Inverness Music Festival 2026

Syllabus

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Welcome to our 2026 Syllabus

IMPORTANT UPDATE. We are in LATE ENTRY PHASE 21/12/25- 04/01/2026. Some of our classes have closed, and others may close over this period, once they have been scheduled. If you wish to enter and cannot see a suitable class, please get in touch.

Our motto is 'Performance for Everyone!'. This means whatever your age or stage, whether you are an individual or a group, whether you just want to have fun, whether you want to join in a competition, or receive detailed specialist feedback, you will be very welcome. We can always help you find an event suitable for your needs.
We are known as Inverness Music Festival, but don't forget we also have events for Speech, Debating, Composition, and even Art.
Our venue is Inverness Methodist Church. Participants should note there is no parking at the church and should plan their day carefully if not using public transport.

During and post pandemic we held many classes online. We are glad to say that nearly every class is now live again. There are some exceptions but otherwise we hope to see everyone in person in 2026. However, for every class, if you find you cant attend or if you would simply like to enter by recorded performance, you will be able to submit a video. You won't be able to compete, but the video will be played on the day and you will receive a mark and feedback.

Don't forget, if performing isn't for you, we always need volunteers and kind' supportive audiences.

Why support Inverness music festival?

- To have fun and meet interesting people- join us for a little while, watch a few events, become part of our community,
- To have something to practice for and work towards- as a group or as a solo
- To challenge yourself
- To gain confidence
- To have a platform- the stage is yours!
- To experience a friendly competition.
- To gain feedback

Our theme for 2026 is 'Celebrate' so we are looking forward to a lively atmosphere.

Our provisional dates for 2026 are:
Speech/Drama, Classical/ Contemporary 4th-7th March
Traditional: 12th- 14th March.
There will be some vocal on both weekends.
If you have questions - get in touch! invernessmusicfestival@gmail.com

Online Entries

Any video entries should be submitted online via 'Play and Perform'. Please see our website and Facebook pages for advice about the best way to record and present your videos.
Fully online classes will be adjudicated remotely, and you will be sent a link to view your class. If you have given permission, highlights will be available to view on our Facebook page or on YouTube during the festival period.
Please note that by entering an online class, we expect the class participants to view each other's videos to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all entrants.
Video performances can be recorded on any phone with a camera, and do not require highly specialised equipment. However, if you have difficulties accessing a suitable device, please contact us on invernessmusicfestival@gmail.com, and we will try to help.

Live Performances

Live participants need only bring their scores on the day plus an EXTRA photocopy for the adjudicator. You are not asked to specify your choice of music (unless you require the official accompanist)
Live performers may book the festival piano accompanist if they wish for many of our classes, although in most cases traditional music is performed without piano accompaniment. Requests for the official accompanist need to be reconfirmed by email. Please be mindful of our funding situation and do not book the accompanist unless you genuinely intend to use them. If you book the official accompanist you will need to supply them with a copy of the music in advance and you will not be able to change your mind about the choice of piece.
Watch out for our Festival concert! More details soon.

And Finally...

We are grateful to the Inverness Rotary Club, Highland Council Ward Discretionary Fund and Park Community Fund for supporting this event.
Also to the many supporters who helped us during a period of funding shortfall in 2025, and without whom we would not be able to bring you Festival 26.
Please spare a thought for the festival team. The festival depends on support from generous benefactors and supporters. We also need volunteers - in particular anyone with IT and Social Media experience, to help us out in January and February.

We very much hope you will enjoy browsing the syllabus, and please get in touch if you have any questions.

Email: invernessmusicfestival@gmail.com.
Website: www.invernessmusicfestival.org

Festival 2026 Syllabus

Festival entries have now officially closed - thank you for all your entries.

The early strings fiddle workshop will be open for registration until it is full. see below for details.
If you have forgotten to enter the festival, or had technical difficulties with your entry, you are welcome to email us on Invernessmusicfestival@gmail.com and we will see if we can help. Sometimes we can fit an extra performance into quiet classes.
You should have had an email from Play and Perform about your class times. Please make sure that you check your SPAM folders.
If you need details of the class you have entered, we can help- please email invernessmusicfestival@gmail.com.

