

Scotland's Music

Ready for the World

Your guide to Scotland's classical sector

Festivals, venues, series,
touring and more.



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Welcome

Scotland has a vibrant classical scene, a calendar bursting with internationally renowned new music festivals, and creators and artists working in exciting, collaborative ways across classical, experimental and improvisation practices. Find out how invention and collaboration are key to Scotland's rich classical music scene, and how artists boldly and creatively borrow, share and merge styles and genres. Scottish Music Centre and Creative Scotland are proud to support the music sector in Scotland.

scottishmusiccentre.com | creativescotland.com



Chamber Music Scotland / Maxwell Quartet
Credit: Louise Mather

Ensembles, commissioning and producing organisations

AC Projects

AC Projects is an arts organisation founded by Alasdair Campbell, producing a range of new music events across the UK and Ireland. Along with collaborators Café Oto and the Centre for Contemporary Arts, AC Projects produces Counterflows, and collaborates with conductor Ilan Volkov and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on the Tectonics festival.

counterflows.com

The Benedetti Foundation

The Benedetti Foundation was established in 2019 by violinist and dedicated advocate Nicola Benedetti CBE. They deliver transformative experiences through mass music events and provide equal access to music participation and appreciation for all. Led by Nicola and a tutor team comprising exceptional educators and performers from across the globe, they unite those who believe music is integral to life's education.

benedettifoundation.org

Cryptic

Cryptic is a Glasgow-based internationally-renowned producing art house, presenting today's most imaginative, innovative artists whilst also nurturing the creative talent of tomorrow. Creating memorable experiences that engage and inspire audiences, Cryptic 'ravishes the senses' with multi-media performances that fuse music, sonic and visual art.

cryptic.org.uk

Drake Music Scotland

Drake Music Scotland puts disabled musicians, creative artists, ensembles and learners at the heart of its work, creating transformational opportunities for them to have their voices heard and achieve their musical ambitions. The organisation has developed innovative music technologies giving disabled musicians independence and expressive control of their instruments. They run an internationally recognised music education programme and are a source of expertise in inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. Their Digital Orchestra is the world's first disabled youth orchestra, creating new music using inclusive music technologies.

drakemusicscotland.org

Dunedin Consort

Dunedin Consort is one of the world's leading Baroque ensembles, recognised for its vivid and insightful performances and recordings. Their ambition is to allow listeners to hear early music afresh, and to couple an inquisitive approach to historical performance with a commitment to commissioning and performing new music. Under the direction of John Butt, the ensemble has earned two coveted Gramophone Awards, a BBC Music Magazine Award, and a Grammy nomination.

dunedin-consort.org.uk

The Glasgow Barons

Paul MacAlindin founded The Glasgow Barons orchestra in 2017 to revitalise his home, the deprived area Govan in Scotland. They regenerate underused and alternative spaces with classical music. Local communities make music with them in various projects including the award-winning Musicians In Exile for asylum-seeking musicians. They redistribute power and wealth by using local goods and services, whilst co-creating projects with Govan's most vulnerable people.

glasgowbarons.com

Drake Music Scotland
Credit: Sandy Butler



Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra (GIO) is a large improvising ensemble of around 20 musicians from diverse artistic backgrounds ranging from free improvisation, jazz, classical and folk, to pop, experimental music and performance art. Their annual GIOfest includes three days of music, workshops and presentations.

glasgowimprovisersorchestra.com

Hebrides Ensemble

With programmes that are diverse, imaginative and inspiring, Hebrides Ensemble has established itself as one of the foremost chamber music collectives in the UK. Co-founded and led by cellist and conductor William Conway, the ensemble is renowned for its fresh and intelligent approach to programming, which places contemporary music at the heart of a diverse range of repertoire.

hebridesensemble.com

Live Music Now Scotland

Live Music Now Scotland gives outstanding young artists the opportunity of performing at the start of their careers and enables high-quality live music to reach people throughout Scotland's communities, especially those who wouldn't normally have access to it. Live Music Now is an international movement, located across Europe and with offshoots inspired by Live Music Now in the USA and South America.

livemusicnow.scot

Maxwell Quartet

Prizewinners at the 9th Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition in 2017, the Maxwell Quartet have a strong connection to their collective folk music heritage and a commitment to bringing together wide-ranging projects and programmes to expand the string quartet repertoire. The quartet is passionate about collaborating with musicians and other artforms and has toured widely across the UK, Europe and the US.

maxwellstringquartet.com

National Youth Orchestras of Scotland (NYOS)

NYOS works with young musicians aged 8-25 living or studying in Scotland or with Scottish connections. Their activity takes place in locations across Scotland and provides foundational group music-making opportunities, inspirational orchestral experiences, and advanced artistic and career skills development. Their programmes are designed to develop musical, personal and social skills which have lifelong benefits, whatever the young person's chosen career path.

nyos.co.uk

National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCOS)

The National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCOS) is the organisation dedicated to encouraging singing for young people in Scotland. They provide opportunities for young people, teachers and choir directors to support and develop choral singing across the country. Their choral ensembles have appeared on the stages of the Edinburgh International Festival and the BBC Proms.

nycos.co.uk

The Night With...

