

7th Annual Niel Gow Festival - Dunkeld & Birnam -19th – 21st March 2010

This delightful wee festival in highland Perthshire was established to celebrate the life of local fiddle maestro Niel Gow (1727 – 1807). A fun-filled weekend of fiddle music and good craic, this very informal festival kicks off on the Friday night at the Duchess Anne School in Dunkeld Square, with solo performances from Ryan Young, Fiona Wylie, Jack Smedley and Charlie Hayes, four young fiddlers from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama, plus Gordon Gunn (Session A9) from Wick and the dazzling Ivonne Hernandez from the U.S.A.

In contrast to the solo fiddlers of Friday night, Saturday's bill of fayre gets underway with a morning concert featuring Philomusica of Edinburgh under the leadership of Lawrence Dunn. "Philomusica" specialize in the orchestral, more classical side of the Scots fiddle repertoire.

A lunchtime recital by festival organiser Pete Clark and The Niel Gow Ensemble precedes an afternoon concert featuring Aongais Grant, legendary left-handed fiddler from Lochaber, accompanied by Paul Connolly on guitar & melodeon. Local duo Hannah & Kirsty Fisher, special guest from Canada Laura Risk, and Shetland sisters Jenna & Bethany Reid complete the bill.

Saturday night sees the welcome return visit of Ronan Martin & Johnny Hardie (Old Blind Dogs). Also making a return visit is Lauren MacColl, this year in the company of guitarist Barry Reid. Making a special guest appearance on Saturday night, the youngest performer on the bill is thirteen-year-old Lauren Kelly from Dalry in Ayrshire, and making her first visit to the Niel Gow Festival, Sarah Jane Summers with guitarist Ewan MacPherson.

On Sunday afternoon, Dunkeld & Birnam Strathspey & Reel Society open the final concert of the weekend, which includes a second chance to hear Jenna & Bethany Reid and Sarah Jane Summers and a rare performance by "The Birnam Quartet", featuring fiddlers Angus Grant Jnr. and Sarah Hoy, mandolinist Luke Plumb from Tasmania and Jamie Jauncey on piano

Many of the musicians will present workshops during the weekend, providing budding musicians with a great opportunity to be inspired by and learn first-hand from the masters.

Music aside, the Sunday morning "Niel Gow Walk" always proves popular. Under the guidance of Pete Clark, this is an opportunity to learn something of the local history and to experience the beautiful landscape which surrounds Dunkeld and which inspired so many tunes.

Further information can be found on line – www.niel-gow.co.uk – or by calling The Taybank (between 9am and 5pm) on 01350 728 920.