable model, offering multiple performances and community engagement alongside them. This year, three outstanding orchestras offer us distinctive perspectives on the inner workings of their collective sound and ambitions.

The **London Symphony Orchestra** (LSO) takes the stage at the International Festival for the first time since Sir Antonio Pappano took on the baton as their new Chief Conductor. Founded in 1904 as a pioneer in musician-led ensembles, the LSO's residency comprises three concerts: a celebration of early 20th-century works including Elizabeth Maconchy's *Nocturne for Orchestra*, Erich Korngold's *Violin Concerto* and *Vaughan Williams's A Sea Symphony* with the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and soloists **Vilde Frang, Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha** and **Will Liverman,** a concert of Beethoven and Shostakovich co-presented by Pappano and Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti,** and Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. A special performance in The Queen's Hall also sees Sir Antonio Pappano at the piano join with tenor Ian Bostridge and members of the LSO.

Travelling from New York, Carnegie Hall's trailblazing youth orchestra, **NYO2,** lands in Edinburgh for its European debut. This marks the first of a three-year creative collaboration between the International Festival and Carnegie Hall. Led by Venezuelan conductor **Rafael Payare,** they present a thrilling programme: American cellist **Alisa Weilerstein** shines in Dmitri Shostakovich's gripping First Cello Concerto, followed by the triumphant optimism of Sergei Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, composed in 1944 reflecting the turning tide of the Second World War.

Back due to popular demand, the **Family Concert** is recommended for ages 7-11, but suitable for all ages. In a special interactive introduction to classical music, Scottish musical traditions are contrasted with the sounds of America, performed by the inspirational young musicians of NYO2, with presenter **Lucy Drever** introducing the musicians and the music.

The resident orchestra of the **National Forum of Music in Wrocław, NFM Leopoldinum** comes to the International Festival as the flagship ensemble of this year's Focus on Poland season. The string orchestra has

been developing its sound for almost 40 years, now led by British violinist **Alexander Sitkovetsky.** Their residency comprises two concerts, *Bizet's Carmen Suite* as well as a tribute to Yehudi Menuhin, one of the foremost violinists of the 20th century, conceived by two of his former pupils: Alexander Sitkovetsky and Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti.** They are joined by the original strings cohort of early career musicians from the International Festival's Rising Stars mentorship scheme, now in its third year.

This year's Opening Concert sees Usher Hall transform into a sanctuary for **John Tavener's** magnum opus, *The Veil of the Temple,* in its eight-hour glory. In a rare moment of vocal communion, the **Monteverdi Choir** joins the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** and **National Youth Choir of Scotland** for the second ever performance of this work. Comprising eight cycles with short breaks in between, the audience are seated on beanbags and can come and go.

This year, the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** celebrates 60 years of incredible dedication and stirring performances at the very heart of the International Festival. Since its inception, this leading choir has been performing with the world's leading orchestras and conductors. Brought together by a shared love of singing, the Chorus is made up of over 150 volunteer members. Their performances span across the epic Opening Concert, Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (this year's grand Closing Concert).

In an exciting opportunity for aspiring singers, members of the public are invited to join the Edinburgh Festival Chorus in *Come and Sing Elijah,* an immersive workshop led by Chorus Director **James Grossmith,** leading to a special performance alongside the Chorus and the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** conducted by **Thomas Søndergård**

Also in the Usher Hall, the **Aurora Orchestra** make their International Festival debut, in the year of their 20th anniversary as a group. Audiences can listen to Dmitri Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony from the inside out, with a conversational presentation in the round led by Founder and Principal Conductor **Nicholas Collon** that delves into the composer's grapple with the pursuit of truth under oppression. That evening, they play the piece in full, by memory, alongside cellist **Abel Selaocoe,** who joins for a performance of his work *Four Spirits*.

Under the baton of Principal Conductor **Edward Gardner**, the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** returns to the International Festival for the first time in a decade with a stunning programme that includes Sergei Rachmaninoff's inspired *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with pianist **Beatrice Rana,** and Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, exploring our true place in the universe.

