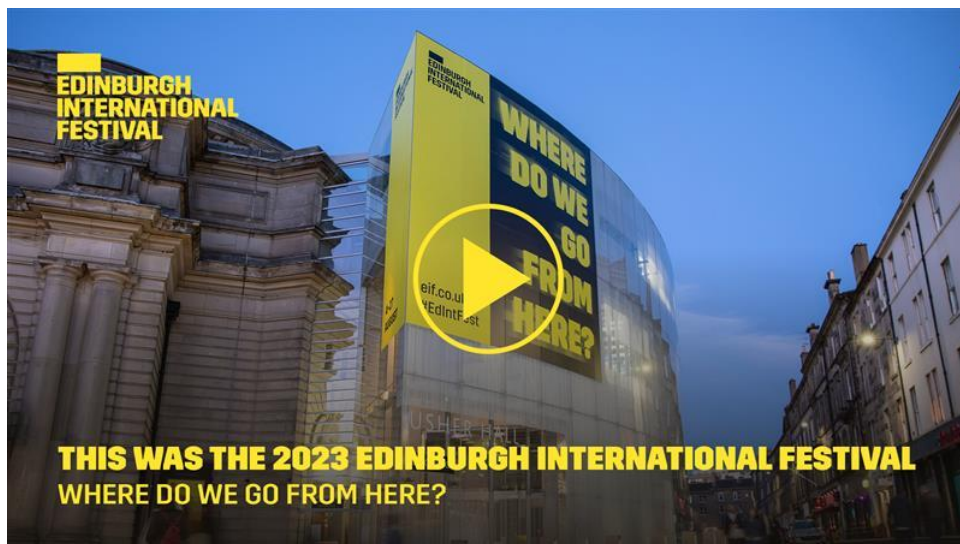


## Nicola Benedetti Delivers Successful First Edinburgh International Festival



- The 2023 Edinburgh International Festival receives great acclaim and offers an **in-depth and high-quality live experience to over 120,000 audience members**, in Nicola Benedetti's first year as Festival Director.
- **Over 32,000 free and discounted tickets** were offered to local communities and people eligible for concessions.
- Benedetti says: *"This year, the Edinburgh International Festival opened its arms to form a dialogue with audiences and artists. We took risks, broke down barriers, and warmly welcomed the world through our doors to provide the deepest level of experience through the highest quality of art."*
- The 2023 International Festival asked audiences, artists and the public to consider the question 'Where do we go from here?', provoking an exchange of cultures and ideas that will set the course for future years.

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**SELECTION OF 2023 FESTIVAL IMAGES** – see [here](#)  
**FESTIVAL SUMMARY VIDEO** – see [here](#)

31 August, Edinburgh: The 2023 **Edinburgh International Festival** has ended on a high, after 24 packed days of events from 2,500 remarkable and diverse artists representing 50 nations.

The programme was characterised by a high quality of art, presenting work from 130 Grammy nominated artists, 33 Grammy Award-winners, 14 Brit Award-winners, 6 Olivier Award-winners and 3 Venice Golden Lions awards. Artists also attracted significant worldwide media attention and positive reviews, with two-thirds of International Festival performances receiving four and five-star reviews.

With an unprecedented emphasis on a deepened audience experience, the 2023 International Festival reimaged how we interact with and appreciate live performance, through audio introductions, contextual demonstrations and discussions before and during performances, and bringing audiences and artists closer together through more informal, intimate performance environments.

**Nicola Benedetti, Festival Director at Edinburgh International Festival** said:

*"I dreamt of a festival that felt truly open and welcoming, creating a shared ownership and pride over the future of our Festival and its profound contribution to Scotland's culture and conversation. The response from artists and audiences has been resoundingly uplifting, filled with a tangible energy pulling us closer together. We asked, 'where do we go from here?' - and we heard from thousands of people, sharing different perspectives from around the world. Now, we are confident in forging our path and deepening next year's conversation together."*

In the 2023 International Festival **120,000 audience members found an in-depth and high-quality live experience** across Edinburgh's theatres, concert halls and venues. It was once again an unmissable destination for Edinburgh visitors looking to experience the highest quality arts and culture, with 13% of bookers being international, an increase of 3% on last year. The International Festival also saw steady attendance from local audiences, with 69% of bookers coming from Scotland.

