

# Scotland's Festival of Light SPECTRA returns with spectacular new programme in 2023



11th January 2023

Multi award-winning festival of light will shine on the City from 09 – 12 February, inspired by the theme of 'Home'.

Spectra makes a spectacular return to Union Terrace Gardens for the first time since 2018

Fantastic Planetby Australian group Parer Studio makes first Scottish appearance.

Eye-catching immersive installations include *Pulse* from Bristol-based This is Loop, Limbic Cinema's *Circa*, and new commissions from *Illuminos*

Newly commissioned projected work will light up landmarks including His Majesty's Theatre and Broad Street

Further information on Spectra is available at [www.spectrafestival.co.uk](http://www.spectrafestival.co.uk)

**SPECTRA**, Aberdeen's multi award-winning festival of light and sound, returns to light up the Granite City from Thursday 9 – Sunday 12 February 2023.

The festival brings a spectacular programme of free works by some of the world's leading visual artists, studios and companies to transform the city centre with light, sound, and eye-catching visual art. Inspired by the theme of 'Home', this year's programme once again lights up Aberdeen's dark winter nights for friends and families alike.

This year also sees Spectra return to Union Terrace Gardens for the first time since 2018. It will be one of the first major events to take place in the historic public space following its multi-million pound revamp, and will transform the garden with a spectacular programme of installations and artworks.

One of the programme's highlights will be the first Scottish appearance of **Fantastic Planet**, from Australian group Parer Studio. The artwork will see towering humanoid figures descend upon different city centre locations, including Union Terrace Gardens, Aberdeen Art Gallery, and Marischal College, having travelled from afar to gently explore this part of our fantastic planet right here in Aberdeen. At a time where the world's resources are being used up and its very existence feels threatened, these gargantuan visitors playfully encourage people to envisage what the future of their own home planet might be.

*Illumaphonium* promises to bring people together with a fun and spontaneous outdoor music-making experience. Consisting of more than two hundred illuminated chime bars, each of which respond to touch with ever changing patterns of light and sound, the giant instrument will be a delight for eyes and ears.

Limbic Cinema's spectacular **Circa** is a light sculpture exploring our circadian rhythms and built around seasonal light levels, with each of the twelve light fixtures representing the average lightfall over one month of the year in Aberdeen. The result is a three-dimensional clock reflecting the light and dark cycles of the city set to a stunning sound design by Joe Acheson of Hidden Orchestra.

Union Terrace Gardens will also be transformed by two spectacular nature-inspired installations. **Nature Nocturnal**, from the Lantern Company, sees incredible illuminated plants, insects and wildlife transform the slopes of the beautifully renovated gardens, allowing visitors to experience the nocturnal natural world in a luminous lantern walk in a gently dazzling kaleidoscope of colour.

Meanwhile Sound Intervention's towering otherworldly **Luminosi Trees** will create an absorbing, calming space in the centre of the Gardens. These giant jellyfish-like structures, six metres high, are built with thousands of sound responsive LEDs that respond in vibrant colours and mesmerising patterns to a Fibonacci-inspired soundscape, meaning it never repeats and will be different each time it is visited.

Elsewhere in the city, Sound Intervention will also be popping up around the town with their amazing **Projector Bikes**: electric trikes which have been transformed into unique mobile cinemas, ready to travel the streets improvising and interacting with audiences. These off-grid audio/visual machines will project delightful digital animations inspired by Aberdeen and the spirit of home.

Broad Street will be transformed by **Pulse**, a spectacular 45-metre long light sculpture from Bristol-based creative team This Is Loop. A large-scale, mirrored light sculpture which plays with scale and perception, offering audiences an alternative way of seeing a familiar and iconic space. Twelve giant hoops covered in mirrors stretch out into a winding tunnel, becoming a contemplative place for visitors of all ages, both day and night.

The festival programme also features some special new commissions that will light up iconic Aberdeen landmarks. On His Majesty's Theatre, **The Waxwing Wanes**, created by projection art-specialists **Illuminos** responding to a new composition by composer and harpist Ailie Robertson, musing on our changing climate and dramatic shifts in temperature we are all experiencing by following the ebbs and flows in nature.

Illuminos also create a new piece for the front of Marischal College, **Nøkken**, based around a shape-shifting, Kelpie-like freshwater spirit, from the shared folklore of Scotland and the Nordics. Echoing the shift in perspective provided by the nearby **Fantastic Planet** artwork.

Meanwhile **Visible Voices**, an animated projection created by visual artist and animator Vincent James working with local young people, infuses everyday objects with a twist of the surreal and will appear in the archways by Union Terrace Gardens.

The Spectra programme also sees live performers take centre stage, with Aberdeen's Fusion Youth Dance Company set to premiere a new piece of outdoor performance. Choreographed by Scottish dance artist Steven Martin and performed in Marishcal College Quad, the piece will offer a live response to the eye-catching **Fantastic Planet** installation that will transform the area during the festival.

Also in Broad St Spectra's resident storyteller Pauline Cordiner, alongside Lindsey Gibb, will host Storytelling in a warm and welcoming space – with storytelling for all ages in English, Scots, and Doric. There will be tales old and new, from Aberdeen and beyond, inspiring visitors to think about the comforts of home, wherever it may be.

**Andy Brydon, Director of Curated Place said:** *"Spectra is always a winter highlight in Aberdeen, and we're beyond thrilled to be announcing this programme for 2023. It's packed with extraordinary work from some truly astounding artists and creatives, with something for everyone to enjoy, and we're excited to once again light up some of the city's spectacular streets and landmarks in wonderful new ways.*

**Cllr Martin Greig, Culture Spokesperson for Aberdeen City Council said:** *"Spectra is a great way to mark the reopening of Union Terrace Gardens and the first major event in the city centre for 2023. These exciting, imaginative light displays can be enjoyed by people of all ages ensuring the city kicks off the new year filled with colour, people and joy. Spectra will bring together residents and visitors to enjoy the fun and splendour of Spectra in the heart of our beautiful city, drawing thousands of people into the city centre to enjoy not just the festival but everything our city has to offer including the great range of restaurants, cafes, galleries and parks. The festival's theme of 'home' is especially important at a time when we are thinking of places that are important to us and we are considering what is best for the future of Aberdeen. The programme of activities gives us the chance to see our city in a unique way and I can't wait to see the wonderful displays this February."*

A staple of the year-round cultural calendar in the North East, **Spectra** is delivered by Aberdeen City Council and created in collaboration with leading arts production company **Curated Place**.

So whether you're out seeing your home city in a new light, visiting from somewhere near or far, or even stopping by on a trip from another fantastic planet with some close friends, Spectra has something to illuminate your winter nights this February.

More information on all the installations, how to find them, and how to enjoy them, will be available on the Spectra website: [www.spectrafestival.co.uk](http://www.spectrafestival.co.uk)