EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Audiences Called to ‘All Rise’ in Edinburgh International Festival with America in the Spotlight

Festival Director Nicola Benedetti Launches the 2026 Programme Themed 'All Rise', photo: Andrew Perry

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7–30 AUGUST 2026
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11 March, Edinburgh: Running from **7–30 August 2026**, this year’s Edinburgh International Festival presents **24 days of world-class performances** selected for their **artistic and cultural resonance** across opera, theatre, music and dance**.**

The 2026 programme is centred on the theme **All Rise,** a rallying cry encompassing collaboration, resilience and ascendance. Marking the **250th anniversary of American independence**, the 2026 programme examines the ideas and impact of the USA with the Festival’s **largest-ever representation of American artists**. It explores recurring themes of freedom, ingenuity, prejudice, and hypocrisy, alongside the creative achievements made possible by the friction and energy of its cultural melting pot.

Spanning 147 performances from artists across 44 countries, including five world premieres and ten works

commissioned by the International Festival, violin virtuoso **Nicola Benedetti's** fourth programme as Festival Director brings together a handpicked programme of some of the greatest artists in their fields. The Festival is shaped as a space for conversation and reflection, where art meets dialogue, with seven post-show talks, two exhibitions, and a dedicated Global Ideas Stage offering deeper opportunities to unpack the themes shaping the world today.

Programme highlights include:

- The International Festival's first-ever jazz ensemble residency, from **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra,** marks an historic moment as **Wynton Marsalis** prepares to step down after four decades as its founding artistic director. The residency launches with Marsalis's symphony *All Rise*, a monumental Opening Concert with over 200 performers onstage, which has inspired this year's Festival theme; Duke Ellington's groundbreaking *Black, Brown and Beige;* and a world exclusive collaboration with piano virtuoso **Yuja Wang**, performing new arrangements by the Orchestra and Wynton Marsalis. A free community-led event in Princes Street Gardens is also inspired by the Festival theme.

- Two of the world's pre-eminent symphony orchestras are also in residence for extended stays, deepening their connection with Edinburgh: the legendary **Berliner Philharmoniker** with conductor **Kirill Petrenko** and soloist **Augustin Hadelich,** and the **Los Angeles Philharmonic**, under the baton of **Gustavo Dudamel** in his final year and tour as the orchestra's Music & Artistic Director.

- The newly renovated King's Theatre reopens with two productions offering incisive reflections on America: **Internationaal Theater Amsterdam**'s epic five-hour staging of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America,* the epoch-defining work of the AIDS crisis, and **Geoff Sobelle**'s *Clown Show*, a darkly satirical portrait of the modern American Dream.

- Opera showcasing artists working at the height of their craft, including two contrasting works: the world premiere of **Missy Mazzoli** and **Royce Vavrek**'s *The Galloping Cure* confronting the global opioid crisis, performed by **Scottish Opera** and conducted by **Stuart Stratford**; the UK production premiere of Verdi's *A Masked Ball* from **Zurich Opera House,** set in America's opulent Gilded Age; and operas in concert *Don Giovanni* (Mozart) from the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and **Chorus** with conductor **Maxim Emelyanychev** and *Elektra* (Strauss) from the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** with conductor **Karina Canellakis,** each featuring internationally acclaimed soloists including **Nina Stemme** and **Louise Alder**.

- A first-time theatrical collaboration between award-winning Brazilian director **Christiane Jatahy** and **Wagner Moura** (recent Golden Globe winner and Oscar-nominated actor) in *A Trial – after An Enemy of the People,* a modern-day courtroom continuation of Henrik Ibsen's classic. *A Trial* also marks the first chapter in a historic three-year commissioning collaboration between Edinburgh International Festival, Holland Festival and Festival d'Avignon.

- Theatre that foregrounds themes of resilience, exile and belonging, including **Khashabi Theatre'**s retelling of epic poem '*Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah'*, **Jaha Koo**'s *Haribo Kimchi* set in a Korean snack bar, **Mario Banushi**'s visually stunning *Taverna Miresia – Mario, Bella, Anastasia,* and the UK premiere of **Olympique Dramatique's** innovative *[seagull]*, an adaptation of Chekhov in Flemish Sign Language.

- **San Francisco Ballet**'s return to the International Festival for the first time in over 20 years with European premiere *Mere Mortals,* a bold new full-company work from Canadian-American choreographer **Aszure Barton.** Reimagining the Greek myth of Pandora's Box through humanity's

complex relationship with AI, composer and electronic musician **Floating Points** performs his original score live with the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra.**

- Compelling dance works including the UK premiere of *Ihsane* from double Olivier Award-winning choreographer **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui,** exploring how the world changes in a never-ending cycle of destruction and rebirth, whilst **Groupwork**'s *When Prophecy Fails* delves into collective belief through the psychology of a 1954 UFO doomsday cult and **Dan Daw**'s *EXXY* reclaims space for disabled artists.

