

## PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MAR 2020



### **The VIRTUAL Edinburgh International Harp Festival**

**3rd – 8th April 2020**

This year the 39<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh International Harp Festival was planned for the 3-8<sup>th</sup> of April to take place at Merchiston Castle School. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the festival received the news that the school was cancelling bookings due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Festival was one of the first high profile events in Scotland to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Despite their disappointment, the Edinburgh International Harp Festival team, determined that the show must go on, are now proud to present the 39<sup>th</sup> festival in its new online form for 2020, the VIRTUAL Edinburgh International Harp Festival.

#### **HISTORY OF THE EIHF**

Taking place for 5-days every Spring at Merchiston Castle School, the Edinburgh International Harp Festival is run by The Clarsach Society and is a huge celebration of every kind of harp, of music and of friendship

It regularly attracts over 500 players and students from around the world, with the 2019 Festival seeing participants from 25 countries including New Zealand, Japan, Paraguay, Malaysia, USA and Russia.

Harp enthusiasts gather together with local Edinburgh audiences for concerts, courses, workshops and late-night music, with performances and tuition from some of the world's finest harpists.

#### **WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN**

The 2020 Edinburgh International Harp Festival was potentially set to be the best yet with pre-cancellation ticket sales for some 70 events already exceeding those of previous years

Attendees and the wider public were set to enjoy a series of top rated concerts, the envy of the harp world, in the magnificent "Harry Potter" style Memorial Hall of Merchiston Castle School.

EIHF is world-renowned for its opportunities for participants to learn from the world's and Scotland's finest harp tutors, and the 2020 programme featured 42 courses and 20 workshops on a wide range of styles and topics.

The festival was due to host one of the world's biggest harpmaker's exhibition, displaying instruments ranging from faithful historical reproductions to the very latest developments in harp construction.

#### **THE VIRTUAL HARP FESTIVAL**

The brainchild of the Festival's media co-ordinator Rachel Hair, well known throughout the harping world as a performer and teacher, the VIRTUAL EIHF was launched on the 17<sup>th</sup> March to give the harp world something positive to look forward to during this challenging time, whilst allowing them to continue to learn and be inspired in a safe environment.

Taking place from the 3-8<sup>th</sup> April, the dates of the original EIHF, VIRTUAL EIHF will give harp enthusiasts and the public around the world, the chance to watch performances and engage in online workshops from 18 harpists, all of whom were originally booked to appear at the Festival.

Workshop and concert videos, 3 each day, will be uploaded on the Festival's facebook, youtube and website pages, and will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

While all this can be freely accessed, viewers are encouraged to make a donation to EIHf or to purchase the music of the performers and tutors, who are giving their time and pre-recording their videos at home.

Performers include Ireland's Cormac de Barra, Germany's Tom Daun, America's Lily Neil, Scotland's Gillian Fleetwood and Elinor Evans and former harpist to the Prince of Wales, Anne Denholm. Welsh jazz pedal harpist Ben Creighton Griffiths will attempt a transatlantic video meet-up with his duo partner violinist Adrien Chevalier, currently locked down in the USA.

Workshops will be taught on a variety of subjects, showcasing the wide range of subjects normally enjoyed at the EIHf. Scottish harp, Bulgarian harp, technique and harp-looping will be taught by teachers including Corrina Hewat, Wendy Stewart, Tsvetelina Likova, Eira Lynn Jones and Calum MacLeod.

Harpists-at-home will have the chance to join in with an orchestra of 100 harpists as VIRTUAL EIHf showcases the video premieres of "Farewell to St Kilda" the final movement of Isobel Mieras's "St Kilda Suite" and Rachel Hair's "Mannin Aboo", performed at the 2018 EIHf "From Scratch" concert. Free sheetmusic will be available to download for practice beforehand.

There will also be the chance to view videos from harp-makers on harp maintenance from Festival founders, Pilgrim Harps, one of 18 harp-makers who would have exhibited at the EIHf.

## **QUOTES**

**Rachel Hair, coordinator of the VIRTUAL EIHf, said:**

*"We are so excited to bring a taste of our 39<sup>th</sup> Festival to the world, online and to the safe environment of everyone's homes. We hope it will help bring a smile to the faces of harpists and music-lovers worldwide, inspiring them to keep playing music whilst supporting our VIRTUAL EIHf artists and tutors."*

**Patsy Seddon, Joint Artistic Advisor of the EIHf, said:**

*"This is 'virtually' the best idea we've heard in a long time! Well done to Rachel for thinking of it and being able to progress it with her skills and those of others around her. It may even herald in a new era of our future festivals where some events are in situ and others online or even both. As hoped, our wonderfully supportive artists are flocking to take part and we look forward to enjoying EIHf in splendid isolation in the comfort of our own homes"*

**Isobel Mieras, Joint Artistic Advisor of the EIHf, said:**

*"Heartfelt thanks to all the performers and teachers who have so enthusiastically supported us. Our thoughts are with them as we all face these new challenges. Meanwhile enjoy a taste of what we all looked forward to so much-- and we'll see you all at the 40<sup>th</sup> Festival: April 9-14 2021!"*

## **END**

**Watch the VIRTUAL EIHf:** [www.harpfestival.co.uk](http://www.harpfestival.co.uk)  
[www.facebook.com/EdinburghInternationalHarpFestival](https://www.facebook.com/EdinburghInternationalHarpFestival)  
[www.youtube.com/edinharpfest](https://www.youtube.com/edinharpfest)

**For further details contact:** Rachel Hair, [media@harpfestival.co.uk](mailto:media@harpfestival.co.uk)

**High Res Images:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/j8bhdevxvkshvrl/AADzHMgAKVopYs13QlvJ-mGKa?dl=0>

**Low Res Images:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/j8bhdevxvkshvrl/AADzHMgAKVopYs13QlvJ-mGKa?dl=0>