



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

A Celebration of Scotland's Music and Song Traditions

St Andrew's Day Concert, Playfair Library

30th November 2025

Welcome

We are delighted to welcome you to a **Celebration of Scotland's Music and Song Traditions**, the University of Edinburgh's annual St Andrew's Day Concert.

This event is hosted by Celtic and Scottish Studies and the School of Scottish Studies Archives.

Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh

Celtic and Scottish Studies was formed in 2001 through the merger of the Department of Celtic and the School of Scottish Studies. The study of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh goes back to 1882 and ours is the longest established Celtic department in Scotland. The School of Scottish Studies was founded in 1951 to collect, archive and promote the cultural traditions of the nation. The multidisciplinary team delivers teaching and supervision across a broad range of specialist areas and is committed to excellence in research and publication.

Our department also plays a highly visible public role, ranging from advising government and other bodies on language issues involving Gaelic at all levels, to developing and supporting public and community engagement with the traditional arts in Scotland and beyond.

School of Scottish Studies Archives

The work of Celtic and Scottish Studies draws extensively upon the collections of the School of Scottish Studies Archives, the core of which is the ethnological fieldwork undertaken by staff and students over the past seventy years. The collection, now managed by the Centre for Research Collections, includes a sound archive comprising some 33,000 recordings, a photographic archive containing thousands of images from the 1930s onwards, a small film and video collection and a manuscript archive. The Scottish Studies library of ethnological publications, both Scottish and international, is used as a resource to contextualise the fieldwork material.

Collecting has focused on Scottish life, folklore and the traditional arts. Material comes from communities throughout Scotland and its diaspora. The main languages of Scotland - Gaelic, Scots and English - are all represented including many dialects that are now extinct. In 2010, a significant proportion of the archival field recordings were made available via the Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches website, in partnership with the BBC, the National Trust for Scotland and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Performers

Lori Watson

Scots song

Learning first in her local community and then with several luminaries and alumni of our School of Scottish Studies, Lori trained in Scottish music and folklore in Glasgow. She gained her PhD in artistic research and ethnomusicology in 2013 at St Andrews, producing a portfolio of new music and thesis exploring contemporary traditional music practices in Scotland.

Drawing firstly on the rich creative tradition of the Scottish Borders, Lori has become a leading interpreter of Scottish folk music and Scots song. Her skills as a fiddle player, vocalist and composer are widely recognised and she was awarded Scots Singer of the Year in 2017, Guardian Folk album of the Year in 2018, and included in the Women in Music and Culture list in 2024.

Formerly a Lecturer in Traditional Music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Lori is currently a Lecturer in Scottish Ethnology at the University of Edinburgh where she continues her focus on the traditional arts and performance. Lori has also taught and/or examined at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Newcastle University, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, the University of the Highlands and Islands, and the Norwegian Academy of Music.

Lori collaborates with and contributes to the renowned School of Scottish Studies Archives and features the rich cultural resources in her teaching. Her role in 2023-24 as an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Fellow, leading the New Traditional School in Scotland project, involved a return to experimental and folk music practices, fieldwork and the development of a new music collection and archive.

Lori will be appearing with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in January presenting a selection of our most significant traditional songs and ballads.

Franky Leong-Murphy

Folk music on whistle from one of our wonderful student musicians

From Macau in China, Franky is a multi-instrumentalist playing whistle, clarinet, violin and mandolin. Franky performed in the Royal Academy of Music in London's New Talent Festival 2023, and received the Neil P Johnston Fine Arts Award in 2025 at the International School of Macau.

Franky is studying whistle with our Traditional Artist in Residence, Fraser Fifield, who will be joining him and will also perform later in the concert.

Rob Dunbar

Gaelic song

Rob is Chair of Celtic languages, Literature, History and Antiquities of the University of Edinburgh. His research focuses on language policy and planning for Scottish Gaelic, for other Celtic languages (particularly Welsh and Irish), and for minoritized languages. His work on legal instruments (international, national and sub-national) support language policy and planning initiatives; Gaelic broadcasting, and provision for broadcasting in other minoritized languages.

Originally from Canada, Prof Dunbar has dedicated nearly two decades to Gaelic language development but also to Gaelic literature, culture and society from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, and on Gaelic in Canada. Before assuming the role of Chair of Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh in June 2013, he held positions as Senior Research Professor at the University of the Highlands and Islands, and Research Director of the collaborative Soillse Research Project.