- World-class morning concerts at The Queen's Hall, launching with a new commission of *Passion of Mary Magdalene* from leading baroque ensemble **Dunedin Consort,** and featuring performances from artists including **Vilde Frang, Sean Shibe** and **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** and **Makoto Ozone** with the **Kleio** Quartet, and a series of concerts in tribute to the late Alfred Brendel. An evening performance in The Queen's Hall sees a world premiere collaboration between Scottish smallpipes player **Brìghde Chaimbeul** and **Scottish Ensemble.**

- A wider orchestral programme that stretches the globe to welcome world-class performers to Edinburgh: **Orchestre symphonique de Montréal** performs two concerts with conductor and music director, **Rafael Payare; Jordi Savall, Hespèrion XXI, La Capella Reial de Catalunya** and **Tembembe Ensamble Continuo** honour the millions of victims of the transatlantic slave trade in *A Sea of Music*; and the trailblazing **National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America** returns as part of a three-year collaboration with Carnegie Hall. Informal beanbag concerts return to the Usher Hall, featuring a Festival debut from the **Sinfonia of London** with the music of Hollywood's Golden Age and a Brass Fanfare tribute to the late inspirational trumpeter **John Wallace.**

- From Scotland, the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** and **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** take on Mahler's epic *Das klagende Lied* led by **Sir Donald Runnicles,** and the **Colin Currie Group** celebrates the work of **Steve Reich**, including a world premiere of Festival co-commission *In All Your Ways*.

- Intimate, vibrant performances from artists crossing continents and genres filling The Hub, the Festival's home on the Royal Mile, including an expanded number of spontaneous Up Late sessions curated by **Mark O'Connor, Gustavo Dudamel, Donald Shaw** and **Nicola Benedetti.** Further performances include musicians from the **Aga Khan Music Programme,** Senegalese dance band **Orchestra Baobab,** Mercury Prize-shortlisted Glasgow group **corto.alto** and contemporary Celtic musicians **Gnoss, RÓIS,** and **Simon Thoumire**, as well as *Routes to Roots,* a project led by **Catriona Price** in collaboration with Argentinian ensemble **El Guapo.**

- Events for families include the Scottish premiere of *Hostile*, a one-man Spaghetti Western from French theatre company **Bakélite,** a Family Concert from the inspirational **Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA)** alongside their Scottish peers **Big Noise**, conducted by **Gustavo Dudamel,** and the International Festival's interactive workshops for children and families, the **Art of Listening,** in Space @ The Broomhouse Hub.

- In visual art and talks, the first international exhibition of Alabama's **The Legacy Museum** presents *The Legacy of Slavery* in the Playfair Library, charting the history of racial injustice in America as well as Scotland's links to slavery, while British sculpture artist **Anne Hardy** transforms Talbot Rice Gallery with a site-specific solo exhibition turning the iconic Georgian Gallery into an immersive 'found object'. *The Global Ideas Stage* curated and hosted by Harvard University professor **Sarah Lewis** and **Nicola Benedetti** promises a bold new form of public discourse with world-leading thinkers and cultural icons live on stage at the newly-refurbished King's Theatre. A series of illuminating post-show talks with creative teams complements seven productions in the opera and theatre programme.

With a continued commitment to ensure that cost is not a barrier to cultural discovery, **over 50,000 tickets** for

the 2026 International Festival will be available for **£30 or less**, including **£10 'give it a go' tickets** for all events in the programme, encouraging audiences to try something new. Thousands of free tickets through the Young Musicians Pass for 8–18-year-olds and Tickets for Good for NHS staff, charity workers and low-income benefit recipients, will also be available across the programme.

Following the success of the Festival's first Dementia-Friendly concert in 2025, this year two concerts will offer performances designed for people with dementia, alongside their caregivers, family and friends. Continuing the Festival's commitment to accessibility, the wider programme also features 43 accessible performances, including the highest number of captioned performances to date, at 21. The updated free Access Pass continues to provide a tailored Festival experience for anybody needing additional support, by enabling members to share their access information in more detail.

The 2026 edition of the Edinburgh International Festival takes place from **7–30 August 2026.** General booking opens on Thursday 26 March, with tickets available to members and supporters from Thursday 19 March. To become a member, or sign up to our mailing list for more details, visit www.eif.co.uk.

Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director, Edinburgh International Festival said**:**
"Our 2026 Edinburgh International Festival is an invitation to All Rise. It's a rallying cry to artists and audiences to stand with us, in our belief that through artistic endeavour we will see each other more truthfully and more tolerantly. Marking 250 years since the Declaration of Independence, we put America firmly in the spotlight. A nation whose ideals of freedom sit alongside deep hypocrisy, we are all drawn to its extreme possibilities because they reflect the aspirations and shortcomings we recognise in ourselves. The American story is filled with innovation and ingenuity, perseverance and prejudice – tensions that have fuelled some of the most extraordinary artistic achievements in history."

"This year's programme brings together over 2,000 artists across opera, music, theatre and dance and through their voices we will confront complexity with curiosity and openness. At moments of uncertainty, the arts offers a space to gather, to question and to imagine differently. Join us this August as we rise together – through the dark, the dazzling, the challenging and the transformative. In doing so, we celebrate not only artistic excellence, but the resilience and flourishing of the human spirit."

Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said**:**
"The Edinburgh International Festival is an unparalleled celebration of the performing arts and an annual meeting point for peoples of all nations. Committed to virtuosity and originality, the International Festival presents some of the finest performers and ensembles from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre. The Scottish Government is proud to support one of the most significant annual fixtures in the global cultural calendar through multi-year funding from Creative Scotland and the Festival EXPO Fund."

Dana MacLeod, Executive Director of Arts, Communities and Inclusion at Creative Scotland said:
"Edinburgh International Festival offers an experience to see work of significant scale and ambition, a driving force behind the magnetic energy of the August festivals. This truly international programme of world-class artists alongside homegrown talent creates a powerful channel for international ideas and positions the value of global connection at its core. Creative Scotland is pleased to support the festival which brings joy to the city and a warm welcome to our international visitors."

Culture and Communities Convener Margaret Graham said**:**
"The International Festival is renowned for showcasing bold, world-class art, and 2026 promises to be one of its most exciting years yet. From internationally celebrated artists to brilliant new voices, the programme is packed with another season of unforgettable performances. There truly is something for everyone to enjoy, and

I'm delighted that so many people will be able to share in the magic."

Further programme information by genre:

Opera

The Galloping Cure is **Scottish Opera** and **Opera Ventures Productions'** bold new opera for the opioid age, in a haunting allegory for a crisis that has become a worldwide epidemic. **Missy Mazzoli, Royce Vavrek** and **Tom Morris** join forces again following their International Festival hit *Breaking the Waves* (2019), with a visually stunning and emotionally gripping contemporary fable evoking a darkly funny and devastating vision of a crumbling society. Mazzoli weaves club beats into her richly textured score, brought to life by conductor **Stuart Stratford** and **The Orchestra of Scottish Opera.**

The UK premiere of **Zurich Opera House**'s production of Giuseppe Verdi's *A Masked Ball* comes to the Festival Theatre as a fully staged tragicomic opera. Verdi's exquisite music comes to life with **Gianandrea Noseda** conducting the **Orchestra of the Zurich Opera House.** Noseda's passionate conducting style is perfectly suited for the high-stakes drama central to *A Masked Ball,* which director **Adele Thomas** transports to the opulent American Gilded Age. Two stellar casts alternate between performances, with ill-fated lovers Riccardo and Amelia played by **Stephen Costello** and **Elena Stikhina** (26 and 30 August), and **Piero Pretti** and **Erika Grimaldi** (27 and 29 August).

Scottish companies lead the charge in two thrilling operas in concert at the Usher Hall. **Maxim Emelyanychev** conducts the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and **Chorus** and a brilliant cast in the fourth of their acclaimed series of Mozart operas in concert at the Festival with *Don Giovanni,* Mozart's great opera of seduction, trickery and retribution; and **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** perform Richard Strauss's audacious opera, *Elektra*, under the direction of **Karina Canellakis.** Dramatic soprano **Iréne Theorin** leads an exceptional cast in the title role as Greek tragedy meets modern psychology.

Opera productions at the 2026 International Festival are presented as part of the Anderson Opera Series, made possible by James and Morag Anderson, which allows the Festival to bring internationally acclaimed opera to Edinburgh and ensures these unmissable performances are accessible to the widest possible audience.

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

Classical Music

World-leading orchestras and artists from across the globe showcase their outstanding musicianship across 23 spellbinding concerts at Usher Hall and 21 intimate recitals at The Queen's Hall.

In 2026, the International Festival's sustainable residency model returns with three of the world's most exceptional orchestras, allowing audiences to enjoy their work and communities to engage with artists for an extended period.

