

# 48th ST MAGNUS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

## Friday 21 June to Saturday 29 June 2024



An unusual venue - a 50ft life-size sperm whale – runes, tunes and Scandic connections cast a spell over Orkney this summer.

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22th March 2024

Infusing the stunning landscape of the **Orkney Islands** while basking in the light nights of midsummer, the **St Magnus International Festival** creates a beautiful and distinct shape in the UK's festivals landscape.

Under the directorship of Scottish composer **Alasdair Nicolson**, this year's programme brings the signature mix of film, literature, theatre, community participation and world-class musicians that St Magnus has come to be known for. **Gerda Stevenson**, director of last year's world premiere performance of David McNeish's play, *Thora*, has her film *The Storm Watchers* shown in installation daily at the Festival, alongside innovative outdoor performances from all-women's theatre company **Circo Rum Ba Ba** who bring a **50ft life-size sperm whale** to Kirkwall within which they perform a show exploring plastic in our oceans. More theatre comes from Aotearoa / New Zealand company **Trick of the Light** with their one-man-show *The Bookbinder*. Literary conversations are littered throughout the Festival, with poet **Kathleen Jamie**, historian **Jocelyn Rendall**, and horror writer and enthusiast **Johnny Mains** discussing their work.

**And of course, a strong music line-up also courses through the eight days of the Festival.**

In 2024, Nicolson continues his practice of bringing performers to Orkney to be 'in residence' at the Festival, exploring both sustainability and the deepening of relationships between artists, visiting musicians, their homelands, and the Orkney Islands.

Embracing and intertwining both Scottish and Nordic identities held close by Orcadians, the Festival welcomes Swedish chamber orchestra **Musica Vitae** with guest cellist and director **Robin Michael** to the Isles to perform an eclectic programme including music by Bach, Highland composer Lisa Robertson, the **UK premiere of cello concerto Storm Runes by Nicolson** and a programme based on Swedish folk music. Michael will also be performing a solo event at Stromness Town Hall, sandwiching Welsh composer Huw Watkins' Sonata for Solo Cello between two of Bach's famous Cello Suites. Musica Vitae and Robin Michael will be reprising their Storm Runes programme from the Festival at Kings Place in London as part of **Scotland Unwrapped**.

The **Edinburgh Quartet** enjoys a collaborative residency at St Magnus this year. In addition to their own concert, the ensemble performs alongside **Alon Sariel, Kathryn Stott**, and in a very special concert with **Erland Cooper**. The composer from Stromness buried the only existing tape of his work **Carve The Runes Then Be Content With Silence** alongside other artefacts, leaving clues as to its whereabouts. The musical time capsule has recently been unearthed, and the piece will be played with the Edinburgh Quartet with Cooper on piano as the buried trinkets dry out around St Magnus Cathedral.

St Magnus is a festival where youthful talent is offered the opportunity to flourish on the Orkney stage, and this year's offering is no different. The Festival continues its ongoing collaboration with **Live Music Now Scotland**, with the guitar and soprano **Morris Begg Duo** and the fiddle and accordion of **Roo and Neil** representing the charity. The former perform in two events, one of which is a dazzling multi-media promenade concert at St Magnus Cathedral with musicians from the Nicolson-founded **Assembly Project** and stunning video mapping from **Illuminos**. Roo and Neil perform in one of two late-night "Sound of Local Folk" concerts, with young Orcadians pianist **Jennifer Austin** and fiddler **Eric Linklater** performing in the other. Austin also plays a magical concert in-the-round at St Magnus Cathedral, bringing her new compositions to Kirkwall by candlelight.

Top names in classical music also make their way to the islands for this celebration. These include percussion ensemble **O Duo** and soprano **Elizabeth Llewellyn** performing the long-awaited **UK premiere of George Crumb's American Songbook III: Unto The Hills**, supported ably by the talent of the **Royal Birmingham Conservatoire percussion department**. **Ensemble Hesperis** plays baroque music with a Scottish flavour; acclaimed mandolin player **Alon Sariel** performs Plucked Bach; and **Kathryn Stott** joins us on her farewell to the piano tour.

The Orkney community is at the heart of the Festival, and these highlights of the programme certainly reflect this: the **world premiere of new commission The Rhythm Of The Stones** from **Stephen Deazley** and Orkney Voices performed by hundreds of local school children and the Assembly Project; and Carl Orff's monumental Carmina Burana performed by the **Festival Chorus** of many local volunteer singers alongside acclaimed choir **Sonoro**, O Duo and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire percussion, and a litany of starry soloists in the Pickaquoy Arena.

