

# **Edinburgh International Festival 2025 will include a “nod to the unconventional”**

## **Edinburgh International Festival announces its full programme for summer 2025 today.**

Tickets will go on sale to Friends on 25 March, and on general sale on 27 March.

When the Creative Scotland (CS) funding round was announced in January the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) had a lot to celebrate. But the possibility of receiving less funding and the delayed granting of the monies has led to a more compact festival taking place this year. Festival Director Nicola Benedetti picked out some of the treats in this year's programme and said: “We have, and are, presenting a larger number of unconventional style performances in unconventional ways, the first of which kicks off at the Usher Hall with John Taverner's *The Veil of the Temple*, an eight hour long vigil – an experience that you're not going to find anywhere else in the world anytime soon.

“It will include 250 singers very much focusing on the celebration of the Festival Chorus's 60th anniversary.

“We will be looking at all parts of society, but it will also be a very intergenerational experience. I think it's important for our festival to showcase contrast in that way. We will have the most intense and sometimes long form presentations in theatre and in opera, of course, we have this year, *Orpheus* and *Eurydice* – that will be in the Playhouse. It's not a long

opera though, it's only an hour and 20 minutes, but that collaboration with contemporary circus is certainly a nod to the unconventional."

## **Creative Scotland**

The CS Multi Year Funding Programme, which gives creative and cultural organisations funding for three years at a time supporting their core costs and work programmes, awarded £3.92 million annually for the next three years to the "festival where it all began".

This funding was welcome news – and came two months after some of the programme which will run from 1 to 24 August was announced. The fear that the CS funding would not be enough has affected the size of this year's festival which is smaller than before. There is no mention of closing fireworks, and no big opening event.

The Edinburgh International Festival's level of core funding had not increased since 2008, and the organisation said this multi year award would "benefit the thousands of artists, freelancers, organisations, audiences, and communities that the Festival employs and serves".

Dana MacLeod, Creative Scotland's Executive Director of Arts, Communities and Inclusion said: "Congratulations to the International Festival team for this imaginative programme which brings important conversations by world-leading artists and extraordinary creative experiences for audiences to the capital city. Borne out of a belief in the power of the arts to connect and provide hope in a divided world, the International Festival's original ethos remains true today, with international and homegrown talent presenting stimulating work, reflecting and celebrating the world we inhabit. A long-time supporter, Creative Scotland is happy to have been able to confirm a funding commitment to the International Festival for the next three years."

At the time the funding was announced Francesca Hegyi, Chief Executive, EIF said: *“It’s a good day for culture and creativity in Scotland. We welcome this increased investment in the Scottish cultural sector, which will help to showcase the enormous talent of this country. We are grateful for the International Festival’s uplift in funding, which recognises the unique role we play in connecting Scotland to the world, and gives us a firm foundation from which to build. The return of multi-year funding allows us all to plan ahead with greater confidence.”*



## **Festival Theme – The Truth We Seek**

This year EIF presents a relatable theme in the current climate of questionable facts presented as the truth on social media and elsewhere in the media all over the world. The festival suggests that the search for truth is “precarious, fractured and abused”. The programme will have contemporary reflections and well-known tales “where fact meets faith and

fiction”.

## 2025 programme announced

Although some parts of the programme on the theme of The Truth We Seek have already been trailed ahead of today, the full programme has been freshly announced on Thursday.

Ms Benedetti said: “Our 2025 Edinburgh International Festival invites you to explore The Truth We Seek—a journey into the elusive nature of truth, in our personal and public lives. In an era of ‘alternative facts’ and manipulated narratives, the arts offer us something deeper: a poetic and metaphorical wisdom that is both more nuanced and more precise.

“This Festival – born in the city of the Enlightenment – has championed artistic expression as a means of discovery, insight, and mutual understanding. This year, we proudly present seven world premieres, exceptional international and Scottish artists, and celebrate 60 years of our Festival Chorus as well as the brightest emerging talent.

“Join us this summer as we seek and find truth together. Your curiosity will be rewarded with thought-provoking, and potentially transformational, experiences that you simply won’t find anywhere else.”