The **Berliner Philharmoniker** returns to the International Festival for the first time in 20 years, with Chief Conductor **Kirill Petrenko** leading two outstanding concerts. The residency programme features Beethoven's much-loved Violin Concerto with Grammy Award-winning **Augustin Hadelich** as soloist, alongside music by Scriabin, Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony and Elgar's beloved *Enigma Variations*. Members of the Berliner Philharmoniker also appear at The Queen's Hall, performing soulful works by Fibich and Brahms, followed by a playful sextet from Dohnányi, in an intimate concert during the Festival's closing weekend.

The world's premier big band ensemble, **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis**, come to

Edinburgh for the International Festival's first-ever jazz ensemble residency. The first of four concerts at the Usher Hall, this year's **Opening Concert** sees 200 performers take to the stage for trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis**'s monumental 12-movement symphony, *All Rise*. Joined by the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**, the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** and the **Jason Max Ferdinand Singers,** the ensemble trace a journey from classical to jazz and blues, via a New Orleans funeral and the rhythms of a train, conducted by **James Gaffigan.**

Three other concerts include a powerful account of Black life in America with Duke Ellington's symphony *Black, Brown and Beige,* with the Orchestra joined by singer **Ekep Nkwelle,** and a special International Festival commission and world exclusive collaboration from classical superstar pianist **Yuja Wang,** with two concerts of repertoire selected by Wang and Marsalis, specially arranged for Wang's charismatic artistry and the jazz orchestra's spontaneity and flair.

A free community-led event in Princes Street Gardens invites audiences to discover pop-up performances throughout the park. Music and dance from across Scotland and the US feature in this collaborative event, *Together We Rise,* inspired by the Festival's 2026 theme, All Rise. The event culminates in a collective performance inspired by the final movement of **Wynton Marsalis'**s *All Rise* symphony. Presented in collaboration with the **Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival,** with more details to be announced.

LA Phil returns to the Festival for an exhilarating programme with **Gustavo Dudamel**, in his 17th and final year as their Music Director. Beethoven's *Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7* are paired with the UK premiere of Gabriela Ortiz's Grammy Award-winning ballet score, *Revolución diamantina*, and a tribute to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Thomas Adès's *Inferno*, in two exceptional concerts at Usher Hall. The final concert sees **YOLA**, LA Phil's youth orchestra, and Scotland's **Big Noise** come together in the Family Concert, an introduction to classical music perfect for children from the age of 7–11 and their grown-ups.

Travelling from Canada, **Orchestre symphonique de Montréal** performs two concerts under the baton of Music Director **Rafael Payare.** Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's rarely performed cantata trilogy *The Song of Hiawatha* is brought to life alongside the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus,** with an introductory talk from Black British classical music specialist **Uchenna Ngwe.** Full of variety, their second concert sees Indigenous Canadian sopranos **Emma Pennell** and **Elisabeth St-Gelais** join the orchestra for two powerful OSM commissions that pay tribute to Canada's Indigenous communities, followed by music from Gabriela Ortiz, written for (and performed by) soloist **Alisa Weilerstein**, and Strauss's vivid autobiography, *Ein Heldenleben*.

Bach to Bach celebrates the work of prolific composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Celebrated cellist **Alisa Weilerstein** rises to the feat of performing all six of the *Cello Suites* in a single concert; Icelandic pianist **Víkingur Ólafsson** plays selected Bach keyboard works alongside Beethoven's Sonata Op.109 from Olafsson's recent recording; and participatory event *Come and Sing Bach Chorales* sees audiences learn and perform works from Bach, guided by Edinburgh Festival Chorus Director **James Grossmith**.

Brass players from three of Scotland's top orchestras, the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**, **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**, and **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** join forces with **The Wallace Collection, The Cooperation Band, St Andrews Music Participation (StAMP)** and **RCS Junior Conservatoire** in a fond tribute to The Wallace Collection's late founder, inspirational trumpeter John Wallace. The family-friendly beanbag concert includes movements from Wallace's *Symphony,* inspired by Wallace's native Fife, and Elgar Howarth's arrangement of Modest Mussorgsky's atmospheric *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

The popular beanbag concert series continues with the **Sinfonia of London**'s Festival debut, conducted by **John Wilson,** with classics from the Golden Age of Hollywood in a morning and evening concert; 2026 Ernst

von Siemens Music Prize winner **Jordi Savall** and the **Hespèrion XXI** ensemble speak to the cultural legacy of migration in *A Sea of Music,* with **La Capella Reial de Catalunya** and **Tembembe Ensamble Continuo**; and the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** joined by singers from the **Rising Stars** mentorship scheme perform a programme of American music from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Also in the Usher Hall, the **National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America** plays works by Gershwin and Bartók led by one of the most in-demand conductors of her generation, **Karina Canellakis,** with virtuoso piano soloist **Kirill Gerstein;** the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** performs Mahler's epic cantata *Das klagende Lied* (*The Song of Lamentation*) with the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** and soloists **Kathleen O'Mara**, **Catriona Morison**, **John Findon** and **Nicholas Brownlee**, conducted by their former Chief Conductor **Sir Donald Runnicles**; and acclaimed percussionist **Colin Currie** is joined by a hand-picked ensemble to perform the music of pioneering minimalist Steve Reich, including a world premiere and Festival co-commission *In All Your Ways*.

