



**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

FESTIVAL 2015

**CLASSICAL MUSIC
INSIGHTS**

A CHORUS OF SOUND AND LIGHT

Herald Arts Editor Keith Bruce discovers
how data collected from the Edinburgh
Festival Chorus will be transformed into
a remarkable free outdoor display



On the night of Friday 7 August, the Edinburgh Festival Chorus emerges from the Usher Hall, in virtual form, for a unique free event that will explore its work in specially commissioned visuals projected onto the outside of the concert venue. The music will be *Harmonium*, by contemporary American composer John Adams, and the pictures are being created by 59 Productions, a company that has taken its pioneering work in video projection for the theatre to the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics and the 'sails' of the Sydney Opera House.

Creative director Richard Slaney sees the Usher Hall as a similar canvas. He enthuses about *The Harmonium Project* as a reversal of the company's usual way of working, where a soundtrack will be composed to accompany the visuals.

'I'm designing what we do, and how we create it,' he says. 'We try and find a narrative in everything we do, but this time the music exists first, so it has to illustrate that, although it will be more about the chorus and how they sing, and how they come to sing that piece.'

To that end, 59 Productions is working with the Centre for Design Informatics at the University of Edinburgh and ten volunteers from the chorus to document and display what is involved in being a member of the choir. 'It won't be just film of the choir singing,' says Slaney.

Spanish soprano María Liendo Zaccara is one of those volunteers whose physiology will be the basis for the artwork 59 creates. She points out that, unlike other amateur choirs who rehearse repertoire for a concert and then move on to a new work once they have performed it, the Edinburgh Festival Chorus has 'everything on the go at once'.

'I was aware that singing is hard work and exercise, but now I know that three hours of rehearsal burns up 255 calories – so that is a good excuse for the glass of wine afterwards!'

The singers' work is also being captured with video and infra-red cameras, and software that allows Slaney and 59 to create a 'points cloud' of different faces in a sort of three-dimensional map. That will then be animated for the Usher Hall projections. All the various data sources will be combined to mirror the collective experience of singing together.

'It is a collective experience, not an individual singing a line – that is why choral singing is interesting,' says Slaney.

Illustrating that process is what 59 Productions intends to do for the first free outdoor public launch event at the Edinburgh International Festival. As a project to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Chorus, it sings of a choir with a focus on the future. ■

Keith Bruce is Arts Editor at *The Herald*

THE HARMONIUM PROJECT

Fri 7 August 10.30pm
Festival Square, Lothian Road, Free
eif.co.uk/harmonium

In partnership with the
College of Humanities
and Social Science



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Supported by

EventScotland

50th Anniversary Edinburgh
Festival Chorus Partner
The Morton Charitable Trust

PRIDE OF SCOTLAND



Carol Main looks at the rich and varied array of Scottish artists appearing at this year's Festival

Home grown talent leaps out from the music programme of this year's Festival, whether at the Usher Hall, The Queen's Hall, Festival Theatre or the Ross Theatre.

Edinburgh-born percussionist Colin Currie makes his Festival debut as a soloist with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in music by recently knighted doyen of the composition world, Ayrshire's very own James MacMillan. Playing his *Percussion Concerto No 2*, Currie, newly appointed as Patron of the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland and the Festival's Young Musician's Passport Ambassador, gives MacMillan's rhythmically energetic score its Scottish premiere at the Usher Hall.

Top Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti plays Glazunov with the Oslo Philharmonic, but it is at the Festival Theatre that one of Scotland's finest voices can be heard. Lyric soprano Marie McLaughlin, originally from Hamilton, makes a rare appearance in Scotland as Marcellina in a staged concert performance of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. It

is a role she has sung internationally, including at La Scala and the Royal Opera House, where she made her debut at age just 24. Catch her while you can.

Scottish Opera brings its new *H.M.S. Pinafore*, while the younger operatic voices of Royal Conservatoire of Scotland students can be heard in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. No Festival would be complete without the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, not to mention their long-time Edinburgh resident Chorus Master, Christopher Bell. This year, the Chorus celebrates its 50th anniversary and performs twice with the RSNO, as well as with the Philharmonia Orchestra, the SCO, and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under its extraordinary Scottish maestro, Donald Runnicles. ■

Carol Main is a freelance writer

Visit elf.co.uk for more on this year's music and opera programmes and to book online.



PIANO POWER

This year Festival audiences can enjoy many
of the world's finest keyboard players

There's no denying it: 2015 is a very strong year for pianists at the Edinburgh International Festival. Indeed, the Festival's most ambitious musical project is a keyboard one, with the eminent Austrian pianist Rudolf Buchbinder offering a complete survey of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas across nine concerts.