His collaborations extend to various international organisations such as the Council of Europe, where he currently serves as the UK member of the Committee of Experts, the treaty body which oversees implementation of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Additionally, he has worked closely with national and sub-national governments, including the National Assembly for Wales, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations, focusing on issues related to the preservation and revitalization of minority languages and the safeguarding of their speakers. He has served as a member of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and MG Alba, and played a role in the formulation of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

Gary West

Pipes and folk song

Piper Gary West has spent a lifetime immersed in Scotland's traditions through his work as a musician, academic, and broadcaster.

Releasing his debut solo album *The Islay Ball* in 2001, performing a duo with harpist Wendy Stewart, with whom he released *Hinterlands* in 2009, and forming part of the trio BrÒg and ceilidh band Hugh MacDermid's Haircut. In 2018, he was part of the all-star cast of the *Far, Far From Ypres* commemorative tour.

He is a familiar voice in the piping world, his weekly BBC Radio show *Pipeline* was broadcast to an audience of around forty thousand, now superseded by his self-produced podcast *Enjoy Your Piping*.

In 2016 he wrote, produced and performed in *Jock's Jocks*, a one act play based on a remarkable collection of first world war testimonies recorded by North East folk singer Jock Duncan as a labour of love over a period of fifty years. He also edited these for publication as a book, released in 2019. He recently completed a biography of Martyn Bennet.

Gary held a Personal Chair in Scottish Ethnology at Edinburgh until 2021.

Tim Macdonald and Claire Garabedian

18th and 19th century music on fiddle and cello

Tim Macdonald has played baroque violin in a variety of settings from New York City's Frick Collection to BBC Scotland's *Take the Floor*. He teaches violin and Scottish country dance, is a scholar of the violin in the Scottish Enlightenment and recently started a doctorate with us in Celtic and Scottish Studies on the music of the Gow Family.

Claire Garabedian is a baroque cellist who's played with orchestras round the world and in Scotland with the Dunedin Consort. She's also a music therapist, specialising in music in palliative care.

Fraser Fifield and Thalia Blacking

Traditional and contemporary tunes on pipes, whistle and fiddle

Fraser Fifield, born 1976, is a multi-instrumentalist and composer from Scotland, performing on low whistle, saxophone, and bagpipes. His distinctive instrumental voice has several components; Scottish folk is obviously present but also Jazz, Indian, Balkan and more. He is currently Traditional Artist in Residence at University of Edinburgh. A healthy musical curiosity is evident throughout Fraser's 11 solo albums; some place his wind instruments alongside musicians such as Sabir Khan on sarangi (In Mumbai, 2020), bandoneonista Walther Castro (In Buenos Aires, 2015) or Nedyalko Nedyalkov on kaval (Traces of Thrace, 2008). Since the mid-1990's Fraser has worked with many artists in the Scottish folk scene and beyond, including, Old Blind Dogs, Salsa Celtica, Capercaillie, Karen Matheson, Zakir Hussein, Afro-Celt Sound-System, Balkanopolis (Serbia), Nordanians (NL). Fifield's 2021 album release, *Piobaireachd / Pipe Music*, (2021) re-imagined that ancient Scottish piping style - juxtaposing old pieces with innovative new compositions, while 'Secret Path', 'One Great Circle' and 'Second Sight' are a trilogy of trio records led by Fifield's low whistle and compositions, released between June 23 and June 24. Secret Path Trio, with Tom Bancroft and Paul Harrison, was nominated in the Best Live Band category of the Scottish Jazz Awards, 2024. Fraser's current project as Traditional Artist in Residence is a re-arrangement of the *Inchcolm Antiphoner* for saxophone quartet. The *Inchcolm Antiphoner* is Scotland's oldest known document of musical notation, housed in University of Edinburgh's archives with several fragments available to view online. A first performance and a recording are planned for early 2026.

Thalia Blacking, aside from her University of Edinburgh day job at the Easter Bush Campus (Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Studies), is a fiddle player whose style is firmly rooted in her home town of Belfast. She learned much of her music playing in sessions there, inspired by the city's many great players, particularly the late Andy Dickson, fiddle player and guitarist.

Whole company led by Will Lamb - 1 set of tunes to finish

'Big set' led by banjo

Professor Will Lamb was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1995, after taking an interest in Gaelic and traditional music, he went to Nova Scotia and spent an academic year at St Francis Xavier University. Will began his postgraduate study at the University of Edinburgh in 1996, taking an MSc in Celtic Studies. Following his PhD in Linguistics, moved to North Uist to take up a lecturing position at Lews Castle College Benbecula (University of the Highlands and Islands) where he led the music programme. Will is now Personal Chair in Gaelic Ethnology and Linguistics with us at Edinburgh where recent work has been in Gaelic Natural Language Processing and Artificial Intelligence. He also finds time to play his banjo!