Rounding off the Festival in style are two performances from **Scottish Opera** on their Pop-Up Opera tour. Audiences in Stromness on Friday and St Margaret's Hope on Saturday can look forward to 30 minute shows for all the family - A Little Bit of The Merry Widow and A Little Bit of Don Giovanni brought to life by a storyteller, singers, instrumentalists, narration and colourful illustrations.

The Festival spans venues from Ship of Fools Gallery to St Magnus Cathedral, stunning churches nestled scenically on the coast, Stromness Town Hall, Library, and Academy Theatre, The Writing Room at Kirkwall Hotel, and the Pickaquoy Centre.

The magical atmosphere of St Magnus Festival should be on every experience seeker's bucket list.

**Festival Director, Alasdair Nicolson said:** "We pride ourselves on bringing the Orkney midsummer days and nights to life with all kinds of artistry, so we couldn't be more thrilled to be presenting a 2024 Festival programme with a wide array of music, theatre, literature, and more. With this year's resident artists we explore and strengthen the connections we have between Scotland and the Nordic countries, with the Edinburgh Quartet bringing their versatility and talents from the capital, and Musica Vitae bringing their Swedish flair. I'm of course very personally excited to have Musica Vitae and Robin Michael perform the world premiere of my new cello concerto, Storm Runes, among a programme of Orkney-inspired works.

*“There’s really some outstanding works on show this year from across the artistic spectrum. After Thora’s success last year, I’m delighted we can show director Gerda Stevenson’s film at the Ship of Fools Gallery. We have some very innovative and interactive theatre performances from Circo Rum Ba Ba and Trick of the Light, and of course our thought-provoking and fulfilling Literary Hour conversations with brilliant poets, novelists, and historians.*”

*“Our community events are a step bigger this year, with monumental works performed by our school and Festival choirs alongside some fantastic names in classical music. We have had an overwhelmingly positive response to our promenade concerts as well in past years, so we can’t wait for our Magnus Mixtape event with music and lights on show in the beautiful St Magnus Cathedral. As usual, many nooks and crannies of the Orkney Islands will be explored over the course of the Festival, with some events held in venues not often visited with chances to sample local baking. We look forward to welcoming faces old and new to these magical Islands in June.”*

**Nick Hewitt, Culture Team Lead at Orkney Islands Council said:** *“St Magnus Festival’s 2024 offer spans an incredible range of artforms and genres, and it is really exciting to see such strong live performances building on last year. Orkney Islands Council is pleased to be in partnership with the Festival as a funder and excited to see its ongoing development.”*

**Emma Campbell, Music Officer at Creative Scotland commented:** *“St Magnus Festival continues to provide a stellar opportunity for islanders and visitors alike to experience world-class culture in Orkney during the height of summer. The sheer variety and quality of artistic offering in the programme this year ensures that the 2024 festival will be yet another truly vibrant and unique experience for attendees.”*

**Paul Bush OBE, VisitScotland Director of Events, said:** *“EventScotland is delighted to be supporting the St Magnus International Festival through our National Events Funding Programme. Orkney is the perfect stage for this annual celebration of music and the arts, with the event offering fantastic support to the islands’ local talent and international performers alike.*

*“Events play an important part in our communities by offering visitors and locals the chance to come together and share memorable experiences. I’m sure visitors will be greeted with a warm Orcadian welcome as they come to the area from far and wide to enjoy this uniquely Scottish event.”*

MAGFEST MEMBERS PRIORITY BOOKING from 10am on 8th April 2024.

GENERAL BOOKING from 10am on 15th April 2024.

**Social Channels:**

<https://www.facebook.com/stmagnusfestival>  
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**St Magnus Festival:**

<https://www.stmagnusfestival.com/about-us>

LISTINGS

## **Music**

### **EVENT 1 – STORM RUNES**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Friday 21 June 19.00

**MUSICA VITAE**

**ROBIN MICHAEL** Director/Cello

The first concert in a residency by this string orchestra from Växjö in Sweden brings together music mainly from Scotland contrasting contemporary with baroque. A strong connection with Orkney brings a brooding new concerto based on the work of George Mackay Brown alongside Lisa Robertson’s sound picture of the Old Man of Hoy and ends with Maxwell Davies’ ever-popular piano pieces in string arrangements

