

# Edinburgh International Festival Presents Free City-Wide Events this August



Princes St Gardens, photo by Gaelle Beri

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**4-27 AUGUST 2023**

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- For the opening weekend of the Festival, **Princes St Gardens** will host a range of free open-air concerts including performances from **over 300 young Scottish musicians**, **GRIT Orchestra** and three national youth companies
- **Charlotte Square Gardens** open to the public for the final weekend of the Festival, in a free-access outdoor musical soundscape of recorded performances from the 2023 programme
- In-conversation, low-cost, events take over **the Scottish Parliament** in a first-time partnership with the **Festival of Politics**
- The Festival's HQ on the **Royal Mile**, The Hub, is open to the public in the daytime, for a programme of free afternoon sessions to deepen engagement with artists and creatives

*28 June 2023, Edinburgh:* A range of 39 free events have today been added to **Edinburgh International Festival's** 2023 programme, the first from incoming Festival Director **Nicola**

**Benedetti.** The free events, and two low-cost in-conversation events, capture the spirit of community and the joy of music making, and join over 300 performances from the world's leading performers of music, theatre and dance, that take over Edinburgh's venues and concert halls from 4-27 August 2023.

An **Opening Fanfare Weekend** taking place from 5-6 August, features brass bands and pipers, rappers and choirs, as over 300 young musicians from Scotland's vibrant homegrown music scene assemble for an energetic weekend of music-making in Princes St Gardens.

On Saturday 5 August, between 12pm – 5pm Scottish youth and amateur ensembles take over three pop-up stages in the gardens, culminating in a final moment of joint music making at the end of the day. Ensembles featured include **Intercultural Youth Scotland, Drake Music Scotland, Tinderbox Collective, Musicians in Exile** and the **Edinburgh Ukrainian Choir 'Oberih'**. All performances on Saturday are free and entry is non-ticketed.

Sunday 6 August sees an epic set from the thrilling **GRIT Orchestra** as well as performances from three National Youth Companies, **The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** and **National Youth Brass Bands of Scotland**. GRIT Orchestra will showcase their unique blend of Celtic and world music traditions and perform tracks from their seminal albums *GRIT* and *Bothy Culture* by the late Martyn Bennett and arranged by Greg Lawson. In a truly memorable manifestation of the first week's theme: community over chaos, the group will also perform a world premiere work **composed for the 2023 Festival**, accompanied by over 100 young people. Performances on Sunday take place between 2pm and 4:30pm are free, with limited tickets available for the seated arena in front of the Ross Bandstand. Full schedule below.

Over at The Hub, the International Festival's home on the Royal Mile, an inaugural programme of afternoon sessions includes free artist conversations, performances and listening experiences.

Designed to deepen the level of experience for audiences and give an insight into aspects of performers' artistic practice, the programme features artists from across the 2023 Festival. The Hub programme is supported by long-standing Festival Partner, The University of Edinburgh. BSL interpretation and live captions will be available across the whole programme of The Hub afternoon talks.

From the 2023 theatre programme, writer **Nat McCleary** and director **Johnny McKnight** of National Theatre of Scotland take us behind the scenes of new Scottish play *Thrown; Life is a Dream* creatives **Nick Ormerod** and **Declan Donnellan** of *Cheek by Jowl* discuss international collaboration in theatre, with Spanish interpreter **Juan Ollero**, an in-conversation with *As Far As Impossible's* director, and director of Festival d'Avignon, **Tiago Rodrigues**, and an afternoon with **Geoff Sobelle**, award-winning theatre artist, clown and creator of immersive work **FOOD**.

From the 2023 music programme, a deep dive into the music and story of Richard Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*, a performance and demonstration of Rachmaninoff's stylings by British-Ukrainian pianist **Alexei Grynyuk**; and a discussion on musical innovation from experimental composer, DJ and producer **Matthew Herbert** around his world premiere album *The Horse* and its fascinating journey uncovering the musical potential within a horse skeleton.

The International Festival also hosts two special events in another new location, the Scottish Parliament, in a first-time partnership with the **Festival of Politics**.

The Debating Chamber will see two In Conversation events featuring two major creatives from the International Festival programme: **Gustavo Dudamel**, one of the world's foremost music conductors, will be joined by **Clare Adamson MSP**, Convener, Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, on Friday 25 August, and the world's premier solo percussionist **Dame Evelyn Glennie OBE** will be in conversation with the Deputy Presiding Officer **Liam McArthur MSP** on Wednesday 9 August. Both artists will discuss their storied careers as well as the key question posed by the International Festival this year: **where do we go from here?** A panel session exploring the future of the arts and culture will also be part of this series, on Thursday 10 August.