In The Queen's Hall, the series opens with **Dunedin Consort** and baroque specialist **John Butt** unveiling the Scottish premiere of *Passion of Mary Magdalene,* composed for the group by **Tansy Davies** and sung by award-winning soprano **Anna Dennis.**

Three recitals given in memory of pianist, composer and mentor **Alfred Brendel** highlight composers close to his heart. Pianists **Steven Osborne, Paul Lewis** and **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** bring together works by Schubert, Mozart, and Beethoven with contemporary gems from Sir James MacMillan and Judith Weir, alongside miniatures by Ligeti and György Kurtág to pay tribute.

Recital performances from duo partners see mezzo-soprano **Beth Taylor** and pianist **Hamish Brown** perform a concert exploring the sea and iconic female figures from myths; tenor **Lawrence Brownlee** and pianist **Iain Burnside** present an imaginative recital of Italian and American songs; and soprano **Julie Roset** joins with pianist **Susan Manoff** in a selection of songs from the French Belle Époque and beyond.

Following their Festival debut in this year's Opening Concert: *All Rise,* the **Jason Max Ferdinand Singers** performs a recital of inventive arrangements of spirituals, folk songs and well-known hymns, reflecting their ethos of championing Black excellence through an eclectic range of choral literature. Also making a Festival debut, Scottish guitarist **Sean Shibe** brings together a programme of Spanish and British music from across five centuries.

Also in The Queen's Hall, two dementia-friendly concerts are designed especially for people living with dementia. Audiences can enjoy familiar music in a relaxed environment, alongside their caregivers, family and friends, performed by the **Scottish Rising Stars of Jazz** cohort with presenter **Lucy Drever.**

In an evening performance, trailblazing Scottish smallpipes player **Brìghde Chaimbeul** takes a creative approach to the Scottish Gaelic music tradition, alongside **Scottish Ensemble** and filmmaker **Jonny Ashworth,** blending new and traditional tunes, electronic sound and bewitching footage of Scottish landscapes, co-commissioned by the International Festival and Eden Court.

Further performances from world-class artists and ensembles include **Vilde Frang** and **Friends, The Gesualdo Six**, the **Gringolts Quartet**, the **Pavel Haas Quartet**, the **Kleio Quartet** with **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** and **Makoto Ozone,** the **Venice Baroque Orchestra, Rising Stars of Voice** with **Louise Adler** and **James Baillieu**, and the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra's Wind Soloists** with **Maxim Emelyanychev.**

The International Festival's **Rising Stars programme** continues into its fourth year, in an ongoing commitment

to creating year-round pathways for emerging musical talent. Providing budding musicians with access to world-class training, networking and development opportunities, there are **27 International Festival Rising Stars** this year across strings, voice and for the first time ever, jazz, who will take part in the mentorship scheme leading up to performances on an international stage.

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

A consistent sell-out event, *First Night at The Hub* sees Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti** joined by musicians from across the Festival for a late-night surprise line-up. This year, two more evenings are curated by world-leading musicians: *Up Late with Mark O'Connor and Gustavo Dudamel,* and *Up Late with Donald Shaw*.

Classical and Jazz Jam nights also return after the success of 2025's innovative concert formats, putting the choice of repertoire in the hands of the audience. This year's **Rising Stars of Strings** join Festival Director **Nicola Benedetti** for the Classical Jam, while pianist **Joe Webb** and drummer **Domo Branch** lead the Jazz Jam with the **Rising Stars of Jazz** and five guest jazz artists.

Contemporary and Traditional Music

2026's contemporary music programme brings music from across the globe and across the folk, electronic, classical and jazz music genres to the Festival's home on the Royal Mile, Gothic Revival building The Hub. A welcome drink is included in The Hub's cosy bar.

Mercury Prize-nominated Scottish jazz artist **corto.alto** performs an energetic gig, joined by a collective of outstanding musicians. Formally trained at the Royal -Conservatoire of Scotland and now praised for making jazz popular with Gen Z audiences, his music fizzes with experiments in jazz, electronic music and club culture.

Orchestra Baobab showcases the Cuban and African sound fusion that cemented their status as Senegal's most popular band. Following their 2001 reunion, 2026 marks the release of their new album, *Made in Senegal*, a vibrant celebration of their homeland.

