

EIF releases music CD for Edinburgh's elderly

Edinburgh International Festival has produced a double disc album featuring some of the highlights of the August 2020 music programme and three digital releases in partnership with Linn Records.

The 2020 Edinburgh International Festival was overhauled during the pandemic, and the programming team came up with the idea of hosting classical music recordings at The Hub. These were broadcast through speakers in Princes Street Gardens and could also be enjoyed at home on YouTube.

Many music lovers however, were unable to join in the experience of these performances in the Gardens, due to health concerns, shielding or barriers to travel and some did not have access to digital performances.

With those audiences in mind that the team have created a specially recorded CD of some of the highlights of the season, working closely with the community engagement team who are now making sure it is distributed to music lovers who otherwise have missed out.

The CD has high quality recordings from performances given at The Hub, Edinburgh Festival Theatre and the Scottish Opera Production Studios in Glasgow during August. Thanks to a partnership with record label Linn Records, which specialises

in classical music, jazz and Scottish music, the recordings will also be available from key download and streaming platforms, and in Studio Master from [LinnRecords.com](https://www.linnrecords.com) from Friday.



The first disc features the world premiere recording of Klaus Simon's arrangement of Mahler's Seventh Symphony for smaller orchestra, as performed by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Thomas Søndergård. The International Festival also worked closely with long-time collaborators Scottish Opera to record a selection from their production of Menotti's *The Telephone* sung by Soraya Mafi and Jonathan McGovern.

The second disc also collects highlights from across the chamber music programme from August 2020, showcasing the breadth of performances which range from Edinburgh-born artists, Philip Higham and Susan Tomes, performing Nadia Boulanger, to traditional Scottish folk tunes performed by the Elias String Quartet and Andrea Baker performing spirituals as part of her celebration of the African American female voice *Sing Sistah Sing!*

Our Learning and Engagement team is working closely with partners to identify communities and individuals across Edinburgh who have been socially and creatively isolated this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on older people in the city. So far, they have worked with networks including LifeCare, Home Instead Senior Care, Oxfangs Care, Caring in Craigmillar and Citadel & Pilmeny Development Project's Intergenerational Group. Our team is also issuing online callouts to community groups to volunteer individuals who could benefit from the CD, as well as working with care homes and day services to distribute copies further afield.

A core part of what Edinburgh International Festival exists to

do is bring as many communities as possible across Edinburgh together through the arts, so we wanted to provide opportunities for both life-long listeners and those new to classical music to be reminded of the live performances that were missed on our stages this year. The CD features an information booklet to introduce listeners to the International Festival, biographies of all of the artists and translations of the songs not sung in English.

“Over lockdown, I was thinking a lot about those who were experiencing digital exclusion at a time where so much was moving online,” said Calum McDonald, the International Festival’s Community Engagement and Access Officer. “Just because someone is shielding, socially isolated or engaging with care services doesn’t mean they haven’t been lifelong music fans or don’t have a passion for the arts. While a lot of older people in our community are very digitally engaged, some are not – and a lot of people who don’t have a device to access the internet still have a CD or DVD player. I wanted to extend the joy of the music made in The Hub over August to everyone in the city to help battle creative isolation.”

This whole project was made possible thanks to the support from sponsors Baillie Gifford Investment Managers, who have enabled the International Festival to produce enough CDs to distribute broadly to isolated communities.

The opportunity to release the recordings also came about due to the increased digital programming in 2020. While this has been a necessity to keep audiences safe, digital artwork has also opened up new creative opportunities for the International Festival and its community of artists, which will be exciting to explore into the future.