*The Edinburgh Reporter met with Director of Edinburgh International Festival to find out about the “unconventional” performances in this year's programme. The need for more creativity came after delays to funding from Creative Scotland. It was a welcome relief when the multi year funding was awarded*

– [The Edinburgh Reporter \(@edinreporter.bsky.social\)](https://www.edinburghreporter.com/2025-03-13T12:02:31.721Z)  
[2025-03-13T12:02:31.721Z](https://www.edinburghreporter.com/2025-03-13T12:02:31.721Z)



Nicola Benedetti CBE Festival Director EIF at The Hub Culture and Communities Convener, Councillor Val Walker said: "I'm delighted to see the 2025 programme for the Edinburgh International Festival be unveiled. This promises to be an exciting new chapter in the Festival's rich history with nearly 2,000 artists from around the world returning to Edinburgh this August. The fact that over a quarter of these artists are from Scotland is also a cause for celebration. It's particularly encouraging to see that accessibility for all continues to be championed with initiatives such as free tickets for young musicians, NHS colleagues and community groups, along with £10 Affordable Tickets for all performances. Everyone deserves to be able to enjoy our world class cultural offer regardless of circumstance. Opening weekend of the International Festival will see a fantastic free event held in Ross Bandstand where all are welcome to the Big Singalong. From dance to classical music, opera to theatre and beyond there is an absolute wealth of talent, intrigue and spectacle on display this summer and I'd encourage all our residents and

visitors to make the most of it. The International Festival is a stalwart of the Capital's cultural calendar and as a Council we're proud to continue our support."

Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said: "The Edinburgh International Festival has stood as a global celebration of the performing arts, and their power to bridge cultural and national differences since 1947. That role is as relevant as ever, so I very much welcome the Festival's commitment to affordability and accessibility in this year's programme.

"The International Festival is where it all began for Edinburgh's Festivals so whether you are coming from near or far, I encourage everyone to enjoy the best of what Scotland and the world has to offer, across the genres of classical and contemporary music, dance, theatre, and visual art.

"The Scottish Government's Expo fund is designed to help showcase Scottish artists and our festivals to the world, and I'm very proud to continue that support with £80,000 for this year's International Festival."

There are, as usual in the EIF programme, far too many concerts, plays and performances to cover in just one article, and we recommend a hearty session reading it to find the events you will not want to miss.

Instead we have picked out only a few here.

## **The Edinburgh Reporter choices**

### **Opening weekend in Princes Street Gardens**

The International Festival's opening weekend welcomes all to a free event in Princes Street Gardens at the Ross Bandstand for *The Big Singalong*, led by Stephen Deazley, artistic director



of Edinburgh's Love Music Community Choir.

The following day, Norwegian folk ensemble Barokksolistene returns to lead *The Ceilidh Sessions*, an afternoon of music and storytelling inspired by the Gaelic ceilidh tradition.



## Mary Queen of Scots

This is a new production presented by Scottish Ballet and the first full length story ballet from the resident choreographer, Sophie Laplane. The tale is told by Queen Elizabeth I, and is a story of what her relationship with the beauty that was Mary Queen of Scots might have been. There is some history intertwined with stories and legend. Elizabeth through the years will be played by a variety of members of the company. The costumes will be designed by Soutra Gilmour who has won awards for her work on [&Juliet](#).



## **Opening Concert = John Tavener – The Veil of the Temple**

This is an eight hour long performance during which the audience will be free to come and go. The magnum opus will take place at Usher Hall when all the seating will be replaced by bean bags, making it a more comfortable experience for those who last the distance.

The Monteverdi Choir will join the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and National Youth Choir of Scotland. There is a taste of what you might listen to (even for some of the whole eight hours) below:

## **Orpheus and Eurydice**

Opera Queensland will present the European Premiere of a reworking of an 18th century opera featuring musicians



performers and the Australian contemporary circus company [Circa](#), the same group of acrobats who presented the festival grand opening event at Murrayfield Stadium, [MACRO](#), in 2022.

The story explores the meaning of true love and the challenges to our inner beliefs – a continuing mystery.

The production will feature the [Scottish Chamber Orchestra](#), a chorus from Scottish Opera and video projections to capture the woeful love story.





MACRO at Murrayfield Stadium August 2022 featuring CIRCA PHOTO  
J.L.Preece

## Make it Happen

The world premiere of *Make it Happen* with Brian Cox, CBE, at Festival Theatre, is the festival's big news this summer, and will run from 1 to 9 August. Where better to stage a fictionalised version of the woes of RBS than in Edinburgh where it all happened?

Roy Luxford Creative Director Edinburgh International Festival said he is excited about the play. He explained it all came about after a conversation between the actor Brian Cox, the writer James Graham and director Andrew Panton of Dundee Rep. Mr Luxford said: "The result is a big international narrative with the epicentre in Edinburgh."

This is James Graham's new play, brought to life by National Theatre of Scotland, EIF and Dundee Rep Theatre, telling the story of the Royal Bank of Scotland in the 2008 financial crash, and it offers Brian Cox the opportunity to come back to

the stage, after a decade during which he was on our small screens in *Succession*. Cox plays Adam Smith whose capitalist beliefs Fred Goodwin one time CEO of RBS followed religiously.