Elsewhere, the Festival's keyboard recitalists are a pleasingly diverse bunch. Canadian Angela Hewitt brings her nimble, sensitive skills to bear on the surprising combination of Domenico Scarlatti, Albéniz, Granados and de Falla ('Nobility, melancholy, brilliance – sunny weather!' she says), and Mitsuko Uchida tackles one of the most powerful and demanding works in the piano repertoire, Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*.

There aren't many classical pianists who can claim worldwide superstar status, but Chinese wunderkind Lang Lang is one of them, and he shows off his flamboyant pianism in a solo recital of Bach, Tchaikovsky and Chopin, as well as in Bartók's propulsive Piano Concerto No 2 with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

It's the opportunity to experience pianists in contrasting roles that makes this year's piano

focus so fascinating. The brilliant young Chinese pianist Yuja Wang is another concerto soloist – in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4 with the San Francisco Symphony and Michael Tilson Thomas – but also makes a second appearance partnering violinist Leonidas Kavakos in all three violin sonatas by Brahms.

Most intriguingly, however, young Russian powerhouse Daniil Trifonov, who's astonished Festival audiences with his dazzling solo skills, performs alongside baritone Matthias Goerne in songs by Schumann, Brahms, Wolf and Shostakovich. 'It's always very inspiring and valuable to participate in chamber music,' says Trifonov. And instructive to sample lesser-known sides to a performer's art. ■

David Kettle is a freelance writer and editor

Usher Hall concerts run from
8–30 August; The Queen's Hall
concerts run from 8–29 August

Visit eif.co.uk for more
information, to hear samples
of the music and book
tickets online.

CONTRASTING SEASONS

David Kettle looks at very different takes on Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*

Along with Beethoven's Fifth, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* must be the world's best-known and best-loved piece of classical music – not bad for an innocuous set of four little violin concertos. And this year's Festival offers the chance to experience Vivaldi's masterpiece of musical storytelling from no less than three very different perspectives.

It's that sense of storytelling that's key to the work's enduring popularity. For Vivaldi set himself

the challenge of combining the virtuosity and sophistication expected of a conventional violin concerto with depicting scenes from the passing of the seasons – twittering birds and snoozing shepherds in 'Spring', for example, or harvest dances and a boisterous hunt with yapping dogs and popping muskets in 'Autumn'.

'In the wonderful *Four Seasons*, the orchestra and soloist don't really exist – we're all alike in



importance in painting this piece,' explains the eminent German violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, soloist in the Festival's more usual performance of the work (Wed 26 Aug). She plays it alongside the Mutter Virtuosi, an intimate ensemble of exceptional young performers she's hand-picked from around the globe. 'I feel very connected with these players: I unavoidably become a kind of mother figure to them, which is fine – I love children anyway!' It's far from the first time she's performed the piece: she recorded it way back in 1984 with the Berlin Philharmonic and Herbert von Karajan, but her accounts today are more informed by the lightness and clarity of period performance. 'The older you get, at least in my case, the more curious you get – I'm rather suspicious of what I know, because I know there's a lot I don't know! But there are endless possibilities of having a wonderful time with something that's so complex.'

The British composer Max Richter has taken a radically different approach to *The Four Seasons* however, literally 'recomposing' it for the 21st century. He retains the violinist-plus-orchestra format of the original but adds electronics, loops and samples to cast brilliant new contemporary light on the piece, sometimes poking affectionate fun, at others uncovering unexpectedly fascinating details. It's still Vivaldi, but transfigured as though he's having a conversation with Arvo Pärt or Philip Glass. Richter's free-thinking take on the Baroque

masterpiece gets two contrasting outings at the Festival – as a musical performance, with Richter performing alongside violinist Daniel Hope and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (Mon 24 Aug), and as the musical inspiration and accompanying score for choreographer Wayne McGregor's acrobatic dance work *Kairos* for Ballett Zürich (Thu 27 – Sat 29 Aug). ■ **David Kettle**

VIVALDI'S THE FOUR SEASONS

Wed 26 August 8pm, Usher Hall
 Tickets £12–£44 eif.co.uk/fourseasons

Supported by 

MAX RICHTER

Mon 24 August 8pm
 Edinburgh Playhouse, Tickets £10–£32
eif.co.uk/maxrichter

BALLETT ZÜRICH

Thu 27 – Sat 29 August 7.30pm
 Edinburgh Playhouse, Tickets £10–£32
eif.co.uk/zurich

Supported by   



GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES



Ken Walton looks at the diverse range of international orchestras appearing at the Festival this year



What does an international orchestra bring to an international festival? The answer to that would have been very different years ago, when national styles were as variable as the languages of the respective countries. But even with globalisation, and the tangible ironing out of geographical and cultural idiosyncrasies, orchestras from around the world still have strong elements of personality that mark them apart.