## **EVENT 7 UNTO THE HILLS: SONGS OF SADNESS, YEARNING AND INNOCENCE**

St Magnus Cathedral

Saturday 22 June 20.00

**ELIZABETH LLEWELYN** Soprano

**O DUO**

**ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE** Percussionists

A UK premiere for one of the America's most original composers, George Crumb, sees the nave of St Magnus are joined by percussionists from Birmingham Conservatoire accompanying the stellar soprano Elizabeth Llewellyn who has been seen most recently as Ellen Orford at ENO and Bess in the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

## **EVENT 8 SOUNDS OF FOLK: JENERIC**

The Sound Archive, Kirkwall

Saturday 22 June 21.30

**ERIC LINKLATER** Fiddle

**JENNIFER AUSTIN** Piano

Jennifer and Eric are two of the young generation of Orcadian traditional performers who already have a vibrant career separately as solo performers and as members of various groups. Their combined talents can only lead to a burst of creative energy which celebrates the living tradition of Orkney music making.

## **EVENT 9 – FOLK FROM THE NORTH LANDS**

Harray Hall, Harray

Sunday 23 June 11.00

**MUSICA VITAE**

**ROBIN MICHAEL** Director/Cello

As part of their residency, the player from Musica Vitae presents a concert of music from Scandinavia interspersed with folk music arrangements from their native Sweden. The Norwegian Grieg's evergreen baroque-inspired Holberg Suite is peppered through the programme which draws on the talents of the ensemble's violinist Märten Sundén as arranger of a fascinating and toe-tapping selection of traditional music. Following the Swedish theme, the concert is followed by coffee and cinnamon buns from Orkney's own Eviedale Bakehouse.

## **FESTIVAL SERVICE**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Sunday 23 June 11.15

**ST MAGNUS CATHEDRAL** Choir

**MICHAEL MAPPIN** Organ

## **EVENT 10 – OH, WHAT COMES OVER THE SEA**

Stromness Town Hall

Sunday 23 June 15.00

**ELIZABETH LLEWELLYN** Soprano

**SIMON LEPPER** Piano

A survey of music by Coleridge Taylor is peppered with music by a range of his contemporaries that exploits the talents of this longstanding duo partnership.

Elizabeth Llewellyn's voice has been described as 'radiant' and she is one of the UK's finest singers. She is joined by her long-term collaborator Simon Lepper who is well known as a collaborative pianist for singers and as one of the accompanists for Cardiff Singer of the World.

## **EVENT 12 – CARMINA BURANA**

Pickaquoy Centre

Sunday 23 June 19.00

**HELENA DIX** Soprano

**GREG TASSELL** Tenor

**ANDREW SLATER** Bass

**NEIL FERRIS** Conductor

**MICHAEL HIGGINS** Piano

**JAMES KEEFE** Piano

**RBC PERCUSSION**

**SONORO**

**ST MAGNUS FESTIVAL CHORUS**

One of the most iconic choral works of the twentieth century, Carmina Burana has become a well-known work particularly because of some of its music being used in film and TV, but also because its quirky soundworld and ancient Latin texts create a musical landscape that is entirely unique. In this version we have the full battery of percussion and pianos to accompany a work that investigates the fickleness of fortune and wealth, the ephemeral nature of life, the joy of the return of spring and the pleasures and perils of drinking, gluttony, gambling, and lust.

## **EVENT 14 – SOUND OF FOLK: ROO AND NEIL**

Sound Archive

Sunday 23 June 21.30

**ROO GEDDES** Fiddle

**NEIL SUTCLIFFE** Accordion

Roo Geddes and Neil Sutcliffe combine their shared experience across Classical, Folk and Jazz to create original music for violin and accordion. Based in Glasgow, their compositions are inspired by landscape and people and by the ways in which music can evoke a sense of place and community.

They first met aged 13, as students of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Juniors' School. The duo is quickly gaining recognition and in 2021 were selected by Celtic Connection's prestigious 'Danny Kyle Award' and way from their instruments, they share a love of hillwalking, tree climbing, and all things outdoors.

## **EVENT 15 – THE ISLE IS FULL OF NOISES**

St Magnus Cathedral

Monday 24 June 13.00

**MUSICA VITAE**

**ROBIN MICHAEL** Director/Cello

**HELENA DIX** Soprano

In the final concert of their residency, the players of Musica Vitae bring together an English programme ranging across the centuries from the elusive consort music of Matthew Locke to Joe Cutler's searching and elegiac work with cello solo dating from 2005. The songs and theatre music of Henry Purcell bring the soprano Helena Dix to the fore with Elgar's early masterpiece completing this brief survey of music from across the Border.