Visionary saxophonist and composer **Camilla George** has become a key player in the UK jazz renaissance. Known for fusing African and Western music styles in a hypnotising blend of Afrofuturism, hip hop and jazz, George is accompanied by her band for a night of deep groove and improvisation.

Fresh from his 2025 Aga Khan Music Awards win, **Derya Türkan,** master of the kemençe (a three-stringed fiddle) is joined by luminous vocalist **Dilek Türkan** and Aga Khan Master Musicians **Yurdal Tokcan, Basel Rajoub** and **Feras Charestan.** Together, they add a contemporary twist to the sound of 17th-century Turkey.

Also presented by the Aga Khan Master Music Programme, an electrifying, all-female group of **Yasamin Shahhosseini** on oud, **Farah Kaddour** on buzuq and **Senny Camara** on kora sees a rare collaboration called *Beyond Tradition,* where strings cross borders. Each musician, performing together here for the first time, is a powerful advocate for her traditional instrument of choice, integrating their artistic practice with projects supporting marginalised communities. **Senny Camara** also plays with her own ensemble in a separate concert of West African traditional music.

The Hub continues to champion innovative folk music, with musicians from across Scotland and beyond.

Grammy-winning partners onstage and off, **Mark and Maggie O'Connor** celebrate the depth and beauty of American musical genres in an evening of dazzling fiddle tunes, exploring original songs and reimagined

versions of popular Americana tunes.

Scottish violinist and composer **Catriona Price** and Argentinian musicians **El Guapo**'s ambitious project *Routes to Roots* is a genre-defying celebration of making music together across cultures, bringing together artists from Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Malawi, Mongolia, Canada, and Scotland. After her sold-out show in The Hub in 2023, **Catriona Price** leads an evening celebrating friendship and the boundless possibilities of making music together.

RÓIS's experimental sound blends folk music, electronic beats and ancient Irish rituals from her home in County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. From winning Album of the Year and Live Act of The Year at last year's Northern Irish Music Prize to the RTÉ Folk Awards naming her Best Emerging Artist and earning a 2025 Choice Music Prize Irish Artist of the Year nomination, **RÓIS** is a rapidly rising force to watch.

Composer and concertinist **Simon Thoumire**'s compositions for Scots fiddle embody an ongoing dialogue between Scottish folk music and the classical tradition, performed in The Hub with regular collaborator **Patsy Reid** on fiddle and viola and an acclaimed line-up of musicians. A world premiere of Thoumire's clarsach concerto fuses with electronics to explore the sustaining power of cultural heritage.

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

Theatre

Edinburgh International Festival's 2026 theatre programme offers a chance to see leading international artists in the artform, with **three European premieres**, **five UK premieres**, and **three Scottish premieres**.

Opening the 2026 theatre programme, visionary Brazilian director **Christiane Jatahy** returns to the Festival with a radical sequel to Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People,* featuring Golden Globe-winning actor **Wagner Moura.** Transplanting Ibsen's themes to contemporary Brazil, *A Trial – after An Enemy of the People* offers a sharp look at authoritarianism, fake news and public judgement. Jatahy combines audience participation and filmed footage, creating a one-of-a-kind performance each night as 11 people who register before the performance are randomly selected to serve as the jury and play a pivotal role in shaping the end of the play. *A Trial* also marks the first chapter in a historic three-year commissioning partnership between Edinburgh International Festival, Holland Festival and Festival d'Avignon.

Internationaal Theater Amsterdam returns to the International Festival with the UK premiere of their production of *Angels in America*, after their acclaimed stagings of *A Little Life* in 2022 and *Penthesilea* in 2024. An epoch-defining work of American theatre set at the height of the AIDS crisis, playwright Tony Kushner has credited this radical reworking from director **Ivo van Hove** as his favourite version of the play. Taking place on a minimal set accompanied by a David Bowie soundtrack, both parts of the play are combined into one epic performance in the King's Theatre.

Theatre-maker **Geoff Sobelle** brings the European premiere of *Clown Show*, a contemporary portrait of America as a falling-apart circus. Turning his attention to the American Dream, Sobelle performs alongside a small army of clowns and a live band playing an original score. Commissioned by the International Festival, *Clown Show* sees Sobelle return to the Edinburgh stage following his immersive, surprising productions FOOD (2023) and HOME (2018).

Pulitzer Prize finalist **Zora Howard** makes her directorial and European debut in *HANG TIME*, a subversive and deeply moving play that confronts the legacy of racialised violence in America. Set in a haunting liminal space where three Black men reflect on love, loss and interrupted lives, the play sharply juxtaposes the romantic and

the macabre.