Adjudicators

Keith Hamilton

Keith Hamilton was educated at Hutcheson's Boys Grammar in Glasgow. He then studied singing, piano, oboe and organ in the music teacher's course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and Dundee College of Education. During his final year of study he also gained diplomas from the Royal Academy of Music, The Royal College of Music, and Trinity College in London.
At the age of 23, he was appointed Head of Music at Park Main . He spent 26 years at the school whilst continuing his professional development by studying conducting with the great American conductor Frank Batisti. Greatly influenced by Batisti, he subsequently introduced to Scotland the American heterogeneous method of teaching wind and percussion instruments. Consequently he developed three wind orchestras, with his senior concert band receiving the highest 'Gold' Award for Great Britain 9 times.
Although how retired from full time music teaching, during his long career as Head of Music, he has been:
An SQA examiner for 30 years, Principal of the Academy of Woodwind, Brass and Percussion, Organist and Director of Music of Busby Parish Church in Glasgow for over 30 years.
Keith has been an examiner for the ABRSM for 25 years and apart from his extensive examining in the UK, he has examined in a number of countries abroad, including the Caribbean, Guyana, Malaysia, Cyprus, Singapore, Hong Kong.
Keith is married to Grace, who is also retired from music teaching and is an eminent Scottish Wind Band conductor.

We look forward to welcoming Keith back to Inverness. He will be adjudicating our Brass, Woodwind and some vocal classes.

Bernard Docherty

Bernard Docherty is an acclaimed violinist, conductor, teacher and string ensemble coach
With a career spanning five decades, Bernard has travelled extensively at home and abroad with numerous orchestras and chamber groups.
A prize winning violin graduate of SSAMD (now the Royal Conservatore of Scotland), Bernard's career has seen him hold positions with the orchestras of Scottish Ballet BBC Scottish Radio Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra before being appointed Co-Leader of the Scottish Symphony Orchestra, where he remained for 25 years.
In tandem, Bernard was also in demand as the invited guest leader of various orchestra, which included the Scottish Ballet Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Portuguese Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Ulster Orchestra.

Bernard's focus changed in 2017 to being a full time music educator, teacher, examiner, conductor and strings coach, and he continues to serve at the HJunir and Senior RCS, and the Specialist music school of Douglas Academy.
He is also in demand as the principal strings adjudicator at various music festivals.

We are delighted to welcome Bernard back to Inverness for the first time since our centenary festival in 2022. He will adjudicating the Strings classes, along with our online composition and online ensemble performance classes.

Ceitidh Campbell

Ceitidh Campbell is a teacher, singer and poet who teaches Gaelic at Millburn Academy. She won the Gold Medal at the Royal National Mod in 2018. Her poetry has been published in the Poets Republic, Northwords Now, Causeway and Gallas, and many anthologies. She was the first Gaelic ambassador at the Scottish Poetry library and she is the Gaelic editor for Pushing the Boat out magazine. She was shortlisted for the Gelic WIgtown Poetry prize in 2024 and the manuscript for her debit poetry collection was highly commended at the 2024 Gaelic literature Awards. Her first collection will be published in 2025 by Leamington Books.

Ceitidh has kindly agreed to adjudicate our Speech, Drama, poetry performance and Gaelic classes this year.

Christopher Baxter

Renowned pianist Christopher Baxter is in constant demand as a soloist, musician, orchestral pianist and teacher, and his musical activities have taken him all over the UK and further afield.
Christopher was a prizewinning student at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) where his teachers included Aaron Shorr, Graeme McNaught, and Fali Pavri, and he also received regular coaching from the renowned pianist Nigel Clayton.
Activities as an educationalist have seen Christopher give masterclasses and seminars on piano technique and repertoire across the globe, most recently in China, Hong Kong and India. Christopher holds posts as staff pianist at the University of Edinburgh, accompanist at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and teacher and accompanist at the specialist music schools of Douglas Academy and Aberdeen City Music School. As an examiner for the ABRSM he has travelled extensively throughout the UK and Asia.

We are very pleased to say that Christopher will be adjudicating all of our piano classes at this year's festival. This is his first time as an adjudicator at IMF and we are all looking forward to meeting him.

Iain Campbell

Iain Campbell has played pipes for over 50 years with numerous well known pipe bands, including during his army service in the regiment of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. He gained his Pipe Major Certificate and Senior Teachers's certificate having studied at the Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle. has competed at the highest level gaining prizes at the major pipe band championships. He has played for royalty and dignitaries around the world and continues to play as a professional piper having been recently involved with an award winning Belgian television programme.

We are pleased to welcome Iain back to the Festival this year.

Graham Dickie MBE

Graham has recently retired from the position as Artistic Director of Musical Theatre at the national centre of excellence for performing arts the Dance School of Scotland based in Knightswood Secondary School. He founded the course in 1998, since when it has gained an impressive reputation nationally and internationally His professional career started in opera and ballet as a conductor and repetiteur with Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, D'Oyly Carte Opera and ENO. His reputation as a singing teacher, director , adjudicator and examiner for ABRSM has taken him across the UK and to Australia , Japan and Holland.
Graham founded the Singers Company in 1996 and in 2012 originated and developed the Young Scottish Musical Theatre Performer of the Year Competition. His work in Musical Theatre and education was recognised with the award of the MBE in the 2020 Queens Birthday Honours.