## **EVENT 17 – THE RHYTHM OF THE STONES**

Pickaquoy Arena, Kirkwall

Monday 24 June 17.00

**World Premiere**

**CHILDREN'S CHOIRS FROM ORKNEY PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**STEPHEN DEAZLEY** Conductor

A specially commissioned work brings together the writing of some of the members of Orkney Voices Group with the quirky music of Stephen Deazley. The new piece presents folk tales and legends with lyrics in Orcadian dialect that come together with singing, body percussion, percussion bands and perhaps some dancing.

A celebration of the young talent of Orkney Primary schools.

## **EVENT 18 – POSTCARDS AND MEMORIES**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Monday 24 June 19.00

**KATHRYN STOTT** Piano

Kathryn Stott has been a familiar name amongst pianists internationally over the last 40 years and has an illustrious career which has included an ongoing partnership with the cellist YoYo Ma. This recital is part of her final season touring the world and celebrates a life in music that has championed the new whilst presenting all facets of the piano repertoire. Her programme here showcases a life through piano pieces and brings a diverse and eclectic approach which culminates in a special new work as she retires by friend and colleague Graham Fitkin.

## **EVENT 19 – SURE ON THIS SHINING NIGHT**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Monday 24 June 22.00

**SONORO**

**NEIL FERRIS** Conductor

**MICHAEL HIGGINS** Organ

Sonoro is one of the finest singing groups in the UK and for this late-night concert it presents a programme of music glued together by Michael Higgins' organ compositions inspired by the choir's last visit to the Festival and Orkney's history and landscape. Surrounding these instrumental interludes are choral reflections by many contemporary composers – all inspired by earlier works in the repertoire – that bring a meditative and reflective atmosphere to the peaceful calm of St Magnus Cathedral.

## **EVENT 20 – BOWED BACH**

Stromness Town Hall

Tuesday 25 June 11.00

**ROBIN MICHAEL** Solo Cello

The music of Bach's cello suites is always fresh after many centuries of existence and here they are brought to life by a musician equally comfortable in repertoire old and new. The two suites surround a recent work by the Welsh composer Huw Watkins. Robin Michael comes from Fife and studied at the Royal Academy of Music. He is principal cellist in Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, Solo cellist with Orchestre Les Siecles (Paris) as well as regular guest principal cellist with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

## **EVENT 21 – FULL OF HIGHLAND HUMOURS**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Tuesday 25 June 13.00

**ENSEMBLE HESPERI**

**MARY JANNET-LEITH** recorders

**MAGDALENA LOTH-HILL** baroque violin

**FLORENCE PETIT** baroque cello

**THOMAS ALLERY** harpsichord

In 1700 the first known collection of Scots Tunes was printed in London by the celebrated music publisher Henry Playford. Ever the savvy advertiser, Playford claimed in the title that the music contained therein was 'Full of the Highland Humours'. Ensemble Hesperis take us on a whirlwind tour of music from this period, some by Scots composers and some by others who were so inspired, like Geminiani, that their "Treatise of Good Taste" included nothing but Scots tunes.

Ensemble Hesperis is a young and dynamic ensemble that has instantly won acclaim and won several prizes for its fresh and innovative programming.

## **EVENT 22 – INVOCATIONS AND IMPROVISATIONS**

St Ninian's Kirk, Deerness

Tuesday 25 June 15.00

**EDINBURGH QUARTET**

**ALON SARIEL** Mandolin

In the beautiful setting of Deerness the Edinburgh Quartet is joined by mandolin player Alon Sariel for a varied and fascinating programme. Clark Nichols new work explores timbre for quartet and strings whilst Hans Gal's music takes inspiration from Mozart's use of the mandolin in Don Giovanni. Judith Weir's Quartet takes songs from Spain and Banffshire as its starting point. Puccini's delicate elegy "Chrysanthemums" and Schubert's unfinished quartet movement complete this spellbinding programme.

