

Scottish Storytelling Festival 2021 – Imagine

The Scottish Storytelling Festival 2021 takes place from 15 to 31 October and has expanded with some online and some live events which will cover the whole of Scotland.

There is a wideranging children's programme of events alongside just at the point where it is needed, when children are on half term holidays.

The performances will include 100 musicians and storytellers from Scotland and a further 30 from all over the world. Storytellers were invited to join the creative process by submitting a proposal on the theme Imagine. The result is a series of new works developed by storytellers and musicians and funded by The Scottish Government Festival Expo Fund.

The programme is a mix of events from all different cultures. Audiences at the in person events will be kept to a small number and there will also be some outdoor events.

We list some of the highlights – but the programme is so huge that it requires a cosy chair and a bit of time to examine in detail. It is reproduced below.

Scottish International Storytelling Festival Director Donald Smith said: “Stories and songs are vital for human survival. They carry our emotions, memories and values. They bind us together as families, communities and a nation, especially through tough times. As we emerge from the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Scottish International Storytelling Festival will continue to engage, inspire and entertain as we travel through stories.

“Our festival commissions invite us to imagine different pasts, futures, or timeless others, to challenge what we know and create the images of what we are yet to discover. These stories form the core of our live programme, whilst our *Guid Crack* and *Global Lab* sessions offer online participation in unique storytelling ceilidhs and workshops.”

The [@ScotStoryFest](#) takes place from 15 to 30 October inviting you to imagine something different Tickets on sale now for a

mix of online and live shows. Minister [@JennyGilruth](#) told us how important a festival like this is in post-Covid recovery
pic.twitter.com/zMIPMcltdb

– *Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [September 21, 2021](#)*

At the festival launch Janis Mackay and Gica Loening entertained a small audience with a lovely piece intertwining a story from Roch The Wind told in words and music. The Culture Secretary Jenny Gilruth MSP attended the launch. She said: “The Scottish Government has delivered a Community Fund Grant which has been delivered by Museums Galleries Scotland. I think that is a hugely important help and support for storytelling more generally. But it also helps recovery of communities.”









Edinburgh's long running story night *Guid Crack* returns online throughout the festival and the Storytelling Festival's famous *Open Hearth* sessions are set to return to the Netherbow

Theatre, hosted by some of the finest traditional storytellers from Scotland and beyond.

Community groups and schools can take part in The Big Scottish Story Ripple (#StoryRipple) by holding a storytelling event led by a professional storyteller. Groups can apply for a subsidy that will cover the cost of their storyteller's fees. In return, successful applicants must offer a good deed back to their local community on or before St Andrew's Day – continuing the ripple of kindness.

The highlights:

- The festival's opening concert *Roch the Wind*. A feminine meditation of Hamish Henderson's iconic *Freedom Come A' Ye*, fusing music, words and imagery in a hymn to belonging, to home, and to freedom. Written and performed by Janis Mackay, with Rowan Zeinu and Gica Loening, with photographs by Catriona Murray and dramaturgy by Liam Hurley.
- From *Floor Sweeper to Climate Pioneer* tells the little known story of James Croll the Scottish janitor born into poverty and dogged by ill health who became the self-taught father of climate science. Using storytelling, props, film animation and historical interpretation, storyteller Nicola Wright will present Croll's theories – which inform today's study of climate change – and tell the story of his remarkable life to a family audience.
- *Mohan: A Partition Story* is a moving, visceral and emotive storytelling performance by Niall Moorjani, which retells their Grampa's experiences of the Partitioning of India. With first-person telling from 'Mohan's' perspective, the story is interwoven with fascinating and, at times, haunting historical insight. An evocative and thought-provoking evening of oral

storytelling, with accompanying live music.

- In *Oracles*, Millennial woman, Sarah Grant, struggles to live up the legacy of her Grandmother, the “Oracle of Glasgow”: she who sees all, hears all, tells all. As a modern storyteller, Sarah tries (and fails) to translate traditional storytelling to see how it might work in places such as the family WhatsApp group chat, on TikTok, marketing adverts and many many more. How can the lessons learned at our ancestors’ knees survive in the digital world? Does the legacy of women passing down stories end with the current generation? *Oracles* is a story about family, legacy, womanhood and traditional storytelling, grounded in a mix of traditional storytelling and spoken word.
- In *Ladies Who Like it*, storytellers Marie Louise Cochrane and Heidi Docherty imagine a world where women could tell and hear each other’s joyful, life- affirming stories about sexuality, shared with warmth, compassion and knowing laughter. With musical accompaniment and original songs from Suzanne Fivey they will host an evening of humorous, inspiring and informative contemporary collected tales about sex, presented for the wellbeing and inspiration of other women, and for those who care about them.
- Legendary conservationist John Muir is celebrated in a new show by Richard Medrington and Rick Conte from *The Man Who Planted Trees* and storyteller Andy Cannon. They invite us to follow Muir from a window ledge in Dunbar to the brink of a crevasse in Alaska to find out what connects this conservation pioneer, a remarkable dog and an indigenous tribe clinging on to their culture and their land.
- In *Wolf Girl* Storyteller Daiva Ivanauskaitė and singer Agnė Čepaitytė present the true story of Ingrid Ramm

from Königsberg, a city that no longer exists. After WWII thousands of orphans from East Prussia travelled to Lithuania in search of food and shelter. These children are known as Wolfskinder. Ingrid Ramm was one of them, a lonely young refugee who fought for survival with the help of imagination, determination and luck. Daiva's family opened their doors to the Wolf Girl. This storytelling performance combines fragile memories, fantastic tales and classical German songs – the ones Ingrid's mother used to sing.

Scottish International Storytelling Festival

15 – 31 October 2021

Online and in person in Edinburgh and across Scotland

For tickets and more info visit www.sisf.org.uk



The launch of the Scottish International Storytelling Festival took place on 21 September with Culture Minister Jenny Gilruth
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