None come more individual than Sir John Eliot Gardiner's *Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique*, which brings period instrument performance right up to date in its unique interpretations of Romantic repertoire. Raw colourings and gutsy expression will unquestionably feature in its performance of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*.

Then there's the spit and polish that Vasily Petrenko has instilled in his Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. Over two programmes, the charismatic Russian gleans from his players the riches of Rachmaninov and Sibelius, the traditionally-inspired sounds of Norwegian composer Geirr Tveitt, and teams up with Nicola Benedetti in Glazunov's spirited Violin Concerto.

The fiery incision of the Budapest Festival Orchestra is familiar to Edinburgh audiences, and as well as bringing Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* to the opera programme, Iván Fischer's crack team joins the Edinburgh Festival Chorus in a performance of Mozart's *Requiem*.

Both the Philharmonia under Esa-Pekka Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas, have starring pianists in their programmes: the former bringing Lang Lang to the Festival for the first time in Bartok's Piano Concerto No 2; the latter featuring the much talked about Yuja Wang in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4.

As for the big symphonic repertoire, no Festival would be same without a dose or two of Mahler. The San Francisco Symphony bring us the First Symphony, while the European Union Youth Orchestra perform the Fifth under the exciting baton of Gianandrea Noseda.

This year's orchestral programme ends with one of the great twentieth-century masterpieces, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Expect nothing less than perfection from the London Symphony Orchestra under the highly individual Valery Gergiev. ■

Ken Walton is Classical Music Critic for *The Scotsman*

Explore the full Usher Hall programme at eif.co.uk

EARLY EXPLORATIONS



Three Usher Hall concerts at the start of the Festival champion work from the early music repertoire

No sooner does the final cadence in this year's EIF big opening concert fade away, than the Usher Hall programme takes a journey back in time to explore, over three consecutive nights, the world of early music.

There's no theme as such, but between Sunday 9 and Tuesday 11 August, respected leaders in the historic field – the Catalan viola da gamba player Jordi Savall, veteran conductor and interpreter William Christie, and the wonderful French early music ensemble Le Concert Spirituel – will offer insights into three very different areas of early music repertoire.

Savall's concert, for which he is joined by violinist Martin Hayes and guitarist Dennis Cahill among others, is not exclusively about early repertoire. But in celebrating *Celtic Dialogues*, this broad-ranging collection of experts tackles traditional historic styles from both Scotland and Ireland.

Christie's programme, with the stylistically-flexible Scottish Chamber Orchestra, explores the explosive high-drama world of French Baroque opera, with scenes from Charpentier's *Médée* and Rameau's *Les Boréades*, and no doubt the odd wind machine, that will blow your mind.

But the most intriguing of these three concerts is surely the last: an epic aural spectacle in which

Le Concert Spirituel performs Alessandro Striggio's recently rediscovered *Mass in 40 Parts*, thought to have been sung during his 1567 visit to London in the presence of Thomas Tallis, who went off immediately to compose his own 40-part *Spem in Alium*. ■ **Ken Walton**

CELTIC DIALOGUES

Sun 9 August 8pm, Usher Hall, Tickets
£12–£38 eif.co.uk/celticdialogues

Supported by  **Culture Ireland**
Cultúr Éireann

RAMEAU & CHARPENTIER

Mon 10 August 9pm, Usher Hall, Tickets
£12–£38 eif.co.uk/rameau-charpentier

LE CONCERT SPIRITUEL

Tue 11 August 9pm, Usher Hall
Tickets £12–£38 eif.co.uk/spirituel

Supported by **David McLellan**

CLASSICAL MUSIC LISTINGS

USHER HALL CONCERTS

Fri 7 Aug 10.30pm
The Harmonium Project
Festival Square, (outside
Usher Hall)