The Night With... is a concert production company and record label based in Glasgow, presenting salon-style concerts of interesting music in intimate, informal venues across Scotland and further afield. Run by Matthew Whiteside, the organisation provides development and commissioning opportunities for young and emerging composers. Since 2016 they have delivered 76 concerts, 37 different programmes, 67 premières, 20 commissions, five calls for scores and a two-day festival. They have released seven albums with three more soon to be released.

thenightwith.com

Nordic Viola

Founded in 2016, Nordic Viola is a flexible ensemble of woodwind and string players forming musical and cultural connections in the North Atlantic Region with an emphasis on contemporary music and its relationship with traditional forms. The ensemble takes audiences on an extraordinary journey in words and music to the Faroe Islands, Orkney and Shetland, Iceland and Greenland.

nordicviola.wordpress.com

Paragon Ensemble

Two key principles – equality and inclusion – guide Paragon’s work in creating music, dance and performance opportunities. Through learning and performance environments, people from all walks of life and with a wide range of additional support needs come together, develop new skills, meet new friends and discover their true potential.

paragon-music.org

Red Note Ensemble

Since its formation in 2008, Red Note Ensemble has taken up a leadership position as Scotland's contemporary music ensemble, performing and developing an extensive, highly varied and critically acclaimed programme of new music to the highest standards, and taking new music out to audiences across Scotland and internationally.

rednoteensemble.com

Scottish Ensemble

Scottish Ensemble is a pioneering group of outstanding musicians. They explore how music can be performed, shared and enjoyed by performers and audiences alike, with thought-provoking collaborations and exceptional performances. From their roots as a specialist early music ensemble, they have become a versatile performing group that makes art for the here and now. They make cross-artform work a priority, collaborating with visual artists, digital artists, dance companies and theatre makers.

scottishensemble.co.uk

Sistema Scotland

Sistema Scotland is a social transformation charity based in six communities in Scotland. They are committed to improving lives and strengthening communities through music and nurturing relationships. Through their local Big Noise orchestra programmes, children are immersed in music to help foster teamwork, confidence and aspiration.

makeabignoise.org.uk

Sonic Bothy Ensemble

Sonic Bothy is an inclusive new music ensemble that explores, composes and performs experimental and contemporary music. The ensemble brings together musicians with and without additional learning support needs, who work across genres and perform to audiences across Scotland and beyond.

sonicbothy.co.uk

sound

sound is a new music incubator based in north-east Scotland, encouraging new music creation and discovery. In addition to presenting the annual *soundfestival*, their year-round activity supports a wide range of composers, engages with local communities and provides educational opportunities. They aim to give composers the opportunity to experiment, develop and create new works, and to have these works performed and heard.

sound-scotland.co.uk

Sound Thought

Sound Thought is a Glasgow-based collective of experimental sound artists, composers, and audio engineers. They provide a platform for early-career practitioners, postgraduates, and recent graduates to exhibit their work and build community. Recent work has explored themes including acoustic ecology, deep listening, and accessibility in experimental music.

soundthought.co.uk

Tinderbox Collective

From grassroots youth work to award-winning arts productions, Tinderbox offers a range of creative workshops, orchestra courses, arts residences and apprenticeship programmes. They provide a year-round programme working with hundreds of children and young people aged 10-25, from complete beginners to young professionals. Tinderbox aims to create high quality and original work, with a drive to be genuinely inclusive and foster active and creative participation from everyone involved.

tinderboxcollective.org

Orchestras and National Performing Companies

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (BBCSSO)

The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is Scotland's national broadcasting orchestra and performs throughout Scotland, the UK and abroad. It maintains a busy schedule of broadcasts for BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Television and online.

bbc.co.uk/bbcso

Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO)

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra is one of Europe's leading orchestras with a rich history stretching back over 125 years. It is one of Scotland's leading cultural institutions and an orchestra with a variety of work that is almost unparalleled amongst its British peers.

rsno.org.uk

Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO)

The internationally celebrated Scottish Chamber Orchestra is made up of a unique collection of talented musicians who inspire and connect with people of all ages. The Orchestra aims to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to hear live orchestral music by touring the length and breadth of Scotland and around the world.

sco.org.uk

Scottish Opera

Scottish Opera is Scotland's national opera company. Scottish Opera's mission is to entertain, inspire, surprise, educate, challenge and delight audiences old and new by delivering high quality, powerful opera throughout Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally.

