Edinburgh International Festival Unites Artists and Audiences in Search of Truth as Festival Launches

Festival Director Nicola Benedetti and *Make It Happen's* Brian Cox, photo by Jess Shurte

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2025 FESTIVAL PROGRAMME RUNS FROM 1–24 AUGUST 2025

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- The **2025 Edinburgh International Festival** begins tomorrow with the first of more than 133 performances: the ultimate destination to experience world-class artists across music, theatre, opera and dance in creative and unconventional ways in Edinburgh this August.

- Exploring the theme **The Truth We Seek,** more than **2,000 internationally renowned artists from across 42 nations,** including a third of artists based in Scotland, will perform

- Upcoming highlights include: the world premiere of theatre blockbuster *Make It Happen* from **James Graham,** monumental 8-hour choral work *The Veil of the*

Temple, an Australian reimagining of opera *Orpheus and Eurydice* featuring acrobatics, and the Scottish premiere of **Nederlands Dans Theater, Simon McBurney** and **Crystal Pite's** *Figures in Extinction.*

- To ensure that cost isn't a barrier to cultural discovery, **half the tickets for the 2025 International Festival will be sold at £30 or less,** and **£10 tickets** have been made available for every performance across the programme. Tickets can be purchased from www.eif.co.uk.

31 July, Edinburgh: Tomorrow the curtain rises on the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival, welcoming over 2000 artists from 42 countries to Edinburgh for a 24-day global celebration of world-class performing arts.

The third year under Festival Director and celebrated Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti,** this year's International Festival welcomes audiences to explore opera, music, theatre and dance through the lens of the theme **The Truth We Seek,** a journey into the elusive nature of truth in our personal and public lives.

This year's programme invites audiences to experience bold, thought-provoking performances in fresh and unconventional ways. The opening weekend features large-scale participatory events *The Big Singalong* and *The Ceilidh Sessions,* celebrating the collective joy of singing and dancing outdoors in Princes Street Gardens, set against the iconic backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

Elsewhere, the historic Old College Quad becomes the stage for the world premiere of *Dance People*, an outdoor dance performance, and a classic opera is reimagined with a twist in *Orpheus and Eurydice,* bringing together world-class musicians and performers with breathtaking acrobatics from Australia's Circa.

The 2025 programme also opens up barriers to cultural discovery: more than 50,000 tickets are priced at £30 or less, £10 Affordable Tickets have been made available to all performances, and wide-reaching initiatives offer free tickets to NHS workers, young people and community groups to a range of Festival performances.

Stand-out performances across the International Festival include:

Make It Happen (1–9 August, Festival Theatre)
The world premiere of a gripping new drama by **James Graham,** tackling the 2008 financial crisis in Edinburgh. Starring **Brian Cox** as Adam Smith and **Sandy Grierson** as Fred Goodwin, this timely co-production with the **National Theatre of Scotland** and **Dundee Rep** reframes the collapse of global markets through a distinctly Scottish lens.

Opening Concert: The Veil of the Temple (2 August, Usher Hall)
A spiritual epic: over 250 singers from the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus, Monteverdi Choir** and **National Youth Choir of Scotland** perform John Tavener's *The Veil of the Temple* in its complete eight-hour form with the audience seated on beanbags. This year also marks the first performance in the Festival Chorus's 60th anniversary year.

Dance People (7–10 August, Old College Quad)
Lebanese choreographer **Omar Rajeh** and **Maqamat** company present an open-air activation of dance, movement and activism. Performed outdoors in the heart of the city, it dissolves the lines between performance and real life.

Orpheus and Eurydice (13-16 August, Edinburgh Playhouse)
A highlight of the 2025 Festival's opera programme, a fully staged Australian reimagining of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* fuses together circus, acrobatics and world-class opera, in its European premiere.

Figures in Extinction (22-24 August, Festival Theatre)
Nederlands Dans Theater present the Scottish Premiere of *Figures in Extinction* in collaboration with **Crystal Pite** and **Simon McBurney**, confronting the hard truths about humanity's impact on the world and art's meaning in the face of mass destruction.

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 and informal performance space, including Up Late gigs from **Alabaster DePlume** (8 August) and **Kathryn Joseph** (9 August), and an interactive concert from **Hanni Liang** (7 August) inviting audience members to share their dreams, with a live response created on the piano.

Events for families include **Art of Listening for Families** interactive workshops (4-9 August, Church Hill Theatre Studio), **The Ceilidh Sessions** (4 August, Ross Bandstand) and **NYO2's Family Concert** (4 August, Usher Hall).

Residencies bring **London Symphony Orchestra**, Poland's **NFM Leopoldinum** and Carnegie Hall's **National Youth Orchestra 2** to Edinburgh for an extended, more sustainable stay that features multiple performances and community engagement. Highlight performances include NYO2's **Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony,** NFM with **Bizet's Carmen Suite** and **Beethoven and Shostakovich** from the LSO, presented with insight from **Sir Antonio Pappano** and Festival Director Nicola Benedetti.

Intimate morning recitals at The Queen's Hall return with artists including **María Dueñas, Mark Simpson and Richard Uttley** and **Bomsori Kim and Thomas Hoppe** and spectacular evening orchestral concerts at Usher Hall with **NCPA Orchestra from Beijing and pianist Bruce Liu,** the **Monteverdi Choir** and the **Budapest Festival Orchestra.**

Edinburgh International Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti said: *"This year's International Festival is a bold invitation to question the world around us – to seek, challenge and reflect on truth through the extraordinary lens of live performance. We're honoured to welcome artists and audiences from across the globe to Edinburgh, and we remain deeply committed to making that experience more accessible than ever. Whether you're here for an intimate recital, a powerful play, a mass singalong or an eight-hour choral epic, you'll encounter connection, curiosity, and the power of great art to shift perspectives. This year's Festival offers the possibility of truly transformational encounters and I look forward to sharing this with you.*

Councillor Margaret Graham, Culture and Communities Convener said: "*Each year the International Festival offers a real variety of innovative and striking art and performance. 2025 is no different, with the programme encouraging Deep Thinkers, Social Butterflies, The Curious and Romantics. The range, from outdoor ceilidhs to epic opera, means there is truly something for everyone, bringing together world class performers from around the globe and here in Scotland. There are several different price options that will let even more people discover the magic of the International Festival too. These include Young Musician's Pass, Tickets for Good and substantial discounts for art workers and under 30s."*

Multi-Artform Manager at Creative Scotland, Lorna Duguid, said: *"The Edinburgh International Festival continues to be a beacon for artistic excellence and cultural exchange, bringing the world to Scotland and showcasing Scotland to the world. This year's theme, The Truth We Seek, speaks powerfully to the times we live in- inviting artists and audiences alike to explore, question and connect through extraordinary performances. With a third of this year's programme featuring artists based in Scotland and an unwavering commitment to accessibility, the International Festival exemplifies how world-class culture can be both globally relevant and locally rooted."*

Tickets to world-class performances across a hand-picked programme of music, theatre, opera and dance at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2025 are available at 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 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 .**

Support the Edinburgh International Festival
As a charity, the Festival relies on support from members, donors, funders and partners to fulfil our mission and vision. Membership starts from £60 and includes perks such as priority booking, plus access to backstage tours and rehearsals during the Festival. For more information visit **www.eif.co.uk/membership.**

About Creative Scotland
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