As part of the vision to broaden audiences, **over 21,000 tickets** were discounted to people eligible for concessions, including D/deaf and disabled people, arts workers, students and audiences aged under 26. **Over 11,000 free tickets** were issued, including over 500 tickets for NHS workers and 631 tickets through the **Young Music Pass** scheme, which gives free tickets to young people to experience the best classical music from around the world. The **£10 on the Day** ticket, available to people eligible for concessions, saw a pick-up of over 4,000 tickets, a 46% increase on last year.

The International Festival continued its year-round community engagement work during August, welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds to experience world-leading artists in locations across the city. **Culture Clubs** returned to communities across Edinburgh, with intergenerational groups invited to enjoy a shared meal and attend a performance, including the first ever BSL Culture Club hosted by Deaf Action. **Pop-up performances** brought music to audiences who otherwise might not have been able to attend, featuring the likes of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, award-winning bassist and composer Endea Owens, and the London Symphony Orchestra who performed for around 1,000 patients, hospital staff and visitors in NHS settings.

Thousands of people attended the Opening Fanfare weekend, an incredible feat of mass music-making, which assembled a diverse community of 500 amateur and professional musicians travelling from across Scotland to participate across two days in Princes Street Gardens.

The International Festival also reached more people than ever through digital channels, with content viewed **4.8 million times** over the course of the 2023 Festival, an increase of 63% from 2022. In addition, 19 concerts were recorded live for broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

The Hub - the International Festival's home at the top of the Royal Mile - was reimagined as a 'festival green room, open to all'. The Hub welcomed thousands of visitors and invited them to collectively respond to the central question: 'where do we go from here?' An expansive programme of free talks and debates, participatory events and intimate concerts from incredible musicians spanning Scottish traditional music, jazz and classical ensembles brought artists and audiences closer than ever before.

**An audience of 600** sat in beanbags surrounded by the Budapest Festival Orchestra – a format inviting audiences to experience both the music and the orchestra from the inside out, with conductor Ivan Fischer offering conversational explanations of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony.

**30 audio introductions** were recorded by Nicola Benedetti with broadcaster Tom Service and artists from across the programme who gave insight and more context into specific performances and experiences. These reached 25,000 people, who listened as they were delivered by text message two hours before a performance. Over 32,000 people read blog articles which added further context.

To help audiences gain a greater appreciation of visiting companies and reduce the amount of travel required for international artists, high-profile artistic residencies included the **London Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of departing conductor Sir Simon Rattle, the **Budapest Festival Orchestra** with Ivan Fischer, and the world-renowned **Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela** reunited with their Music Director **Gustavo Dudamel**.

This year also saw a focus on opportunities for talent development and professional exchange. Twenty-two emerging dancers aged 18-25 from across Scotland had the chance of a lifetime to train with the **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** and perform in *Memoria* at the Festival Theatre. Five pre-professional musicians were also invited to join the Mendelssohn Octet at the Hub, in an audition judged by Festival Director Nicola Benedetti. Plus, twelve Scotland-based dancers participated in a week-long collaboration with international peers performing in **Pina Bausch's *The Rite of Spring*** that brought together 34 dancers from 14 African countries.

**Francesca Hegyi, Chief Executive at Edinburgh International Festival**, said: "*August in Edinburgh is the time when the world's spotlight turns to the Festival City, where residents can mix with their international counterparts and see artists they wouldn't otherwise get the chance to. There has been a new warmth and spirit of inquiry to the Edinburgh International*

*Festival this year and the feedback from audiences, artists and visitors has been nothing short of exceptional."*

**Culture Secretary Angus Robertson**, said:

*"This was a bumper year for Edinburgh's summer festivals, distinguished by a strong contribution from home grown talent, and increased access to events through an expanded programme of community activities. Edinburgh's festivals underline how important culture is to our way of life as well as underlining Scotland's reputation on the international stage. I'd*

*like to thank everyone involved for putting on such a fantastic line-up of performances and events this year."*

**– ENDS –**

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2023 International Festival highlights images – see [here](#)

Festival summary video – available [here](#)

### **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'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)

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