scottishopera.org.uk



National Youth Orchestras of Scotland (NYOS)

Festivals Calendar

Counterflows | March – April

Counterflows is an internationally acclaimed Glasgow-based contemporary music festival, produced by AC Projects. The event celebrates challenging and thought-provoking work in experimental music, supporting marginal music practice within a wide array of different genres and approaches. The festival features artists from Scotland, the UK and around the world. They aim to build a non-hierarchical social space to engage with artists' work, as well as explore their connections to culture, politics, community and activism.

counterflows.com

Plug | April – May

Every year the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) presents Plug, an important showcase for student composers and performers and a key moment when the RCS turns its focus to the music of right now. This festival showcases budding talent as well as senior Royal Conservatoire composers.

rcs.ac.uk/seasons/plug

Loch Shiel Festival | May

One of Scotland's most picturesque chamber music festivals, Loch Shiel Spring Festival takes place in the West Highlands and makes use of the spectacular and unusual settings around Loch Shiel itself. The festival hosts performances from internationally renowned chamber musicians.

lochshielfestival.com

Perth Festival of the Arts | May

One of the oldest, continuously running independent arts festivals in Scotland, Perth Festival of the Arts is now in its 50th year. The festival features international and national artists and orchestras from the worlds of classical music, opera, rock, jazz, Celtic, comedy, theatre, dance and the visual arts.

perthfestival.co.uk

Tectonics Glasgow | May

Tectonics is the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's (BBCSSO) annual festival of new and experimental music, pushing the boundaries of what music can be. It brings together international and local artists, composers and performers from different musical and disciplinary worlds for two days of exploratory music-making. Tectonics is curated by the BBCSSO's Principal Guest Conductor Ilan Volkov and Alasdair Campbell of AC Projects.

tectonicfestival.com

St Magnus International Festival | June

Set against the backdrop of land, sea, sky, history and heritage, Orkney's annual celebration of the arts throws a midsummer spotlight on a magical part of Scotland and delivers a diverse cultural offering to visitors from far and wide and those who live on the islands. The festival celebrates the new, showcases both the renowned and emerging, and brings a year-round opportunity for participation on stage and behind the scenes as well as creative learning projects for all ages.

stmagnusfestival.com

East Neuk Festival | June

The award-winning East Neuk Festival takes place in quirky, atmospheric and special venues throughout Fife, including churches, halls, an ex-nuclear bunker, caves and stately homes and gardens. The festival nurtures young artists and commissions a new work each year for community and professional musicians, inspired by the landscape, heritage or history of the area.

eastneukfestival.com

Music at Paxton | July

Music at Paxton was established in 2006 to present high-quality performances of chamber music at Paxton House. Over the years, the event has grown to a 10-day summer festival, bringing international artists to the Scottish Borders.

musicatpaxton.co.uk

Edinburgh International Festival | August

The world-renowned Edinburgh International Festival presents an annual programme featuring the finest performers and ensembles from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre.

eif.co.uk

Edinburgh Festival Fringe | August

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the largest arts festival in the world and takes place every August for three weeks in Scotland's capital city. Thousands of performers, from big names to new artists, present shows across all art forms. The festival includes music, theatre, comedy, dance, physical theatre, exhibitions and events.

edfringe.com

soundfestival. Tim Lines at Promenade Concert
Credit: Anthony Childers



Made in Scotland | August

Made in Scotland supports Scottish artists and companies to bring work to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, to share incredible music, dance and theatre, and allow them to explore the international opportunities that arise from performing at the world's largest arts festival.

madeinscotlandshowcase.com

Lammermuir Festival | September

Born of a conviction that historic architecture and beautiful landscape can be an ideal environment in which to experience great music, Lammermuir Festival was established to bring the finest musicians together with local people and visitors in celebration of music in towns and villages across the county of East Lothian.

lammermuirfestival.co.uk

Sonica | September 2024

Sonica is an award-winning festival of world-class audiovisual art, produced every two years by Cryptic. Sonica presents the best of UK talent alongside exceptional international artists, exploring visual music, sonic and digital arts and taking place in numerous venues across Glasgow.

sonic-a.co.uk

The Cumnock Tryst | September – October

Founded by composer Sir James MacMillan CBE, the Cumnock Tryst is a meeting place for music-lovers. Set in the East Ayrshire town of Cumnock, the annual four-day festival brings some of the world's greatest musicians into local venues, churches and halls, with the community at the heart of all its activities.

thecumnocktryst.com

sound | October

sound*festiva*l events take place across the north-east of Scotland in lighthouses, bothies, museums and churches as well as concert halls and arts centres. Recognised as Scotland's Festival of New Music, sound also organise performances and workshops throughout the year, commissioning and producing new work, nurturing and supporting local and Scottish talent, as well as artists from further afield.