One of the most in-demand conductors of her generation, **Karina Canellakis** also returns after making her Festival debut in the 2023 Closing Concert. Leading a monumental programme with the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** and the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus**, Olivier Messiaen's moving *Les Offrandes oubliées* and Igor Stravinsky's orchestral reworking of his hit ballet *Petrushka* bookend the beauty of Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*.

The **Melbourne Symphony Orchestra,** led by Chief Conductor **Jaime Martín**, sweeps from Edward Elgar's *In the South*, to a world premiere work by Indigenous Australian composer **Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO**, featuring didgeridoo virtuoso **William Barton.** The journey concludes at the 'Great Gate of Kyiv', the majestic finale to Modest Mussorgsky's vivid *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Also in the Usher Hall, **Myung-Whun Chung** conducts the resident orchestra of the **National Centre for the Performing Arts,** Beijing along with **Bruce Liu,** winner of the 2021 Chopin International Piano Competition; the extraordinary **Budapest Festival Orchestra** and polymath founder-conductor **Iván Fischer** return to Edinburgh after their enormously popular 2023 performances in a programme that celebrates their Hungarian heritage;

and the **Monteverdi Choir** and **English Baroque Soloists,** with esteemed Baroque conductor **Jonathan Sells,** showcase enthralling works from their repertoire, featuring George Frideric Handel's *Dixit Dominus*.

In The Queen's Hall, the series opens with award-winning ensemble **The King's Singers** and one of the world's leading percussionists, **Colin Currie,** including a world premiere of a **James MacMillan** work.

Canadian mezzo-soprano **Emily D'Angelo** – the first singer to ever win the Leonard Bernstein Award – is accompanied by pianist **Sophia Muñoz** in a programme of songs woven together by the theme of the natural world, ranging from Béla Bartók, Scottish-Irish folksong by Francis McPeake, to Canadian composer Walter MacNutt.

Two outstanding young musicians, violinist **Maria Dueñas** and pianist **Alexander Malofeev,** join forces for a passionate programme of music by Karol Szymanowski, Claude Debussy and César Franck; and another duo, the fast-rising countertenor **Hugh Cutting** and pianist **George Ireland** present a recital journeying genres and centuries.

Recital performances include duo performances from pairs including pianists **Pavel Kolesnikov** and **Samson Tsoy**, baritone **Florian Boesch** and pianist **Malcolm Martineau**, cellist **Leonard Elschenbroich** and pianist **Alexei Grynyuk** and clarinettist **Mark Simpson** with Piano Professor at the Royal College of Music, **Richard Uttley.**

As part of a Focus on Poland, recitals from violinist **Bomsori Kim** and pianist **Thomas Hoppe,** pianist **Piotr Anderszewski,** and the **Wrocław Baroque Ensemble** share stunning programmes featuring Polish music, and BBC Young Musician of the Year's 2024 winner, **Ryan Wang,** performs an all-Chopin programme.

Further performances from world-class ensembles include the **Dunedin Consort** with **John Butt,** the **Fibonacci Quartet,** the **Sitkovetsky Trio, Belcea Quartet,** and **The Apollon Ensemble** with **Leonidas Kavakos.**

Through the **Rising Stars** programme, the International Festival continues to champion the world's most promising young musicians, offering them a chance to shine on an international stage. Chosen via audition, there are 26 Rising Stars this year – spanning woodwind, strings and voice – who will take part in a mentorship programme with professional musicians, culminating in public performances at The Usher Hall, The Queen's Hall and The Hub.

In the home of the Edinburgh International Festival, The Hub, intimate surroundings bring performers and artists closer together.

First Night at The Hub, curated by Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti,** is a mixed bill revealed on the night for a celebration of artistry and anticipation for the Festival season ahead. Two spontaneous 'jam' concerts, Jazz Jam and Rising Stars: Classical Jam, draw inspiration from jazz jam sessions, where emerging musicians and professionals create exciting and unpredictable results on stage together.