## **EVENT 24/25/29/30 – MAGNUS MIXTAPE**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Tuesday 25 June/Wednesday 26 June 19.30 and 21.30

**MORRIS BEGG DUO**

**THE ASSEMBLY PROJECT**

A promenade performance which presents well known music and musical arrangements throughout the nave, aisles and Rognvald chapel in the magnificent St Magnus Cathedral. In an immersive experience with video mapping, special lighting and an ever-changing live musical performance, the one-hour sequence allows the audience to experience the Cathedral as never before, free to wander, to listen, to watch and to relax. Specially created video-mapping explores the themes of the Cathedral's history and St Magnus' story.

## **EVENT 26 – TIME STANDS STILL**

Stromness Town Hall

Wednesday 26 June 11.00

**MORRIS BEGG DUO**

**INES MAYHEW-BEGG** Soprano

**ROSS MORRISS** Guitar

A celebration of music from across the centuries brings classics by Henry Purcell into contrast with the ballads from Spain inspired by the art of Goya. Stephen Goss's fascinating song cycle, with words by Dylan Thomas, includes Oh, What'll the neighbours say and Rosie Probert and Captain Cat and James Macmillan's work sets the poetry of William Soutar.

## **EVENT 27 – A GIFT FOR YOUR GARDEN**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

Wednesday 26 June 13.00

**ENSEMBLE HESPERI**

**MARY JANNET-LEITH** recorders

**MAGDALENA LOTH-HILL** baroque violin

**FLORENCE PETIT** baroque cello

**THOMAS ALLERY** harpsichord

The Baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann, one of the most prolific composers of all time, created a much-envied garden later in life at his Hamburg residence. Always searching for new and unusual specimens, he wrote on many occasions to his good friend Handel in London, asking for plants from England. "I am insatiable", he wrote, "where hyacinths and tulips are concerned, greedy for ranunculi, and especially for anemones."

This programme presents a cornucopia of music by Telemann and his horticultural correspondents.

## **EVENT 28 – PLUCKED BACH**

St Peter's Kirk, Eastside  
Wednesday 26 June 15.00  
**ALON SARIEL** Mandolin

One of the world's finest mandolin players presents a programme of music by Bach gathered from his violin, cello and organ music. Transferred to this plucked instrument, the music comes to life in a fresh and unusual way and sheds new light on some well-known masterpieces and embraces Bach's own willingness to transfer music from one instrument to another. Alon Sariel is one of the most versatile performers of his generation, whose guiding principle is a changing perspective; giving new life to existing material, as well as creating completely new works.

## **EVENT 32 – AND THEN THERE WERE FIVE**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall  
Thursday 27 June 13.00  
**EDINBURGH QUARTET**  
**KATHRYN STOTT** Piano

Kathryn Stott joins the Edinburgh Quartet for the mighty piano quintet by Franck written in 1879, a highly romantic and tempestuous work which was famously premiered with Saint-Saens at the piano. In contrast Debussy's Quartet of some twenty years later brings the more impressionistic style to bear which is more poetic and elusive though it shares some of the same Gallic passion.

## **EVENT 33 – ACROSS NORTHERN SEAS: A JOHNSMAS FOY**

Stromness Town Hall  
Thursday 27 June 19.30  
**ORKNEY CAMERATA**  
**ELIZABETH SULLIVAN** Director

Established in 1994, Orkney Camerata brings together a variety of musicians from across the Orkney community. For this 2024 Johnsmas Foy, they present a tour of the northern seas with a nod to the Nordic heritage of the islands and music old and new. Peppered with readings of poetry and prose, the concert features music based on the Hymn to St Magnus by Andra Patterson and a work by Sarah Cattley written as part of a project to celebrate the centenary of George Mackay Brown.

## **EVENT 34 – NORTHERN LIGHT**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall  
Thursday 27 June 21.30  
**JENNIFER AUSTIN** Piano

Inspired by the magnetic atmosphere of Orkney, Jennifer Austin brings her new compositions home to the candlelit St Magnus Cathedral. A mesmerising hour of music from this Orcadian pianist and artist whose work has a unique and reflective voice as she looks to the northern light at Midsummer. As well as a solo career, Jennifer has worked with Fara, Blazin Fiddles and many more well-known traditional performers.