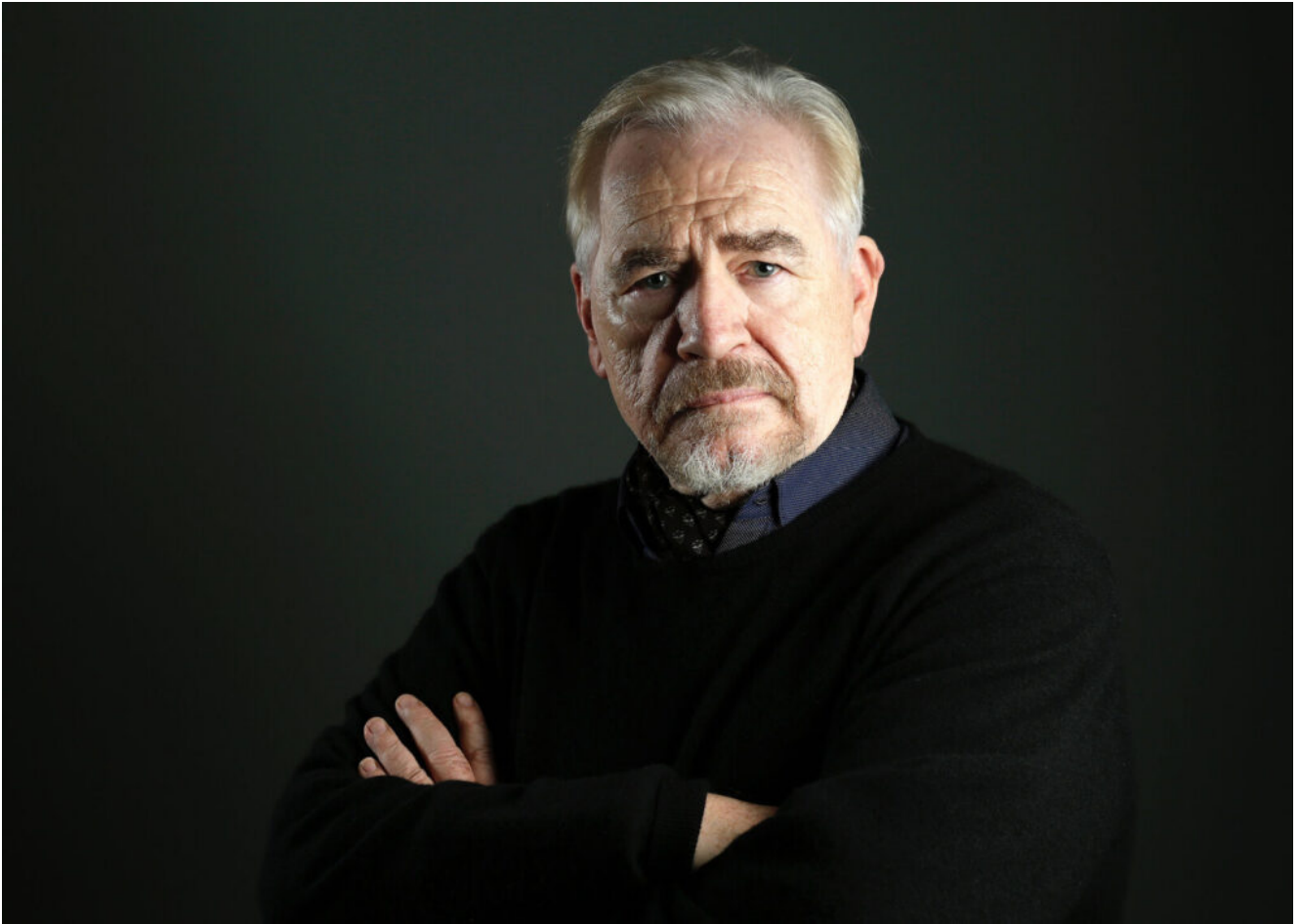
Writer, James Graham, said: "Like many writers, an Edinburgh stage is the first place ever I dared put a full play in front of an audience. To be invited to join the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival programme this summer is an honour and a thrill. And to work with the National Theatre of Scotland, the Dundee Rep, and of course – Brian Cox, whom I've been desperate to write for for as long as I can remember.

