

**EXPERIENCE A HUGE VARIETY OF HARPS AND MUSIC
AT THE 2012 EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL HARP FESTIVAL
March 30th – April 4th 2012**

The Edinburgh International Harp Festival (EIHf) launches its 2012 festival programme featuring new music, new sounds and new faces in its annual celebration and gathering of musical talents.

Isobel Mieras, artistic adviser: “We are delighted to be welcoming so many new faces and sounds to this year’s festival in our international line-up of renowned contemporary harpists from around the world.

The EIHf is co-commissioner of **Sally Beamish’s Seavaigers** concerto which will be performed on 3rd April and features one of Scotland’s premier string ensembles, the **Scottish Ensemble**, working with two of the finest traditional musicians, **Chris Stout** (fiddle) and **Catriona McKay** (clarsach). This second performance follows the hugely successful premiere on 24th January.

Ancience is also brand new and is the result of a co-operation amongst performers of varied background, blending their traditions on instruments with a distinguished history with new ideas and making use of electronic sounds.

We will also have a fantastic fusion of native Colombian with jazz – recently described as “mind blowing” – certainly such as we have not heard in Edinburgh! Scandinavian and Welsh tradition will feature alongside medieval and baroque. The African Kora can be heard in company with guitar and viola d’amore and the Scottish clarsach will join with the Chinese zheng!

The festival also embraces the tradition rooted in Scotland and the other Celtic nations historically associated with the harp. Young Scottish players perform as soloists, in duos and groups and there is a celebration of the partnership between the harp and the Gaelic language, long fostered at the Royal National Mod.

Every Easter we bring harpists from across the globe together to rub shoulders. There is much to enjoy during a visit to the festival. The festival’s home, Merchiston Castle School, is nestled in 100 acres of beautiful parklands and is a wonderful place in which to take a stroll, sit, chat, or play. You can see a favourite harpist in concert, pop in and meet some of today’s finest harp makers, join in a class or workshop, enjoy a cuppa in the festival café, a nightcap at the late night sessions or simply park yourself on the grass – with or without your harp! Entry to Merchiston and the Harpmakers’ Exhibition is FREE and EVERYONE is welcome!”

**Full details of all events plus on line booking are now available
www.harpfestival.co.uk and Hub Tickets www.hubtickets.co.uk**

For further information, to arrange interviews, sessions or media accreditation for EIHf please contact:

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Performances “Snapshot”

