

Edinburgh Mela – more choice than ever before

✘ The Edinburgh Mela has announced its 20th annual programme, for the weekend of 29-31 August 2014 and all the organisers are holding their breaths about the weather. The Mela last year had to be abandoned on Sunday due to high winds, but over 13,000 people had attended the day before.

True to the spirit of the event, there is a huge, eclectic lineup on offer, featuring world-renowned musicians, exciting new dance commissions and a major new piece of music created by rising star Soumik Datta for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

A vibrant, joyous carnival of sounds, sights, music, dance, colours, tastes and aromas from all over the world, the Edinburgh Mela is a festival for the people of the city. Started in 1995 as a celebration of the city's South Asian communities, the Mela has now grown into one of the biggest world music, dance and food festivals in the country: crowds of 30,000 people are expected at the 2014 celebration on Edinburgh's Leith Links, where the Mela has been based since 2010. Mela means 'gathering', and that's exactly what our Mela is: a meeting place where all of the cultures and communities who call Scotland home can mingle, converse and bond over music, dance and wonderful food. The Edinburgh Mela is one of Edinburgh's major festivals, and part of the Edinburgh Festivals collective.

In 2014, organisers will be continuing their efforts to 'green the Mela', with a new and improved waste management plan. As ever, the public are encouraged to leave their cars at home and walk, cycle or use public transport to get to the Mela wherever possible.

Tickets will be available at the [Edinburgh Mela website](#) and in person from the Fringe Box Office from 1pm on 8 July. Day tickets for the Mela on Saturday and Sunday are £4 for 13s and over (children have free entry); tickets for the evening performance of The King of Ghosts are priced at £15 (£12) from the Edinburgh Mela website (links to booking pages for touring venues can also be found there). The Edinburgh Mela is open from 12-9pm on Saturday and Sunday, and the site opens for The King of Ghosts at 7.15 on Friday 29 August.

The Edinburgh Reporter met Chris Purnell the Director of the Mela to see what he is looking forward to, and we were delighted by some music from Soumik Datta at the same time.

Some of the legends helping the Mela celebrate 20 years include **Rise Kagona**, formerly of the world-famous **Bhundu Boys**, 90s ragga icon **Apache Indian**, **Cornel Campbell**, owner of the most famous falsetto in reggae, and the electronica/dub DJ **Gaudi**, who will close the Mela with a revival of the spectacular live show he last presented at the Pyramids of Giza.

Organisers have made a special effort to reach out to the various diverse communities across Edinburgh, with musicians and dance artists drawn from a huge range of countries, including Poland, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Ghana, Jamaica, Bangladesh, China, Gambia, India, Rajasthan, Cuba, Brazil, Spain the Ukraine and Kenya, as well as a strong representation of home-grown talent. It's one of the most diverse, biggest and exciting programmes yet – come on down and join the party!

✘ The festival site will open on the evening of Friday 29 August, with the world premiere of The King of Ghosts, a brand new commission supported by Culture 2014 and the Year of Homecoming, which brings together exciting young sarod virtuoso Soumik Datta and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in a cinematic, musical spectacular. Datta, whose previous collaborators include Nitin Sawhney, Bill Bailey and Beyonce Knowles, draws on the 1969 arthouse film Gupi Gayen, Bagha Bayen by Oscar-winning director Satyajit Ray, pulling together

lush orchestral textures, Indian folk rhythms, projections and electronic beats into a completely new experience. The King of Ghosts will go on to tour Scotland in early September, at the Glasgow Old Fruitmarket (05/09/14), Perth Concert Hall (06/09/14) and Eden Court, Inverness (07/09/14). This is the first time the Mela has toured a commission, and an enormously exciting development.