Sat 8 Aug 7.30pm
The Opening Concert

Sun 9 Aug 8pm
Celtic Dialogues

Mon 10 Aug 9pm
Rameau & Charpentier

Tue 11 Aug 9pm
Le Concert Spirituel

Wed 12 Aug 7.30pm
The Rake's Progress

Thu 13 Aug 8pm
Symphonie fantastique

Fri 14 Aug 7.30pm
MacMillan & Sibelius

Sat 15 Aug 8pm
Oslo Philharmonic
Orchestra 01

Sun 16 Aug 8pm
Oslo Philharmonic
Orchestra 02

Tue 18 Aug 8pm
Mozart's Requiem

Wed 19 Aug 7.30pm
Philharmonia Orchestra

Fri 21 Aug 8pm
Lang Lang

Sat 22 Aug 8pm
Berlioz's Grande
messe des morts

Sun 23 Aug 5pm
H.M.S. Pinafore

Mon 24 Aug 8pm
Mitsuko Uchida

Tue 25 Aug 7.30pm
Noseda conducts Mahler

Wed 26 Aug 8pm
Vivaldi's The Four Seasons

Thu 27 Aug 7.30pm
San Francisco Symphony 01

Fri 28 Aug 7.30pm
San Francisco Symphony 02

Sat 29 Aug 8pm
Beethoven's Missa solemnis

Sun 30 Aug 7.30pm
Stravinsky's
The Rite of Spring

THE QUEEN'S HALL SERIES

Sat 8 Aug 11am
Nash Ensemble

Mon 10 Aug 11am
Tallis Scholars

Tue 11 Aug 11am
Modigliani Quartet

Wed 12 Aug 11am
Valentina Nafornița
& Roger Vignoles

Thu 13 Aug 11am
Angela Hewitt

Fri 14 Aug 11am
Budapest Festival
Orchestra Soloists

Sat 15 Aug 11am
Trio Zimmermann

Mon 17 Aug 11am
Sarah Connolly
& Malcolm Martineau

Tue 18 Aug 11am
Richard Egarr

Wed 19 Aug 11am
Iestyn Davies
& Ensemble Guadagni

Thu 20 Aug 11am
James Gilchrist

Fri 21 Aug 11am
Colin Currie & Friends

Sat 22 Aug 11am
Christine Brewer
& Roger Vignoles

Mon 24 Aug 11am
Sol Gabetta
& Bertrand Chamayou

Tue 25 Aug 11am
St. Lawrence String Quartet

Wed 26 Aug 11am
Leonidas Kavakos
& Yuja Wang

Thu 27 Aug 11am
Zehetmair Quartet

Fri 28 Aug 11am
Arcanto Quartet

Sat 29 Aug 11am
Matthais Goerne
& Daniil Trifonov

Sun 30 Aug 3pm
Family Concert

PLAYFAIR LIBRARY HALL CONCERTS

**Beethoven
Piano Sonatas:**

Sat 8 Aug 5pm
Concert 1

Sun 9 Aug 5pm
Concert 2

Mon 10 Aug 5pm
Concert 3

Wed 12 Aug 5pm
Concert 4

Thu 13 Aug 5pm
Concert 5

Mon 17 Aug 5pm
Concert 6

Tue 18 Aug 5pm
Concert 7

Tue 25 Aug 5pm
Concert 8

Wed 26 Aug 2.30pm
Concert 9

FIND OUT MORE,
WATCH TRAILERS,
HEAR THE MUSIC
AND BOOK
TICKETS AT
EIF.CO.UK

FIERY FESTIVAL FINALE!






Festival 2015 concludes with a spectacular concert, with fireworks launched from Edinburgh's iconic Castle to music inspired by dance from Strauss, Brahms and Dvořák, performed live by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

VIRGIN MONEY FIREWORKS CONCERT

Monday 31 August 9.30pm
eif.co.uk/virginmoneyfireworks

Sponsored by
 money

BOOK YOUR FESTIVAL 2015 TICKETS NOW AND ENJOY UNMISSABLE WORLD-CLASS MUSIC AND OPERA THIS SUMMER!

-  Follow us @EdintFest
-  Like us
-  Subscribe to our channel
-  Follow us @EdintFest
-  Subscribe to our Spotify channel

STANDBY – HALF PRICE

From Wednesday 29 July 50% off all tickets for senior citizens, unemployed people, Equity and MU card holders.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND STUDENTS – HALF PRICE NOW!

Under 18s, Young Scot cardholders and all students in full time education.

ARE YOU UNDER 26?

Pay only £8 on the day for selected performances.

ACCESS DISCOUNTS

Call the access booking line on **0131 473 2089** or visit eif.co.uk/access.

EIF.CO.UK

0131 473 2000

Charity No SC004694. Front cover image: Colin Currie, photo: Marco Borggreve