- **Ancience** - Harpers **Mary Macmaster** and **Gwenan Gibbard**, Northumbrian piper **Andy May** and Uilean piper **Tiárnan Ó Duinchinn** plus computer whiz Joe Acheson!!
- **Edmar Castanedo** - a fantastic fusion of native Colombian with jazz.
- The legendary life, turbulent times and captivating music of O'Carolan, the most celebrated of Irish players, brought to life in theatre by **Patrick Ball** and by two of Ireland's finest harpers, **Anne-Marie O'Farrell** and **Cormac de Barra**.
- An audience with **Catriona McKay** – a chance for Catriona to reveal three harpers who have made a significant impact on her music and how she learned from their genius.
- The **Rachel Hair trio** – nominated Scottish Folk Band of the year 2011 join us at the start of their tour celebrating the release of their new album (The Lucky Smile) featuring a mix of contemporary material combining passion, and energy with sheer joy and irresistible fun!
- Music of Two Nations – **Yi Dong**, **Eddie McGuire** and **Hannah Phillips** invite us into their fascinating classical and traditional Chinese sound-world featuring the Chinese zheng, the bamboo flute and the Scottish clarsach.
- **Dimitri Boekhoorn** plays up to seven different modern and early harps with music from the Celtic nations and other traditions as well as his own compositions showing influences from South America and the African Kora.
- **Susan Enochsson** provides a glimpse into the magical, spell-binding and evocative world of the harp in Scandinavian history, folklore, sagas and in the modern day.
- National Mòd Gold Medallists, **Wilma Kennedy** and **James Graham** along with harpists **Màiri** and **Calum Macleod** celebrate 120 years of unbroken links between the National Mòd and the clàrsach. Old and new songs will chart a fascinating illustrated account of this journey from the first Mòd in 1892 through to today's links with local and National Mòds
- Young Harper, **Màiri Chaimbeul**, draws deeply on the Gaelic roots in performances of traditional and original music and song. A finalist in BBC Young Traditional Musician 2010/2011 and in Young Jazz Musician 2012.
- **Twelfth Day - Esther Swift & Catriona Price** interweave masterful harp and fiddle playing with beautifully harmonised vocals. Described as “*Beautiful, dynamic, stylish—that’s the music and the musicians! An exciting up and coming act on the folk scene.*”
- An audience with **Wendy Stewart** - performer, teacher, sessioner, busker and composer.
- The **Festival Orchestra** and members of **na Clarsairean** will play a short suite by Isobel Mieras, incorporating new and traditional Scottish music, inspired by Alexander Gray's poem “Scotland”.
- The **Kristianstad Harp Ensemble** - play from their wide repertoire from Scandinavia and the Gaelic countries as well as classical themes in original arrangements.
- The **Kylemore Harp Ensemble** from Kylemore College Music Centre in Dublin, perform traditional Irish tunes as well as twentieth and twenty first century music.
- Rooted in the traditions of his native Colombia, **Edmar Castaneda's** music will delight and amaze rivalling the most celebrated flamenco guitarists. “*almost a world unto himself.*” *New York Times*
- Bringing together the African kora, guitar and viola d'amore in the hands of **Lamine Cissokho**, **Ian Carr** and **Maria Jonsson**, **Namo** present music from many traditions as well as innovative material in intimate, intricate and surprisingly vibrant settings.
- **Find the Lost Cave of Harps** - Join **Heather Yule**, storyteller and harper, on an adventure mystery walk exploring the Merchiston campus through stories, riddles and rhymes. The Story Walk ends with a half-an-hour “Come and Try” session.
- The **Clarsach Society's annual Young Composer Award** will be announced and performed during the Festival.
- **Rhodri Davies** takes the harp in one of its simplest forms and experiments with the use of live electronics and other devices to produce new sound, pitches and rhythm.

Seavaigers

Sally Beamish

for Chris Stout and Catriona McKay

- I. Storm**
- II. Lament**
- III. Haven**

Seavaigers is a collaboration between its composer, Sally Beamish, and two of the foremost soloists in the Celtic tradition: Chris Stout and Catriona McKay. The score leaves space for much improvisation in the solo parts, and the piece was the result of many discussions and ideas from all three.

The title means ‘Seafarers’ and refers both to the seafaring people of the North Sea, and to the two soloists: Chris Stout, from Shetland, and Catriona McKay, from Dundee. The stretch of water between these two Northerly ports has claimed countless lives over the centuries, but is also one of the most beautiful and romantic seascapes in the world – home to seabirds, whales, dolphins and endless changes of light and weather. Strong emotions are always connected to dangerous journeys, and this piece reflects the anticipation, fear, comradeship and adventure of sea voyaging.

The first movement, *Storm*, begins with a shimmering dawn over the water before launching into a ‘reel’ which becomes increasingly unsettled and harmonically dark, before resolving into optimism. The *Lament* refers to many seafaring tragedies. The music consists of one very simple melody, which repeats and overlaps with varying ornamentation, written and improvised.

The solo improvisations continue as the last movement begins – steering a final exhilarated course towards home. Just before the end, the opening music returns, as if land is in sight.

Seavaigers was commissioned by Celtic Connections and the Edinburgh International Harp Festival, with funding from Creative Scotland. It was first performed by Chris Stout and Catriona McKay with the Scottish Ensemble, directed by Jonathan Morton, at Celtic Connections in the Fruitmarket, Glasgow, January 2012, and at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival, April 2012.

Notes for Editors:

1. The EIHf was established in 1981 and is organised by the Clarsach Society to promote the playing of the harp. Its concerts, courses and workshops are suitable for all ages and abilities.
2. This five day event has, in recent years, developed into one of Edinburgh's most popular music festivals, attended by visitors and participants from all over the world and is one of the largest events of its type worldwide.
3. The Festival takes place within the campus of Merchiston Castle School, 294 Colinton Road, Edinburgh and is easily accessed by public transport.
4. Ceilidh Culture is Edinburgh's annual showcase of traditional arts, held in the spring in each year. Featuring a wide range of organisations, both professional and voluntary, it showcases the best of home grown talent alongside acts from across the world, with local performers as well as international stars from all sectors of the