## **EVENT 35/36/38/39 – POP-UP OPERA**

Stromness Town Hall  
Friday 28 June 13.00 & 15.00  
Cromarty Hall, St Margaret's Hope  
Saturday 29 June 13.00 & 15.00  
**SCOTTISH OPERA**  
**JESSICA LEARY** Soprano  
**ANDREW MCTAGGART** Bass  
**ANDREW DRUMMOND HUGGAN** Cello  
**SASHA SAVALONI** Guitar

Experience opera on a miniature scale this summer with Scottish Opera's specially created 30-minute performances. A Little Bit of The Merry Widow and A Little Bit of Don Giovanni are two cleverly rewritten versions of beloved classics - one the ultimate rom-com, the other a moody story of one man's fate.



## **EVENT 37 – CARVE THE RUNES THEN BE CONTENT WITH SILENCE**

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

19.30

**ERLAND COOPER** Piano

**EDINBURGH QUARTET AND FRIENDS**

Ground-breaking Scottish composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist shares his buried album, unearthed, and performed live for the first time, exactly as it sounds from the earth.

In May 2021, he planted the only existing copy of the master tape of his first classical album in Orkney, Scotland, deleting all digital files and leaving only a treasure hunt of clues for fans and his record label alike to search for it.

Alongside special guests, in this performance Cooper shall both reveal and play back the retrieved tape from the soil, then with some exceptional musicians, perform the album exactly as it sounds from the earth.

## **Installations & Theatre**

### **EVENT 4/6/11 – THE BOOKBINDER**

Orkney Theatre

Saturday 22 June 14.00 and 19.00

Cromarty Hall, St Margaret's Hope

Sunday 23 June 19.00

**TRICK OF THE LIGHT THEATRE COMPANY**

**RALPH MCCUBBIN HOWELL** Writer/Performer

**HANNA SMITH** Director

From award-winning New-Zealand company Trick of the Light Theatre comes a story of mystery, magic and mayhem.

An old man sits down to read the tale of an erstwhile bookbinding apprentice. As he speaks the story spills from the pages and into the bindery - from pop-up book to puppetry, storytelling to live action - weaving an original dark fairytale in the vein of Neil Gaiman. First performed in the back room of a second-hand bookshop as part of NZ Fringe, it has since toured across Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK, Canada, and USA. Trick of the Light is an award-winning theatre company from Wellington, New Zealand, that likes to make theatre that is playful, inventive, thought-provoking, and that speaks to the here and now.

### **THE WHALE**

Pickaquoy Outfield

Friday 21/Saturday 22 June

Shows at 13.00, 13.30, 16.00, 16.30, 18.00, 18.30

Birsay Hall Football Pitch

Sunday 23 June

Shows at 13.00, 13.30, 16.00, 16.30, 18.00, 18.30

**CIRCO RUM BA BA**

A giant from the ocean has come on land in Orkney and will be settling outside the Pickaquoy Centre before heading West to Birsay.

Come and visit Circo Rum Baba's giant, 50ft Whale at any time or buy tickets to go inside for a wonderful theatre show for children, Plastic Ocean. If you simply want to see this spectacular creature, come along any time. See below for show times.

### **Plastic Ocean**

Bold explorers squeeze into the belly of an enormous inflatable Sperm Whale where they find themselves in the depths of the bubbling, kelp-swirling ocean. They encounter an acrobatic diver who leads them swimmingly through the age-old journey of the life of an ancient Leatherback Turtle. With the use of exquisite puppets, comedy, and music, Circo Rum Ba Ba explore the tale of sea creatures and their battle to survive in an ocean full of rubbish. The audience help to save the turtle and the Whale from a deluge of plastic and travel from the Indian ocean to a coral reef, leaving feeling empowered that everyone can make a difference.

## **BOX ON THE STREET**

Kirk Green, Kirkwall

Monday 24 June 12.00, 14.30, 16.30

Stromness Pier

Tuesday 25 June 12.00, 14.30, 16.30

**BOX & THE MEDIEVAL APOTHECARY**

**CIRCO RUM BABA**

A curious box lies dormant in the street. Music seems to awaken what lurks inside as eyes appear from every angle and surreal creatures begin to emerge from within. As the music builds the box erupts into a frenzy of tap dancing and a half bird, half human contortionist balances precariously on top. What other creatures will appear and what else can possibly be contained within this bottomless box?

An exuberant and comedic show inspired by Hieronymus Bosch and including acrobatics, dance, and puppetry. Suitable for all ages.