"We still live in the long shadow of the 2008 financial crash and our inability to reset from that inheritance and its divisive legacies, so it feels right to be interrogating it artistically. But we hope to do so in a show full of music and story, larger-than-life characters, cheeky humour, and some ghosts from Scotland's centuries' long past thrown in as well"

Andrew Panton, director, said "It's a personal honour and huge responsibility to tell what became a global story that started in the city close to where I grew up. Working with an exceptionally talented cast, creative and production teams, I'm excited to be directing this new play, bringing it to audiences at Dundee Rep Theatre and Edinburgh International Festival stages."

Actor Brian Cox, said: "I'm excited to be doing a play written by James Graham who is such a great writer. It's been a long time since I played in Scotland – it's good to be back."

Nicola Benedetti said: "We are extremely proud to present a brand-new play by James Graham, 'Make It Happen', which will open the 2025 International Festival in August. This co-commission with the National Theatre of Scotland and Dundee Rep demonstrates our ongoing commitment to bringing vital Scottish stories to the world stage, and invites us to examine events that took place in Edinburgh but rippled across the globe."



Brian Cox, CBE. Photo Colin Hutton



Writer James Graham and director Andrew Panton at Rockvilla.



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## Keynote talks



Simon Fanshawe

Under the Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti, the International Festival has a renewed focus on dialogue and debate, with keynote talks from leading voices calling for change.

University of Edinburgh rector Simon Fanshawe will tackle the 2025 theme, The Truth We Seek. He was a co-founder of the LGBTQ+ charity Stonewall and a Perrier Award for Comedy winner, and Fanshawe's debut appearance at the International Festival will no doubt spark fresh debate, fuelled by his signature wit.

Art and cultural historian Sarah Lewis leads a gripping exploration of the role of art in shaping history, and how it might yet transform the future. A professor at Harvard



University, Lewis' recent book *The Unseen Truth* confronts the falsehoods that have upheld systemic inequality in the United States, offering a razor-sharp reassessment of the nation's racial regime.

## At Talbot Rice Gallery



At Talbot Rice Gallery, Egyptian artist Wael Shawky presents a striking solo exhibition exposing the falsehoods of colonial histories. This landmark exhibition includes *Drama 1882*, an operatic film interrogating the 1882 Urabi revolution, sculptures and drawings. It also pays tribute to David Talbot Rice – the Byzantine and Islamic art historian who gave the gallery its name 50 years ago – bridging past and present.

# Collaboration with Space @ The Broomhouse Hub

EIF have for some years now worked in areas of the city where the festival is a distant concept and often unattainable. This year young people from southwest Edinburgh are already enrolled on an eight week course working alongside teams from EIF, helping the young team learn new skills and gain confidence to enter work.

This is run in conjunction with Space @ The Broomhouse Hub (Wellbeing Onto Work) project and supports 10 young people aged 16 to 24.

Training is held at The Broomhouse Hub and the EIF Hub on The Royal Mile.

Esther Kuperji, Youth Participation Worker at Space, said: "This is a wonderful opportunity for our WOW! Project participants to gain an amazing insight into what is required to put on one of the biggest and best cultural festivals anywhere in the world.

"By working closely with the specialists at Edinburgh International Festival, as well as our team, to build friendships, network, and enhance wider skills, we are sure this will be an incredible experience for those taking part. We are delighted to put on this exciting, educational project in partnership with Edinburgh International Festival, and it shows the wider impact they have on our local communities."

Caroline Donald, Head of Discovery and Participation at Edinburgh International Festival said: "This is a great chance to see behind the scenes at what makes the festival come together and the different types of performances the International Festival puts on including Music, Theatre, and Dance. Anyone taking part in the WOW! Project will meet lots of different International Festival staff members, learn more

about their jobs and how they got them, and demonstrate there's multiple routes to employment.

"We're proud to be able to offer paid work experience during the 2025 International Festival too, which will bring all the elements of the project together in a truly practical way."





## The best way to get EIF tickets

Our best recommendation is to become a Friend of the Festival which is the best way to ensure you get early access to tickets. There are several tiers, some of which are expensive, but the first starts at £60 per year.

Members enjoy priority booking for International Festival performances, get access to exclusive members-only events, insider updates.

The full programme for the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival is announced on Thursday 13 March. Priority booking for the 2025 Festival opens by membership level:

- **Friends: Tuesday 25 March**
- **Silver Friends & Gold Friends: Monday 24 March**
- **Ambassadors & Silver Ambassadors: Friday 21 March**
- **Gold Ambassadors: Thursday 20 March**



Tickets go on sale to the public on Thursday 27 March.

<https://www.eif.co.uk/support-us/membership>

<https://www.eif.co.uk>



Members of Kinnaris Quintet with dancer Mia Habis from French Lebanese company Maqamat at The Hub