In an interactive concert, **Hanni Liang** also invites audience members to share their dreams, and creates a live response on the piano.

Contemporary Music

This year's contemporary music programme crosses electronic, indie, jazz, blues, garage, traditional, and contemporary-classical. In a truly international offering, innovative acts from America, the Netherlands,

Norway, Germany and Poland, as well as leading Scottish talent, come to Edinburgh for a series of electrifying concerts.

Indie, Jazz, Contemporary Classical and Electronic Music
Electronic artist **Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith** turns synth-driven soundscapes into otherworldly experiences. A leading force in progressive modern ambient music, she brings the Buchla modular synthesiser to life, shaping intricate, evolving compositions that blur the line between organic and electronic.

Scottish singer-songwriter **Kathryn Joseph** brings her meditative vocals and rhythmic piano to a late night at The Hub, including songs from her forthcoming album. Joseph first captivated audiences with her 2015 album, bones you have thrown me and blood I've spilled, which won the Scottish Album of the Year award. Since then, the Inverness-born artist has added two more albums and a five-track EP to her name, all filled with her signature honesty and raw emotion.

Jazz musician, spoken word poet and activist **Alabaster DePlume** combines his atmospheric saxophone melodies with his personal politics. A musical maverick, DePlume's last two albums were created on the premise of giving his fellow musicians little time to practice, encouraging true improvisation and a raw, eclectic sound. Expect the unexpected as DePlume's saxophone riffs create a distinctive, warm atmosphere, where spontaneity and creativity lead the way.

Fast becoming a staple of The Hub programme, **Endea Owens** returns to bring the International Festival to a joyful finale. The irresistibly charismatic Grammy and Emmy award-winning bassist and composer is once again joined by her sextet **The Cookout** for their original renditions of jazz standards and Owen's own compositions.

Joep Beving, celebrated for his emotive piano work that melds minimalist and modern influences, joins forces with Berlin-based composer, cellist and electronic innovator **Maarten Vos**, blending classical piano, experimental electronics and avant-garde textures in fresh, unexpected ways.

Traditional Music
The Hub series continues to spotlight those who lead a new generation of Celtic musicians, with representation from Scotland and all corners of the earth. This year features Norwegian trio **Østerlide,** Irish fiddle player **Aoife Ní Bhriain** and Welsh harpist **Catrin Finch**, Glasgow string musicians **The Kinnaris Quintet,** Celtic supergroup **Ímar,** Poland's ***VOŁOSI*** and a new project from three award-winning musicians of Glasgow's freewheeling music scene - **Greg Lawson, Phil Alexander** and **Mario Caribé** (formerly of fusion band **Moishe's Bagel**).

Visual artist **Tazeen Qayyum** creates in real-time with calligraphic drawing, with music by **Basel Rajoub** (saxophone, duclar and percussion) and qanun player **Feras Charestan,** as part of a programme from the **Aga Khan Music Programme** that also includes Tanzanian singer and composer **Yahya Hussein Abdallah** and Tunisian-born viola d'amore player **Jasser Haj Youssef,** and a performance from musical visionaries including pipa player **Wu Man,** accordionist **Vincent Peirani** and cellist **Vincent Segal.**

Other performances span the globe, sharing music styles from Hungary with **Roby Lakatos** and his ensemble, West African djembe from virtuoso **Sidiki Dembele** and ensemble, and Indigenous Australian composer and didgeridoo player **William Barton**, whose experimental compositions stem from his Kalkadunga heritage and a musical upbringing of Elvis Presley, AC/DC and Antonio Vivaldi. A frontierless quartet of Malian kora star **Ballaké Sissoko, Vincent Segal, Vincent Peirani** and saxophonist **Émile Parisien,** fuses neoclassical, jazz and West African kora music with infectious energy.

A full line-up can be found at www.eif.co.uk/contemporarymusic.

Theatre

The power of truth-telling comes alive in a striking lineup of works that explore the climate emergency, colonialism and politics, including one world premiere, two UK premieres and two Scottish premieres.