Lebanese artist duo **Lina Majdalanie** and **Rabih Mroué** bring together the story of McCarthy era censorship and modern-day repression of free speech, in the UK premiere of *Four Walls and A Roof*. In 1933, German playwright Bertolt Brecht fled Berlin, eventually settling in the United States, where he would be tried by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) for communist activities. Ten years ago, Majdalanie and Mroué emigrated from Beirut to Berlin. Their new play weaves these two stories together, exploring historical and contemporary censorship of free speech, the rise of the far right, and exile.

Breaking centuries of taboo, Rwanda's first all-women drumming ensemble, **Ingoma Nshya**, bring their joyous narrative concert, *Ingoma! A Revolution in Rhythm* to Edinburgh for its UK premiere. Through a rich tapestry of traditional and brand-new African dance, songs and rhythms, founder **Kiki Katese** and Rwandan-Canadian soprano **Ineza Mugisha** celebrate rising together and reclaiming their power through music.

In another UK premiere, Palestinian theatre company **Khashabi Theatre's** *Al-Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah* (*The Epic of Bani Hilal*) reimagines an epic poem with physical theatre and live music. The legendary 14th-century poem, once widespread across the Middle East, is now only performed in Egypt and is at risk of extinction. When **Bashar Murkus** and **Khulood Basel** couldn't find any evidence of a Palestinian version, they chose to merge the myth with the aesthetics of Palestinian folklore and Arab performance styles, creating a unique work informed by extensive research that seeks to ask questions of humanity – from within Palestine and beyond.

Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* takes on new meaning in a Flemish Sign Language reimagining from Belgian company **Olympique Dramatique**. Bringing together a cast of Deaf and hearing actors, with some who have signed since birth, and others beginners, the UK premiere performance of **[seagull]** deftly explores the inner turmoil when understanding and communication prove impossible, revealing new depths to this iconic tragicomedy.

An International Festival debut and Scottish premiere, theatre-maker **Mario Banushi** invites audiences into his family's Albanian restaurant, *Taverna Miresia*, for a visually arresting and surreal exploration of memory and grief. Greek tragedy, ancient Balkan ritual and cinematic imagery blend, underscored by the haunting vocals of Greek singer **Savina Yannatou.** Recently awarded the Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale, Banushi is an emerging artist shaping the future of European theatre.

Scottish premiere *Haribo Kimchi* takes place in a pojangmacha, a late-night South Korean snack bar here populated by a robotic eel, a snail and a gummy bear. Theatre-maker **Jaha Koo** has lived in Europe since 2011 and now often feels like a tourist when he visits Korea. In *Haribo Kimchi,* food and culture are endlessly intertwined. One moment he may cook up a sublime seaweed soup, and the next, reflect on painful racist experiences and his deep longing for home, in a show that zigzags between cultural appreciation and the realities of cultural alienation.

For families, *Hostile* from French company **Bakélite** is a Spaghetti Western adventure starring **Olivier Rannou** as a lone cowboy stranded in the desert. As everyday objects transform around him, the cowboy embarks on a playful journey through saloons, bandit encounters and close escapes, in a visual tale of ingenuity and imagination. Recommended for ages 8+.

Post-show talks with companies and creative teams will take place after many performances. See www.eif.co.uk/theatre for information on individual productions.

Dance

2026's dance programme offers a powerful call to rise together, celebrating the strength of the human spirit

through outstanding work by international and Scottish choreographers.

San Francisco Ballet returns to the Edinburgh International Festival for the first time in over 20 years, with the European premiere of *Mere Mortals*. Visionary Canadian-American choreographer **Aszure Barton** unveils a striking new full-company work, set to an original score by **Floating Points** aka **Sam Shepherd**, performed live with the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**. A reimagining of the Greek myth of Pandora's Box through a 21st-century lens shaped by our relationship with artificial intelligence, *Mere Mortals* is a compelling fusion of classical technique, cutting-edge visuals and electronic sound.

Double Olivier Award-winning choreographer **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui** returns with the UK premiere of *Ihsane*, a powerful dance work exploring grief, connection and the cycles of destruction and rebirth. Performed by dancers from **Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève** and **Eastman**, with live music from Tunisian viola d'amore player **Jasser Haj Youssef,** *Ihsane* honours the cultures of North Africa and the Middle East while confronting cycles of violence and persecution with striking, emotionally charged movement.

Following his International Festival debut in 2025, Australian disabled performer **Dan Daw's** *EXXY* is a bold and triumphant dance-theatre work that asks how we continue to value ourselves when society does not. Joined by three performers who move like him, Daw blends raw honesty, humour and striking stagecraft to explore belonging, ambition and the cost of staying at the top of your game. The performance is followed by a celebratory afterparty across all floors of the newly refurbished King's Theatre.