sound-scotland.co.uk

Deep Time | November

Returning for its second year in 2024, Deep Time is Fruitmarket's annual festival of new music featuring commissions, performances and installations by leading radical and experimental artists, composers, improvisors and musicians. Brought together over four days in Fruitmarket's Warehouse, the festival will open your ears to some of the most boundary-challenging new music being made today.

fruitmarket.co.uk/deep-time/

GIOfest | November

Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra is a large improvising ensemble of around 20 musicians from diverse artistic backgrounds ranging from free improvisation, jazz, classical and folk, to pop, experimental music and performance art. Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra's annual festival, GIOfest, includes an international artist-in-residence programme, and three days of music, workshops and presentations.

glasgowimprovisersorchestra.com

Sistema Scotland – Big Noise Govanhill
Credit: Jeff Holmes



Resources and Networks

Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. They enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. They distribute funding from the Scottish Government and The National Lottery.

creativescotland.com

Chamber Music Scotland

Chamber Music Scotland commission and create new works and projects, working in collaboration with artists. They work with Scottish-based musicians to support their creativity and well-being, helping them develop sustainable careers creating and performing chamber music. They aim to creatively explore Scotland and its relationship with its landscape, people and natural resources, advocating for sustainability and helping to protect the wider environment.

chambermusicscotland.com

Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG)

MEPG was set up to promote and celebrate the life-long benefits of a music education and to ensure that the transformative potential of music should be experienced by everyone in Scotland. They advocate for excellent music education in Scotland in all its forms, and bring together a wide range of partners, from young people and music teachers to schools and local authorities, universities and higher education, freelance music tutors, community music groups and other music organisations.

wemakemusicscotland.org

New Music Scotland (NMS)

New Music Scotland is a network of artists, ensembles, orchestras, composers, creators, music educators, sound artists, musicians, producers, promoters and anyone who believes in the importance and value of creating new music in Scotland. They connect, enable and support makers of innovative and experimental new music through professional development, conferences and networking events, advocacy and profile-raising. They also host the annual Scottish Awards for New Music.

newmusicscotland.co.uk

North East Arts Touring (NEAT)

NEAT is a rural touring scheme that promotes professional productions in rural venues across the North East of Scotland through a dedicated team of volunteer promoters. A coordinated approach means that NEAT can provide high quality art experiences in less populated areas. They promote a range of professional live performances including music, and their venues vary in size from small village halls to larger town halls or small-scale arts centres, with some performances taking place in non-traditional spaces such as school halls and church halls.

neatshows.co.uk/touring

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is a national and international centre of excellence for performing arts education. Established in 1847 as a national academy of music, it is now one of the world's best multi-disciplinary conservatoires, offering teaching in dance, drama, music, production and film. They are consistently recognised as one of the world's top performing arts institutions by QS World Rankings.

rcs.ac.uk

Scottish Music Centre

The Scottish Music Centre is a nationally and internationally recognised organisation at the heart of the Scotland's music industry. From preserving Scotland's music heritage with an ever-expanding archive to representing contemporary composers and musicians, the centre supports, promotes and champions the wealth of talent in Scotland's music community. They act as a conduit, a catalyst and a connector to those working in the sector and the public at home and abroad.

scottishmusiccentre.com

Scottish Music Industry Association (SMIA)

SMIA is a membership organisation that works to strengthen and champion Scotland's industry through increasing the value, growing the size and improving the sector's sustainability. SMIA also works in partnerships across all music genres to host the prestigious Scottish Album of the Year (SAY) award.

smia.org.uk

Scottish Classical Sustainability Group (SCSG)

Established in 2020, the Scottish Classical Sustainability Group was created to bring together Scotland's classical music sector to promote sustainability, share best practice, learn from one another, and act as a unified sector in navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by the climate emergency. The group's work to date has seen it launch the Scottish Classical Music Green Guide and win the Environmental Sustainability Award at the Scottish Awards for New Music 2021.

creativecarbonscotland.com | **Scottish Classical Sustainability Group**

The Touring Network

The Touring Network exists to see rural touring be a central, celebrated and indispensable part of the cultural life of Scotland. They encourage live performances of the highest level, and support people as promoters, performers and audiences to create vibrant places to live, work and visit. Their venues cover more than half the area of Scotland.

thetouringnetwork.com

Arts Infopoint UK

Arts Infopoint UK is a pilot initiative developing and sharing resources to guide you through some of the administrative stages of coming to the UK as an artist, cultural professional or organisation. Whether it is questions relating to short term paid work in the UK, moving instruments and kit, or checking social security obligations, Arts Infopoint UK runs events, collates resources, and answers enquiries to assist those planning a creative visit to the UK.

linktr.ee/ArtsInfopointUK



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