Opening the International Festival, *Make It Happen* is an epic new satirical play by acclaimed playwright **James Graham**, directed by **Andrew Panton**, Artistic Director of **Dundee Rep Theatre.** This co-production between **National Theatre of Scotland,** Edinburgh International Festival and Dundee Rep Theatre is the first major artwork to tell the story of Royal Bank of Scotland's role in the 2008 financial crash, and marks the return of **Brian Cox** to Scottish stages for the first time in a decade, with **Sandy Grierson.**

Belgian theatre collective **FC Bergman** present the UK premiere of *Works and Days,* a wordless piece that blends stunning imagery, movement and music to explore our connection with the land we inhabit. Accompanied by on-stage musicians playing original music inspired by Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, ingenious set design exposes the actors to all the elements, from fire to water, with visuals that nod to famous pastoral paintings, all told with FC Bergman's signature humour and pathos.

30 years after its original premiere, *Faustus in Africa!* reimagines the timeless tale of Faust's downfall, reframing it to confront the catastrophic costs of colonialism and the climate emergency. Directed by **William Kentridge,** this bold re-working of the **Handspring Puppet Company's** multi-award-winning 1995 production combines puppetry with Kentridge's celebrated animations. The haunting score, featuring **Warrick Sony** and the late **James Phillips**, ramps up the drama, while Handspring's extraordinary puppetry (of *War Horse* fame) brings a surreal quality to the stage.

A collection of political plays arrives at the International Festival with a fresh wave of urgency - following a sellout debut at London's Arcola Theatre, **Cutting the Tightrope** makes its Scottish debut to delve into the ever-tightening grip of censorship on artistic freedom. Written by a diverse group of award-winning playwrights, this is an audacious exploration of the role of the arts in today's global conflicts and political resistance.

In another Scottish premiere, although Shakespeare's title promises something for everyone, cultural provocateur **Cliff Cardinal's** *As You Like It A Radical Retelling* reimagines the Bard strictly for the open-minded. An Indigenous Canadian artist based in Toronto, Cardinal's take is bold, unapologetic and unafraid to tackle the thorny truths of our times, balancing black humour with raw emotion.

There are also post-show talks after many productions with companies and creative teams. See www.eif.co.uk/theatre for information on individual productions.

Dance

2025's dance programme offers a chance to see top Scottish talent and international leaders in the artform onstage in Edinburgh, with three world premieres, three UK premieres and three Scottish premieres.

Scottish Ballet's *Mary, Queen of Scots* is a major new production from choreographer-in-residence **Sophie Laplane** and co-creator **James Bonas** that draws on the complex relationship between Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I of England. Laplane's bold choreography blends classicism with modernity, reshaping a familiar story with powerful originality. With dazzling costumes that capture the grandeur of the era, with nods to haute couture and punk, new music is by the team behind 2022 International Festival hit *Coppélia,* performed live by the **Scottish Ballet Orchestra.**

Another world premiere looks at Bach from a fresh perspective, as classical music meets hip hop and contemporary dance in *Breaking Bach*. The **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**, performing on 18th-century period instruments, is joined by a troupe of dancers, some professional dancers as well as young talent from Acland Burghley School in London, where the orchestra is engaged in a groundbreaking residency. Award-winning choreographer **Kim Brandstrup** also returns to the Festival after his acclaimed *Minotaur* (2023).

Set outdoors against the striking backdrop of Edinburgh's Old College Quad, choreographers **Omar Rajeh** and **Mia Habis** with Lebanese-French dance company **Maqamat** present the UK premiere of *Dance People*. A performance where the line between audience and performer dissolves, the promenade production pirouettes between joy and critique, examining the power structures that influence the artistic process.

The Scottish premiere of *Figures in Extinction* sees **Nederlands Dans Theater** in collaboration with two heavyweights of their fields: visionary choreographer **Crystal Pite** and ground-breaking theatremaker **Simon McBurney** (Complicité*).* Contemporary dance is fused with striking soundscapes and dialogue – from the crack of melting ice caps to the jarring chatter of social media influencers – to confront hard truths about humanity's impact on the world and art's meaning in the face of mass destruction.

