

# Edinburgh International Harp Festival 2018

The Edinburgh International Harp Festival 2018 will take place at Merchiston Castle School between 30 March and 4 April 2018.

There will be a large number of performers at the gathering which puts Edinburgh at the centre of world class harping.



BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards 2017 Musician of the Year and Scots Trad Music Awards Instrumentalist of the Year, Rachel Newton will perform her eclectic interpretation of both English and Gaelic traditional and self-penned songs with her trio at 7.30 pm on Saturday the 31st March

The Scottish harp the Clarsach is of core importance and this year some well-travelled harpists will return to the home of Scottish harping including New York based, but Edinburgh born, harpist Maeve Gilchrist who will premiere a piece commissioned by the festival, featuring the acclaimed Mr McFall's Chamber and her duo partner, dancer Nic Gareiss.



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Festival favourites Catriona McKay (clarsach) and Chris Stout (fiddle)

will perform their truly unique brand of Scottish music following on from their 2017 new album release.

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Scottish harpist and renowned composer Ailie Robertson returns to the Festival to perform with fellow Outside Track band member and Cape Breton fiddle player Mairi Rankin, of the famed Rankin family.

This year the EIHf will provide a rare chance to hear two of the world's top pedal harpists perform as soloists in a concert made in heaven. In a welcome return to the festival, jazz pedal harpist Park Stickney will perform a one-man harp version of his "Stickney & friends". Appearing at the festival for the first time is well-known pedal harpist Gabriella Dall'Olio who will transport the audience on a musical journey through Italy and beyond.

Paraguayan harpist Ismael Ledesma's spirited performance of his own compositions and traditional melodies on the South American harp, promises to delight audiences.

Following on from last year's focus on Brittany the Festival continues to cross boundaries with a performance from electro harpist Nikolaz Cadoret, performing Breton harp music with a contemporary twist.

## **CELTIC COUSINS**

In its 4th year celebrating the links with their Celtic cousins, the EIHf is turning its spotlight on the music from the two smallest Celtic nations; the Isle of Man and Cornwall, with a collaboration between Manx Gaelic singer Ruth Keggin

and Scottish harpist and Manx harp specialist, Rachel Hair. Cornwall will be represented by harpist and singer Sarah-Deere Jones who will perform with the guitarist Phil Williams.

## **YOUNG TALENT**

In Scotland's Year of Young People 2018 the EIHf is proud to provide a platform both to harpists at the start of their professional careers and to those currently in the early stages of learning.

For the second year running the Harp Festival will be providing the opportunity for school-aged harpists to perform specially composed music by Charlotte Petersen and Isobel Mieras, illustrating the magical story "The Power of Harp", written by Heather Yule. Mod prizewinner Abigail Cavanagh will also perform at this concert.

The Scottish harp and accordion duo "Peach and Skeoch" will perform their own mischievous take on melodies written for accordion and harp at the ever-popular Afternoon Tea concert, which will also feature the youthful Moscow Harp Orchestra playing Russian Folk music and contemporary pieces for lever harp.

Also to be heard at this year's Festival are harp ensembles: Claasagh, a school aged group from the Isle of Man who perform melodies native to their island and students from the Music School of Kristianstad in Sweden playing traditional Swedish tunes arranged for harp, fiddle and cello.

## **HARPING FOR ALL**

### **WORKSHOPS AND COURSES**

The medieval wire strung clarsach is the most ancient of instruments of Scotland and the EIHf will champion this with a specially curated Easter and Spring concert. Wire-strung harp

specialist Bill Taylor will collaborate with the renaissance singers Canty to perform a selection of music from Medieval Europe. This will include the Scottish premiere (in modern times) of 'Be mery', a newly rediscovered Easter carol. The winner of the Clarsach Society's Young Composer Award 2017 will be announced and their piece performed at this concert.

The organisers of the Edinburgh International Harp Festival are proud of its reputation as a friendly, encouraging and inclusive event. 2018 is no exception, with the opportunity for harpists, of all ages and abilities to perform together in the "From Scratch" concert. Featuring new arrangements of traditional and newly composed music by Rachel Hair, Isobel Mieras, Susan Syverson and Corrina Hewat the mass harp ensemble will play this music together in the spirit of friendship and fun.

A core element of EIHf is the chance to learn and share skills and knowledge in a wide range of workshops and courses.

Workshops, 19 in total, including a day of extended workshops, explore amongst others, Medieval harp and singing, practice techniques, dance and the chance to discover different genres of music on the harp.

Courses, 43 in total, at every possible level, range from Scottish, Irish, Manx, Swedish and Breton, how to prepare music for a performance, accompany singing and improvising successfully. There are also harp classes for adult and child beginners and even the chance to try out stepdance, ukulele and wire harp.

## **HARPMAKERS' EXHIBITION**

Makers from all over the UK and beyond will be on hand at this vital element of the festival, displaying instruments ranging from faithful historical reproductions to the very latest developments in harp construction.

Photos courtesy of Neil Hanna Photography  
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