We are very pleased to welcome Graham back to Inverness to adjudicate some of our vocal classes.

Rachel Campbell

Rachel is a local fiddler from Inverness who has been tutoring and performing in the area for nearly 20 years. She has run a traditional music school (Astarj in Inverness, working with adults and children. She also performs regularly with several bands including Tartan Paint, the Reelig Ceilidh band, and under her own name. Rachel's debut EP is set to be released in the spring.

Rachel was last an adjudicator for the festival in 2023, so we are looking forward to her returning for our fiddle and traditional music classes.

Isbel Pendlebury

Isbel is a Highland based teacher, performer and composer. She graduated from Strathclyde University's Honours degree in applied music in 2013 and then subsequently earned a Post Graduate Diploma in Education. She currently works as a Secondary School music teacher in the Highlands alongside her performance and compositional work on the clarsach.

Isbel will be with us on Saturday 14th March for our Clarsach and traditional music classes.

Robin Versteeg

Robin Versteeg studied at Edinburgh University and the Royal Academy of Music and enjoys a varied career as a conductor, pianist, examiner and teacher. Alongside work as a coach and accompanist, he is musical director of the Highland Chamber Orchestra, Cairngorms Orchestra, and Inverness Symphony Orchestra. Robin has also been active as a writer and church musician. Recent activiities include adjudicating at Caithness Music Festival, schools workshops with Scottish ballet, and helping to compile the new Church of Scotland hymnary 'God Welcomes All'.

Robin will be one of our two judges for our Premier Competition on 15th March 2026.

Reference Information

Inverness Music Festival takes place between 5th and 15th March 2026, at Inverness Methodist Church.
Our motto is 'Performance for Everyone'. We want to encourage people of all ages and all stages to take part in amateur performance. Whatever it is that you would like to do- sing, play, act, debate- we would like to give you the chance to take to the stage. Solo performances and groups of all kinds are equally welcome.
The festival is organised into a series of 'classes'. Most of our classes, by tradition, run as fun and friendly 'competitions'. An adjudicator will watch each performance and make constructive comments. If you wish to compete, a mark will be awarded. However, you do not need to receive a mark, or even comments if you prefer not to.

The first step to taking part is to browse our syllabus. Classes are grouped into instruments, (Classical, contemporary and traditional), Vocal, Speech and Drama and Creative, including Art.
There are separate classes for beginners, and different stages of skill. 'Open' classes are for confident and/ or experienced musicians and performers. Most of our classes are live, but if you find you cannot attend, it is possible to send in a recording for feedback.
If you are not sure which class is right for you, just ask for advice- we ae very happy to help invernessmusicfestival@gmail.com

Once you have chosen a class, you need to make your entry as soon as you can. We will give you your exact time to attend nearer the time.

Classical Vocal and Woodwind/ Brass will take place on 5th March. Strings will be on 6th March. Piano 7th - 8th March. Speech and Vocal classes will run on 6th,and 13th March. Other vocal classes will run on 6th March and 13th March. Piping will take place on 12th March and other Traditional music events will take place on 14th March. Our 'Premier Competition' will take place on Sunday 15th March.
If you have a specific restriction on dates or times when you can take part, then please ask for advice, or note it down on your entry when you are asked 'Is there are any additional support needed to facilitate this performance?'. We cannot guarantee to accommodate all requests.

Scottish Traditional Music

These classes include all Scottish Traditional music, solo performers, groups and bands.
Here you will find, specialist fiddle, clarsach, song and piping classes. However, you can play any instrument at all under the 'traditional performance' classes.
Gaelic performances are welcome.

129 Fiddle Workshop for Early Stage Strings players
Rachel Campbell will run a workshop for up to 8 players on the afternoon of Saturday 14th March 2.30pm.
If you would like to join in, you should have a violin of your own, and know how to hold it, know the names of the strings and preferably be able to play a simple tune such as Twinkles. This is a great opportunity to try learning an easy Scottish traditional fiddle tune. You will be learning by ear - reading musical notation is not required
Fee £2.00

How to Enter

Head to our website www.invernessmusicfestival.org. On the top left of the homepage you will see a box which says 'Enter Here'. This will take you to the online entry portal. You will need to create an account with 'Play and Perform, and then you will see all the classes available. When you make an entry you will be asked questions, and can add comments - for example about your availability, or any help you need on the day.

Inverness Music Festival has run since 1922! Come along and join the tradition -