A daring International Festival debut fuses sexy choreography and touching theatricality to take a stand against the disabling forces of society. Australian disabled performer **Dan Daw** is joined by collaborator **Christopher Owen,** turning the spotlight inward to find his own truth through a subject that holds the power to both challenge and liberate: kink.

See www.eif.co.uk/dance for information on individual performances.

Keynote Talks

Under Festival Director Nicola Benedetti, the International Festival has a renewed focus on dialogue and debate, with keynote talks from leading voices calling for change.

In a panel with thought-provoking guests, broadcaster, author and University of Edinburgh rector **Simon Fanshawe** tackles the 2025 theme, The Truth We Seek. A co-founder of the LGBTQ+ charity Stonewall and a Perrier Award for Comedy winner, Fanshawe's debut appearance at the International Festival is bound to spark fresh debate, fuelled by his signature wit.

Art and cultural historian **Sarah Lewis** leads a gripping exploration of the role of art in shaping history, and how it might yet transform the future. A professor at Harvard University, Lewis' recent book *The Unseen Truth* confronts the falsehoods that have upheld systemic inequality in the United States, offering a razor-sharp reassessment of the nation's racial regime.

Visual Art

At Talbot Rice Gallery, Egyptian artist **Wael Shawky** presents a striking solo exhibition exposing the falsehoods of colonial histories. This landmark exhibition includes *Drama 1882,* an operatic film interrogating the 1882 Urabi revolution, sculptures and drawings. It also pays tribute to David Talbot Rice – the Byzantine and Islamic art historian who gave the gallery its name 50 years ago – bridging past and present.

– ENDS –

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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 International 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 International 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.**

Edinburgh International Festival's Discovery and Participation Programme
The International Festival connects with thousands of people around Edinburgh, from primary school pupils to emerging artists, through its year-round bespoke Discovery and Participation programmes. Underpinning the International Festival is an ambition to create a growing social impact through the performing arts, enabling enriching connections between the people and communities of Scotland with core artforms as well as the artists welcomed on stage.

In 2025, for the first time the International Festival has established a Youth Collective, inviting fifteen young people from across Edinburgh to co-create the youth experience of the 2025 Festival. Offered for the first time as part of the International Festival, an adaptation of flagship music workshop**, Art of Listening**, welcomes families to discover the joy of active listening together in an experience which has been hugely popular with Edinburgh's primary schools for 25 years.

This summer will also see flagship projects that bring groups into the heart of August's performances, such as a Youth Takeover Day for senior pupils from across Edinburgh, Culture Clubs for community groups, and pop-up performances in healthcare settings, working with the NHS Lothian Charity, extending the joy of the International Festival beyond concert hall and theatres, into local communities. The International Festival's multi-year Community Connections Hub partnership with **Space @ Broomhouse Hub** continues, creating work experience opportunities for young people, co-curated projects and inviting artists including Aga Khan Masters, London Symphony Orchestra and Scottish Ballet to connect with the Broomhouse community.

Secondary school pupils are invited to performances and activities during August across music, theatre, opera and dance in the Discover series, an annual commitment to creating pathways to each artform and foster a lifelong love of the arts. In 2025 the International Festival is working with a range of companies and organisations to support this work, connecting with a range of performances including *Orpheus and Eurydice, Faustus in Africa!, Mary, Queen of Scots* and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

See www.eif.co.uk/social-impact for more information.

Creative Scotland
Creative Scotland is the public body that supports culture and creativity across all parts of Scotland, distributing funding provided by the Scottish Government and The National Lottery, which, now in its 30th year, has supported over 14,600 projects with more than £501.9 million in funding through Creative Scotland and its predecessor, the Scottish Arts Council. Further information at creativescotland.com. Follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Learn more about the value of art and creativity in Scotland and join in at www.ourcreativevoice.scot.