

Scottish International Storytelling Festival 2015



The [Scottish International Storytelling Festival](#) is the world's largest celebration of live, traditional storytelling, taking place as the season's change in Scotland's stunning capital city and reaching out across the nation as Scottish tellers merge with guests from the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, in a fantastic, ten-day celebration of oral traditions and cultural diversity.

Last year's festival – Once Upon a Place – was a huge success with over 25,000 visitors and Festival Director, **Donald Smith**, aims to continue the hospitable welcome that storytelling is associated with:

"Storytelling connects across borders of culture, race, class, religion and politics. This year's Festival shows what a connected kind of place Scotland is becoming. We're modelling a more festive and welcoming world, where nothing human is alien to us."

With over 70 events in Edinburgh and over 20 throughout Scotland, including mini-festivals in [Orkney](#), [Portskerra](#) and [Inverness](#), you'll find a host of live storytelling, children's activities, walks, talks, workshops and performances to please all.

Taking **Stories without Borders** as this year's theme, the SISF 2015 sees local traditions intertwine with tales from Morocco, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Syria and beyond.

Let storyteller **Rabeea Al Nasser** and musician **Tareq Al Nasser** sweep you away to the Middle East in [From Village to Village: A Journey through Jordan](#), or discover the riches of Syria's oral traditions in [An Evening with the Hakawati](#), led by

traditional storyteller **Bassam Dawood**.

Throughout the week, our **Open Table** cycle lets you indulge in food and stories from around the world, including a **special session for the older generation** with an emphasis on reminiscence tales, while **Open Hearth** sessions sees storytellers from both near and far gather around for a relaxed evening of ballads, folktales, myths and more. The Festival will also be looking to concoct a *Story Salad* incorporating key ingredients from Scotland, Europe and the Middle East merging together for the ultimate blend of tastes and tales.

There will also be themed sessions titled **Stories without Borders** which explore ways of sharing through multiple artforms and platforms, offering a smorgasbord to enjoy, from the merging of physical theatre, dance and poetry as writer-actor **Philip Knight** and virtuoso guitarist **Michael Gosling** retelling the Greek myth of **Prometheus** through to **Stories without Borders in a Digital World**, examining the impact of social media on the art of storytelling, and how the 21st century can allow ancient culture to flourish in brand new ways.

The major strands of the 2015 Scottish International Storytelling Festival are supported by the **Scottish Government Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund**. **Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Europe, Culture and External Affairs**, said:

“Scotland is a country of storytellers, a proud tradition we share with many nations. Stories help us to break down borders and overcome barriers. They help us to discover our common hopes and the challenges we share as global citizens.

It is wonderful we are able welcome storytellers from across the world to the Edinburgh International Storytelling Festival again this year and we are proud to support their work through the Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund.”

Family Events

With storytelling on boats, in gardens and even in a castle, the Festival offers a wealth of events to keep the kids entertained this autumn, most of them free. Travel back to the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie in [Jacobites: The 1715 Special!](#) or hop aboard a Re-Union canal boat for an afternoon of swashbuckling stories in [All Aboard!](#), both with the ever-wonderful [Macastory](#).

And of course, October wouldn't be October without some Hallowe'en treats! Dress up and head to [Lauriston Castle](#) for a spooky afternoon of crafts and stories on **Saturday 25 October**, or join us on Hallowe'en itself to learn songs and poems before setting off on the [Guisers Trail](#) around Edinburgh's Old Town in the afternoon before the [Samhuinn Fire Festival](#) in the evening.

Talks and Lectures

With the World Climate Change Summit coming up in November, Planet Earth provides the focus of this year's Festival lectures. [Experiencing Gardens](#) is a series of free, inspiring talks, all taking place in the gorgeous surroundings of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. [Hidden Meanings](#) explores green spaces in literature and what they symbolise, while [The Quest for Paradise](#) discusses the magic of gardens and our need to create these verdant heavens on Earth.

Back at the Storytelling Centre, there is a fascinating discussion on how traditional stories can change the way we relate to nature in [Another World is Possible](#), as well as a discussion on 'welcoming the stranger' and what this means by storyteller [Martin Palmer](#), plus the annual [Alan Bruford Lecture](#), given by [Gary West](#) which is entitled '*Jock meets the Jocks*': *Personal Narratives of the Great War, As Collected by Jock Duncan*.

Walking Tours

Stories are all around us, and this year's Festival takes you all over the capital to uncover Edinburgh's most fascinating tales. Discover the [Secrets of the Royal Mile](#) on an expert-led walking tour of the historic Old Town, or soak up the autumn colours as you learn of the lore and legends of Scotland's woodlands on [Tree Trails](#) in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

This year, the Festival has teamed up with [Dig It! 2015](#) – the year-long celebration of Scottish archaeology – to encourage everyone to unearth the tales and legends of their local area. Join us at [Dig It! 2015 at Cramond](#), to explore the hidden history of one of the Lothians' richest storytelling terrains, and look out for local events around the country.

Workshops

For those with their own tales to tell, the Festival features four workshops designed to help keen storytellers develop their skills. Entitled [The Ties that Bind](#), the sessions focus on the ways in which stories can heal rifts and bring people together and are led by expert storytellers with experience working with communities in conflict around the world.

These include [Shonaleigh](#), a *drut'syla* (storyteller) from Yiddish oral tradition, who will lead a session on helping people find common ground through storytelling or 'Word Dancing'. [Michael Williams](#) and [Janet Dowling](#) also draw on their experience with groups in Israel and Palestine in [Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace](#), while [Liz Weir](#) examines ways communities can benefit from storytelling based on peace-building projects in Northern Ireland.

Exhibition

Artist [Sylvia Woodcock-Clarke](#) provides the backdrop for this year's festival with [Stories of the Stranger](#), a collection of black and white ink and wash drawings created to accompany contemporary retellings of traditional tales. Raw and

powerful, these images speak of exile, of losing everything, and of relying (or not) on the generosity of strangers – a hugely relevant topic today.

The Scottish International Storytelling Festival: Stories without Borders

Friday 23 October – Sunday 1 November 2015

The full programme is here



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