

Push the Boat Out this weekend

Push the Boat Out, Edinburgh's International Poetry Festival, will set sail this weekend with a line-up of more than 80 performers, artists and speakers and 50 events all appearing at Summerhall.

From poetry readings and discussions, to new commissions, singer-songwriter circles, music hybrid events, dance and hip hop, poetic cocktail-making classes, film screenings, beach walks, panels, workshops and development opportunities – the polyphonic line-up is a true fiesta of the vernacular.

This year, the programme celebrates the poetry of songwriting with multiple events championing the poetic power of lyrics, hip hop and the songwriting process. Singer-songwriter, **Hamish Hawk** offers an evening of lyrical enchantment in a solo show with support from **Iona Zajac** whilst **Conscious Route**, **Queen of Harps** and **Dave Hook** share the back stories of their songs in an in-depth Song Exploder event.

The Songwriters Circle welcomes Hamish Hawk back to the stage alongside legendary Scottish folk musician, **Karine Polwart** and poet and performer **Inua Ellams**, as the three break down their songwriting process and share some of their poetic influences, whilst British rapper, **Dizraeli** takes an honest look at human creation with sharp lyricism and a sense of the absurd in his event Animal Noises.

The programme this year also finds drama at the heart of poetic form, with a series of new commissions from **Imogen Stirling**, **Alycia Pirmohamed** and **Ross McCleary** in partnership with the **National Theatre of Scotland**. Developed on the theme of 'seed' and explicitly exploring poetry in conversation with other artistic disciplines, these new pieces promise to break new ground and plant some future discussions.

Audiences can also expect newly commissioned work that takes inspiration from the festival's home base, Summerhall. Writer **Ever Dundas** and poets **Harry Josephine Giles** and **Iona Lee** celebrate the building's history with a darkly gothic night of poetry and original music composed by **David Paul Jones** that offers an audio treat that is defined as 'cinema for the ears'.

Politics and poetry have platform too as **Jeremy Corbyn** and **Len McCluskey** posit that poetry is for the many in an event that sees the pair share their favourite poems from their newly co-edited anthology and discuss why poetry is for everyone. **Yvonne Reddick's** urgent climate poetry will share words and exchanges on nature's defiance and audiences can enjoy the pulsing poem-stories of **William Letford** as he speaks of the resilience of ordinary people as they adapt to strange and uncertain times.

Audiences are encouraged to embrace the cat life in an extra special event at Maison de Moggy cat café with The Cat Prince himself, prize-winning poet **Michael Pedersen** will share poems from his new collection and Scottish Makar, **Kathleen Jamie** aims to remind us that poetry is made for the ear, in an evening celebrating tradition, mentoring and passing on the baton

For the food lovers and cocktail connoisseurs, **Joelle Taylor** and **Kate Fox** will help shake up a poetic cocktail or two in events that mix your drinks as well as your words and poet and culinary enthusiast, **Sean Wai Keung** adds some flavour

in a dumpling and poetry workshop.

Emma Collins, Director of Push the Boat Out, said: "In this third year, Push the Boat Out is definitely poetry placed firmly in a current tide. This year's programme is a true showcasing of contemporary excellence. Modern, charged, alive, joyful and celebratory with events that are also vehicles for important and vital discussions.

"We've brought together over eighty of the most exciting poets from Scotland, the UK and beyond and we've continued to expand our notion of what poetry is, with eclectic events that celebrate words and language in their many glorious forms and in conversation with other artistic disciplines.

"Poetry is everywhere, it's the lyrics in songs, our conversations and dialogues, the rhythm of spoken word, scripts and sonnets, proclamations and points of view, the stories we tell and the history around us.

"That's what Push the Boat Out is primarily about... words, how we use them, a celebration of them and what they mean to us. We've endeavoured to capture that in this year's programming.

"We also strive to make Push the Boat Out as accessible for audiences as possible. BSL interpreted events are indicated within the programme and once again, in addition to our in person and online programme, we will have a programme of events free to listen to at home via our partners EHFM Radio as well as a selected live stream event that showcases newly commissioned work.

"We've been overjoyed by the response from the incredible artists and poets who've agreed to come on board the boat this year and cannot wait to bring them all together for audiences this November."

Harriet MacMillan, Literature Officer at Creative Scotland, said: "In its third year, the Push the Boat Out programme is

brighter and more dynamic than ever, capturing the many dimensions of Scotland's rich poetry scene. Thanks to National Lottery players, this unique and varied international suite of events is testament to the vital role poetry plays in all of our lives. Their increasing range of collaborations and activities continues to show us how words can connect us with each other and ourselves – the power of poetry will be felt by all who take part in this brilliant celebration."



Poets Ever Dundas, Imogen Stirling and RJ Hunter helped to launch the 2023 programme for Push the Boat Out, Edinburgh's international poetry festival (24-26 Nov 2023). Tickets via Summerhall box office. PHOTO Neil Hanna



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