

Edinburgh International Festival – Aidan O'Rourke

Aidan O'Rourke entertained the media on Friday with a wee tune on his violin in the Old College Quad. It was quite delightful, and even though it was a small audience, O'Rourke was clearly enjoying playing for an audience.

It is a very short commute for him to the Old College as O'Rourke lives just around the corner.

This fact is all-important to his new work which has emerged from lockdown, involving the three Margarets who he came to know over the last year or so. These are three 81 year-olds who introduced him to the notion of Little Ireland in the heart of Edinburgh. This weekend he brings his home in the midst of Edinburgh's Little Ireland to life in a series of three concerts and a film. The film which he made with Mark Cousins will be released later this year.

O'Rourke is as easy to talk to as his music is to listen to.

Sadly the three nights of traditional music which he has curated for the Edinburgh International Festival are all sold out, but it may be worth checking with the box office.



Edinburgh International Festival Launch, Old College, Edinburgh, 6th Aug. 2021 – Aidan O'Rourke

© 2021 J.L. Preece

On Friday 13 August A Great Disordered Heart: Shared Melodies has already [sold out](#). The [show](#) is curated by O'Rourke and will offer a "stripped back take on traditional Irish and Scottish melody".

Aidan O'Rourke grew up in an Irish family in Argyll and learned fiddle in the West Highland style. He pushes the boundaries of Scottish fiddle idioms while remaining true to traditions. Brìghde Chaimbeul, who grew up in a Gaelic Hebridean cultural dynasty, has become the leading player of Scottish small pipes and a musician renowned for her lyrical intensity. Together, O'Rourke and Chaimbeul have a musical partnership that delves into the primal hypnotic qualities of ancient Highland music, as showcased in their acclaimed 2019 album The Reeling.

Cormac Begley is an Irish concertina player from a famed West Kerry musical family. He makes the instrument come to life, whether playing bass, baritone, treble or piccolo concertina. His visceral and holistic way of playing is hailed as a cultural reset for the Irish tradition.

Fiddler Aoife Ní Bhriain grew up in a Dublin family of musicians and plays with refined versatility and a knack for immersing herself in a tune, taking flight into radiant improvisations. She is a member of the exploratory string quintet Wooden Elephant and plays with the Goodman Trio alongside her father Mick O'Brien on uilleann pipes, investigating manuscripts collected around Ireland in the 1800s.

On Saturday 14 August A Great Disordered Heart -Shared Songs will allow some of the most powerful Gaelic voices come together in the second night of music curated by O'Rourke.

Irish singer Liam Ó Maonlaí is a sensational performer whose fierce charisma makes his traditional repertoire all the more

compelling. In 1985, he formed Hothouse Flowers and their album People is the most successful debut album in Irish history to date. Since then, he's engaged with his native song culture with fresh and vibrant energy.

Scottish singer and piper Allan Macdonald is a true tradition bearer from Glenuig in the West Highlands. His research into the deep connections between early pibroch and Gaelic song have revolutionised how both repertoires are interpreted today. While vocal trio Sian (Ceitlin Lilidh, Eilidh Cormack and Ellen MacDonald) originally came together to investigate Gaelic songs composed by women and has gone on to create a distinctly rugged and soulful sound with rich harmonies and striking melodic power.

Róisín Chambers is a singer and fiddle player whose influences draw on the Connemara lineage of sean nós singing. Chambers prides herself as a Dublin exponent of the great sean nós tradition and with a voice of unflinching splendour, lends a forensic realism to her interpretation of the old songs.

On the closing night on Sunday 15 August in A Great Disordered Heart: Shared Futures, O'Rourke will bring his band Lau to the Old College Quad along with Lisa O'Neill producing some innovative sounds with grounding in folk and traditional music.

As the UK's leading folk trio, Lau is a powerhouse of traditional instrumentalists, comprising fiddler Aidan O'Rourke, accordionist Martin Green and guitarist Kris Drever (who also delivers the act's iconic, unwavering vocals). They've been exploring and expanding traditional musical forms since their acclaimed debut album in 2007 and continue to explode conventions, broadening their sonic palette with a recent return to stripped-back acoustic realism. The blazing focus and invention of their performances once led The Guardian to refer to them as 'the UK's best live band'.

Lisa O'Neill of Cavan, Ireland, has a voice you will never forget. Uncompromising, searing and utterly honest, her influences range from Irish Traveller singer Margaret Barry to American country singers Patsy Cline and Johnny Cash. Her own songs carry a political urgency and organic weft. She's happy to call herself a folk singer and says, "...folk songs are stories of the people or for the people. They can be a story from the past or something I've come up with myself. It's my version of what happened. It's a story that's a folk song, isn't it?"



Edinburgh International Festival Launch, Old College,
Edinburgh, 6th Aug. 2021 – Aidan O'Rourke
© 2021 J.L. Preece