

Ian McKellen coming back to Edinburgh International Festival

Sir Ian McKellen will return to the International Festival with a new production that celebrates his 80th birthday. Playing a total of 80 dates across the UK, the tour visits venues with which he has personal connections, while raising funds for local theatres and drama provision.

Ian McKellen On Stage will play at Edinburgh's Assembly Hall from 22-25 August 2019, recalling seminal moments from his life and career. Sir Ian will share anecdotes and perform extracts from his best-loved roles, from Tolkien's Gandalf to the many Shakespearean characters he made his own.

At Sir Ian's request, all profits from performances including his own fees, will be used to support regional theatres and local drama provision, recognising the vital part that they play in developing artists, audiences and theatre practitioners across the UK. Edinburgh proceeds will support drama training for young people via a bursary for an Edinburgh local to study performance, and by contributing to the refurbishment of the Drama Studio at Leith Academy as part of the International Festival's residency partnership with the school and City of Edinburgh Council.



Ian McKellen as Richard II at the Edinburgh International

Festival in 1969

2019 marks the 50th anniversary of Sir Ian's landmark appearance at the International Festival with his dual performance of Marlowe's *Edward 11* which played in repertoire with Shakespeare's *Richard 11* at the Assembly Hall. His mesmerising performances in both title roles dominated the 1969 International Festival and established Sir Ian as one of the UK's leading actors. The production of *Edward 11* was radical in its portrayal of the monarch's same sex relationships, challenging public prejudice of the time and provoking controversy in a ground-breaking moment for the International Festival.

Sir Ian returned to the International Festival throughout the 1970s, most notably with his newly formed cooperative, The Actors' Company, in 1972. Performances of *Ruling the Roost* and *'Tis A Pity She's A Whore* featured Sir Ian and Felicity Kendal in supporting roles as a page and a maid, allowing fellow company members to take the starring roles.



McKellen at the 1969 Edinburgh International Festival

Ian McKellen said: 'I'm celebrating my 80th birthday by touring a new solo show to theatres I know well and a few that I don't. The evening starts with Gandalf and will probably end with an invitation to act with me on stage. In-between there will be anecdotes and acting. I open at my local arts centre in January and end up by August in Orkney.

Live theatre has always been thrilling to me, as an actor and in the audience. Growing up in Lancashire, I was grateful to those companies who toured beyond London and I've always enjoyed repaying that debt by touring up and down the country myself, with the National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, Prospect Theatre, the Actors' Company, as well as with commercial productions. Sean Mathias, the director and I have worked together for stage and screen, many happy times.

At the Edinburgh International Festival in 1969 I played *Edward II* and *Richard II* together at the Assembly Hall. My return is a chance to remember the old days and reprise Shakespeare and others. Profits will benefit equipment and refurbishment for Leith Academy Drama Studio, and will go towards a bursary to an Edinburgh young person going to study performance'.



Ian McKellen and Felicity Kendall at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1972