Other talks presented in partnership with the Festival of Politics will take place in The Hub and explore principles behind the International Festival's 2023 programme:

**Community over chaos** is discussed by **Nigel Osborne OBE**, composer, teacher and aid-worker pioneering music therapy techniques with war traumatised children, in conversation with **Travis Alabanza**, award-winning writer and performer known for their work surrounding gender, trans identity and race. The talk will be chaired by TV and radio presenter **Gemma Cairney**;

**Hope in the face of adversity** and the power of creativity in adverse circumstances is explored by former Makar, or National Poet of Scotland, **Jackie Kay** and British-Iranian artist **Fari Bradley**, chaired by **Jenny Niven**.

**A perspective that's not one's own** is unpacked by author **Dina Nayeri** and cultural development specialist **Fairouz Nishanova**, chaired by author and journalist **Chitra Ramaswamy**. Nayeri's latest book, 'Who Gets Believed?' is a reckoning with believability in Western culture, beginning with the question 'why are honest asylum seekers dismissed as liars?'. Nishanova is the director of the **Aga Khan Music Programme**, aimed at revitalising musical heritage around the world in societies where Muslims have a significant presence.

On the final weekend of the Festival, the gardens at **Charlotte Square** will be opened to the public as a musical oasis, where a soundscape of recorded music from the 2023 International Festival classical music concerts will play throughout the garden. The soundscape will also feature Beethoven's 9th alongside archival recordings.

From our stages to your home, audiences can also enjoy recorded music from across the 2023 programme on BBC Radio 3. A full schedule of media broadcasts can be found online.

A new series of audio introductions hosted by Nicola Benedetti and BBC Radio's Tom Service will share further insight into music and theatre from the 2023 programme through conversations with creatives involved.

For full information on Edinburgh International Festival's 2023 programme of free and ticketed events, visit [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk).

**Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director, Edinburgh International Festival** said: "*Our free programming sees iconic spaces around Edinburgh come alive with some incredible artists. I'm particularly proud that there are opportunities like this for our audiences and community members to get closer to the artists across our 2023 Festival programme. It's our audiences*

*who play a key part in creating the magic of what takes place on our stages and upholding the wonderful standards of this world-class event. A festival is a place of joy and discovery, and I hope everyone will get involved and come together to experience some of this magic this August."*

**Paul Bush OBE, VisitScotland's Director of Events, said:** "EventScotland is delighted to be supporting Edinburgh International Festival's free-to-attend Opening Fanfare Weekend. The family-friendly event promises audiences an up-close and personal connection to Scotland's vibrant music scene, all against the iconic backdrop of Edinburgh Castle in Princes St Gardens. Having events that appeal to both residents and visitors alike enables us to connect and share memorable experiences while showcasing Scotland as the perfect stage for events. We wish Nicola Benedetti, in her first year as Festival Director, and all of the extended team, performers and audiences a very special Festival filled with discovery and delight."

**– ENDS –**

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For media images – see [here](#)

For the 2023 International Festival trailer – see [here](#)

For b-roll – see [here](#)

For a digital version of the Programme Brochure – see [here](#)

For information about the Edinburgh International Festival's 2023 partnerships – see [here](#)

To request media tickets for any performance during the 2023 Edinburgh International Festival, please complete our online accreditation form. To access the form – see [here](#).

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**About Edinburgh International Festival**

Edinburgh International Festival is a **global celebration of performing arts**, bringing the **finest performers of dance, opera, music and theatre** from around the world to Edinburgh for **three weeks every August**.

The International Festival will take place **4-27 August 2023** and is the first from Festival Director and Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti**. Benedetti's vision for the program is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality of art, for the broadest possible audience. Each year the programme will also be developed around a central question, this year's asks '**where do we go from here?**'.

The International Festival's impact also extends beyond the annual programme, with community learning, engagement and professional development programmes running throughout the year, contributing to the cultural and social life of Edinburgh and Scotland.

For more information visit [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk)

### **2023 International Festival supporters**

The core investment that the Edinburgh International Festival receives from the City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland plays a critical role in ensuring our stability and success. The income we receive through project grants allows us to present work that is often additional to our core programme.