## **THE STORM WATCHERS (Installation)**

Ship of Fools Gallery, Bridge Street, Kirkwall

Friday 21 – Saturday 29 June, 11.00 – 17.00 daily

The play *The Storm Watchers* was originally written as a short piece to be part of a pageant in the late Sixties in Stromness. The work was later performed in its own right with some additions. A powerful and poetic piece, the drama presents the lives, anxieties, regrets, fears and memories of women as they deal with the waiting and the aftermath of a storm with all their men at sea. Filmed in lockdown in Orkney this project involved technology, remote rehearsal, mobile phone cameras and much more besides. Originally created for the year of Mackay Brown's 100th birthday, it brings to life one of his early but also most powerful pieces of theatre.

## **Literature**

### **EVENT 2 – A POET IN THE LANDSCAPE**

Stromness Academy Theatre

Saturday 22 June 11.00

**KATHLEEN JAMIE** Poet

(in conversation with **Alison Miller**)

Kathleen Jamie joins us in the final year of her tenure as Scotland's Makar. Her collections include *Black Spiders* (1982) and *The Queen of Sheba* (1995). Her 2004 collection *The Tree House* revealed an increasing interest in the natural world, and won the Forward Poetry Prize and the Scottish Book of the Year Award. *The Overhaul*, won the 2012 Costa poetry award. In 2014, Jamie set herself the task of writing one poem per week. The resulting poems were collected in *The Bonniest Companie*, winning 2016 Saltire Society Book of the Year award. Her *Selected Poems* were published in 2018. The poem 'Here Lies Our Land' by Jamie is inscribed on the national monument at Bannockburn.

For the last decade Jamie has also written non-fiction. Her collections of essays *Findings*, *Sightlines* and *Surfacing* are widely regarded as influential works of nature and landscape writing.

### **EVENT 5 – THE FARSTRAERS: VOYAGES AND HOMECOMINGS**

The Writing Room, Kirkwall Hotel

Saturday 22 June 18.00

**JOCELYN RENDALL** Author

(in conversation with **Alison Miller**)

Jocelyn Rendall talks about her book which travels across three centuries and much of the world, looking into the lives of the Orcadians who found themselves at a distance from, or out of step with, the archipelago they called home.

Using a remarkable archive of letters, court records and other documents, *Farstraers* tracks how life for these men, women and children was shaped by harsh conditions at home and by the wider social, economic and political currents that carried them into new and often challenging settings. Many of these people are lost to us, but at least some of their voices still resonate in the letters they sent home.

### **EVENT 13 – GHOSTLY TALES**

Skail House Drawing Room, Skail

Sunday 23 June 21.30

**JOHNNY MAINS** Speaker

Sit back in the drawing room at Skail House while Johnny Mains gives some background on both Buchan and Brown before reading their ghostly horror stories. A young woman Vera Peterson has disappeared on Orkney, so the narrator is sent to investigate. A birdwatcher camps out on the lonely island of Sule Skerry only to encounter the powerful force of myth and nature.

### **EVENT 16 – SCOTLAND THE STRANGE**

The Writing Room, Kirkwall Hotel

Monday 24 June 15.00

**JOHNNY MAINS** Speaker

From misty moors, crags and clifftops comes a hoard of strange tales gathered by Johnny Mains, award-winning anthologist and editor of other British Library anthologies. The writer and editor relates how he sourced these from Scotland's literary heritage. Bustling with witches, ghosts, devils and merfolk, this selection celebrates the works of treasured Scottish writers such as John Buchan, Robert Louis Stevenson, Dorothy K. Haynes and Neil M. Gunn alongside rare pieces by lesser-known authors – including two tales translated from Scots Gaelic.

Brooding in the borderlands where strange folklore, bizarre mythology and twentieth-century hauntings meet, this volume promises chills and shivers as keen and fresh as the wind-whipped wilds of Scotland.

### **EVENT 23 – CELTIC WEIRD**

Stromness Library

Tuesday 25 June 17.30

**JOHNNY MAINS** Speaker

From the shorelines, hills and towns of ancient lands, tales of twisted creatures, sins against nature and pagan revenants have been passed down from generation to generation. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, folklore from Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, Brittany and the Isle of Man inspired a new strain of strange short stories, penned by writers of the weird and fantastic including masters of the form such as Arthur Machen, Edith Wharton and Robert Aickman.

Here, Johnny Mains talks about his dive into the archives to unearth a hoard enthralling tales imbued with elements of Celtic folklore, ranging from the 1820s to the 1980s and including three weird lost gems translated from Gaelic. Together they conjure uncanny visions of eternal forces, beings and traditions, resonating with the beguiling essence of this unique branch of strange fiction.

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