The Mela proper runs from 12-9pm on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 August, and on the Main Stage, sponsored by Lyca Mobile, there's a strong influence this year, keeping a chilled out party vibe going throughout the festival. Cornel Campbell, owner of the most famous falsetto in reggae and a career that spans over 40 album releases, will be playing a lazy Saturday afternoon set with his new band The Soothsayers. World-famous ragga artist Apache Indian, currently injecting the touring circuit with a new dose of life, will take the Sunday evening slot on the Main Stage by storm, leading into a closing set by the internationally-renowned Italian DJ and musician Gaudi (aka Groovekilla, The Dub Alchemist and Mixmaster Moog). Gaudi, who over the past thirty years has worked across electronica, reggae, dub and world music with artists including Simple Minds, Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Horace Andy and Asian Dub Foundation, will be closing the Mela with his legendary live show, famously performed at the Pyramids of Giza in 2012, with his long-term collaborator, Edinburgh-based beatboxer Danny Ladwa. It's also a far broader programme this year, with Polish folk (with bagpipes) from Wielkopolska, Chinese electronic punk/opera from DaWangGang, award-winning bhangra star Sona Walia, ten-piece Cuban son band Son Yambu, alongside Alaap (commonly known as the godfathers of modern bhangra), and Asian/UK pop stars Rameet, Tasha Tah and SK1.

Over on the Mix Stage, Rise Kagona, the former lead guitarist of the legendary Bhundu Boys and an icon on several continents, who has shared a stage with Madonna and been adored by the likes of John Peel, spikes up Sunday afternoon

with his innovative Jit guitar style. Sunita Khaund Bhuyan infuses Bihu folk music with Celtic fiddle playing, rising star Cynikal mixes up rap, soul, indie and songwriting, MUHA mix their melodies from Eastern Europe to South Asia, and the Dhoad Gypsies add a bit of Rajasthani spice with their fast-paced rhythms and fire-eating antics.

The hugely popular World Dance Feste stage returns to the Mela for a third year.

The Mela major dance commission for 2014 is From Here to There by Edinburgh based dancer and choreographer Merav Israel. Interpreting the language of classical Asian dance traditions within a contemporary context, Israel incorporates modern dance forms and spectacular audiovisual effects, to explore the journeys we embark on in our searches for truth, identity and inner peace.

Capicúa, commissioned especially for the Mela, brings together three generations of Spanish flamenco stars for a completely new work. Led by flamenco legends Carmen Ledesma and Rafael de Carmen, with music by Mari Peña and Antonio Moya.

One of this year's hottest tickets is The Black Album, the newest show from rising UK dance stars Avant Garde Dance – a dark, blistering piece of contemporary hip hop dance, slick moves fused with genuine emotional heft. We Light Up The House present their innovative Futebol show, paying tribute to the World Cup with a phenomenally-skilled narrative dance piece merging expert ball control and Brazillian dance/martial arts styles. Sonia Sabri Company, the leading contemporary South Asian dance troupe are also back at the Mela, as are Edinburgh's own Dance Ihayami.

OTHER ZONES AT THE MELA

THE MELA KIDZONE

This year, the Kidzone, supported, once again by Forestry

Commission Scotland and Edinburgh Airport Community Fund, becomes an Animela, designed to inspire our younger audience with an interactive, multi-sensory arts journey. Visual artists, craftspeople, dancers, musicians and storytellers will deliver a diverse programme of nature-inspired creative arts workshops and performances, celebrating trees and animals of the world. On board the storytelling boat, a crew of animals will take us on a journey of discovery across several seas from the Scottish woodlands to the mountains of Nepal. Creative activities delivered by environmental educators and wildlife experts will promote conservation and exploration and will encourage families to enjoy nature both on their doorstep and further afield.

THE GLOBAL FOOD VILLAGE

Possibly one of the best-loved parts of the Mela – dinnertime! The Global Food Village boasts over thirty stalls featuring food from all over the world. A planet's worth of delicious smells and tastes awaits you.

THE MELA MARKETPLACE

From stalls selling handcrafts and beautiful sari fabrics to information stalls from charities, the Marketplace is the bustling heart of Edinburgh's Mela.

Shami Khan, Chair of the Mela Board of Directors said:- 'It has been a pleasure and a privilege to watch the Edinburgh Mela grow over two decades into one of the best respected world arts festivals in the country. The Mela's continued success over twenty years is testament to the hard work of many groups, individuals, artists and volunteers, and it's them we'd like to celebrate this August.'

Lorna Duguid, Portfolio Manager at Creative Scotland, said: "We are delighted to once again support the Edinburgh Mela and its ambitious artistic programme, especially in its twentieth Year."