This year, and for the eighth consecutive year, EventScotland will be supporting our Opening Event. Supported by Claire and Mark Urquhart, with Learning & Engagement Partner Baillie Gifford, the Opening Fanfare is inspired by the Festival's Learning & Engagement pillars of supporting young people, fostering talent development, and creating community connections.

This year we are particularly thankful to our Korea in Focus Partner, the Korean Cultural Centre UK, as we celebrate 140 years of diplomatic relations between Korea and the UK, as well as to Sir Ewan and Lady Brown and Flure Grossart for their support of the Hub.

Private funding and support from individuals, the corporate sector, trusts and foundations and the Edinburgh International Festival Endowment Fund is also vitally important in enabling us to present a Festival of scale and quality in 2023, as well as ensuring the success and positive impact of our year-round learning and engagement initiatives. Full details of all 2023 supporters can be found at <https://www.eif.co.uk/support-us>.

### **Edinburgh International Festival's Learning and Engagement Programme**

The International Festival connects with thousands of people around Edinburgh through its year-round bespoke Learning and Engagement programmes, supported by our Learning & Engagement Partner, Baillie Gifford Investment Managers.

The International Festival believes that the arts are for everyone and aims to connect with people of all ages, both locally and internationally, through projects that explore our values of discovery, connection and internationalism at their heart. Striving to ensure global celebration of culture is accessible to all, Learning and Engagement aim to create a variety of year-round projects and opportunities.

This summer will see flagship projects such as Culture Clubs for community groups and our Opera Project for secondary school pupils return to the city. This year the International Festival is partnering with a range of companies and organisations to support this work including Alvin Ailey Company, the London Symphony Orchestra, Imagine, Punchdrunk Enrichment and a range of local and international artists.

See [www.eif.co.uk/learning-and-engagement](http://www.eif.co.uk/learning-and-engagement) for more information.

The Opening Fanfare Weekend is a collaboration between Edinburgh International Festival, We Make Music Scotland, Tinderbox Collective and The Grit Orchestra. Supported by Claire and Mark Urquhart and Event Scotland, with Learning & Engagement Partner Baillie Gifford.

It is inspired by the Festival's Learning & Engagement pillars of supporting young people, fostering talent development, and creating community connections.

### **BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Schedule**

8th Aug, Orion Weiss (Piano Quartet)

9th Aug, Jupiter Ensemble & Iestyn Davies

10th Aug, Novus Quartet  
11th Aug, Compilation of above 3  
15th August Günther Groissböck and Malcolm Martineau  
16th Aug, Emmanuel Ceysson  
17th Aug, Yeol Eum Son  
18th Aug, Compilation of above 3  
22nd Aug, Dunedin Consort  
23rd Aug, Mikhail Pletnev  
24th Aug, Julia Bullock  
26th Aug, Compilation of above 3  
12th Sept, Clara Jumi-Kang  
13th Sept, Castalian String Quartet  
14th Sept, Leif Ove Andnes & Bertrand Chamayou  
15th Sept, Compilation of above 3

### **EventScotland**

EventScotland is working to make Scotland the perfect stage for events by securing and supporting an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events. It provides funding opportunities and access to resources and information to develop the industry.

EventScotland is a team within VisitScotland's Events Directorate, the national tourism organisation, alongside Business Events and Development teams. For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news [visit www.eventscotland.org](http://www.eventscotland.org) or [follow Twitter @EventScotNews](#) and [follow us on LinkedIn](#).

### **Festival of Politics**

The Scottish Parliament is proud to host our annual Festival of Politics, now in its 19th year. The Festival started as an opportunity to allow the people of Scotland to access their Parliament in a fun, engaging and inspiring way. To enjoy music from the Garden Lobby – converted annually into a vibrant Festival Café Bar – or take up a spot in the Debating Chamber to listen to the days' leading authors, politicians or musicians.

Every year we aim to provoke and inspire debate in people of all ages and from all walks of life. Where people can get an opportunity to delve beyond some issues that make the headlines. To hear more about some of the most pressing issues in our society from politicians, journalists, academics and commentators. But most importantly to have their say.

This year's Festival of Politics will be held at The Scottish Parliament between Wednesday 9 to Friday 11 August. Our partnership with the Edinburgh International Festival will run across dates in August and be held in The Scottish Parliament and The Hub.

Tickets can be booked on our website: [www.festivalofpolitics.scot](http://www.festivalofpolitics.scot).