Award-winning Scottish ensemble **Groupwork**'s *When Prophecy Fails* is a hypnotic physical-theatre work inspired by the true story of the world's first UFO doomsday cult. Set in 1950s America, **Vicki Manderson** and **Finn den Hertog**'s claustrophobic staging combines with **Lewis den Hertog'**s visuals and the near wordless interplay of five actor-dancers to create a thrilling exploration of the crisis that follows the shattering of belief.

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

Talks and Visual Arts

Curated and hosted by **Sarah Lewis,** Professor at Harvard University, and Festival Director Nicola Benedetti, extraordinary global thinkers and cultural leaders join the **Global Ideas Stage** at the newly refurbished King's Theatre for unconventional, convivial conversations inspired by our Festival theme, in collaboration with **Panmure House.**

One of America's premier cultural institutions, The **Legacy Museum** from Montgomery, Alabama presents its first international exhibition, taking place in Edinburgh's Playfair Library. Tracking the tragic history of millions of enslaved Africans who were abducted and trafficked across the Atlantic to the Americas by European powers, this exhibition explores the myth of racial hierarchy that enabled slavery, lynching and segregation.

At the Talbot Rice Gallery, British sculpture artist **Anne Hardy** creates an immersive exhibition which responds to the geography and architecture of the whole gallery. Employing a skilled technological approach, the gallery's lighting and technical elements are synchronised to transform the space into a living, breathing exhibition.

See https://www.eif.co.uk/keynotetalks for more information.

General booking for the 2026 International Festival opens on 26 March, with tickets on-sale earlier to Members and supporters. To become a member or sign up to the Edinburgh International Festival newsletter for the

latest information, go to www.eif.co.uk.

– 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 7–30 August 2026, 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 79 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.

This year, the Festival launched a multi-year brand-building campaign, led by an advert featuring Festival Director Nicola Benedetti and an array of Scottish and international artists. The video gives a flavour of that intense, visceral live experience of the world's greatest artists that only the Edinburgh International Festival can give, and will play in cinemas and TV streaming services as well as online. Watch online here.

Membership at 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, and 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.

New for 2026, two dementia-friendly concerts, developed with the **Beacon Club** at Broomhouse and presented in association with Alzheimer's Scotland, create relaxed, welcoming spaces for people living with dementia, their families and caregivers. Featuring the **Scottish Rising Stars of Jazz** and Discovery and

Participation Associate Artist **Lucy Drever,** these performances combine familiar jazz standards, new sounds, conversation, tea and cake in an informal setting.

This year the Youth Collective, established in 2025, continues to evolve as a cohort of fifteen young people embed youth voices within the Festival. During the year, they take part in a structured skills development programme, and in August's festival they will co-create a Youth Takeover Day, connect with young musicians from the **National Youth Orchestra of America** at Carnegie Hall and foster the experience of international exchange at the heart of the International Festival.

The International Festival's multi-year Community Connections Hub partnership with **Space @ Broomhouse Hub** continues, creating sustained opportunities for skills development with a long-term commitment to supporting young people and ESL speakers, alongside dementia inclusive projects and activity that addresses social isolation

An adaptation of flagship music workshop *Art of Listening* returns during the August festival, this year taking place at Broomhouse to welcome adults and children to discover the joy of active listening together, in a programme that has been inspiring Edinburgh's primary schools for 26 years.

This summer will also see flagship projects that bring artists into the heart of Edinburgh communities, including NHS Festival Sessions, pop-up performances in healthcare settings presented in partnership with **NHS Lothian Charity,** extending the joy of the International Festival beyond concert halls. Culture Clubs will invite local communities to connect with International Festival artists through a community meal and performance, creating meaningful connections through shared cultural experience.

Secondary school pupils are invited to performances and activities across music, theatre, opera and dance through the Discover series, an annual commitment to creating pathways into each artform and fostering a lifelong love of the arts. In 2026, the International Festival is working with a range of companies and organisations to support this work, including **Zurich Opera** and **Groupwork** from Scotland, strengthening connections between world-class international artists and local communities beyond the stage.

Discover Opera will explore Verdi's *A Masked Ball,* touring a potted version to secondary school music classes in June, and inviting pupils to attend the full mainstage performance at the Festival Theatre in August. Through Discover Theatre, pupils studying theatre will attend an exclusive schools' performance of Groupwork's *When Prophecy Fails*, followed by workshops introducing Groupwork's creative practice and inspiring pupils in their own pathways as emerging theatre-makers. 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. Further information at creativescotland.com. Follow Creative Scotland on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.