

## **The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Niel Gow Festival** **16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Niel Gow Festival will take place over the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> March in Dunkeld and Birnam. The festival is a celebration in music of the life of Niel Gow (1727-1807), regarded by many as the patriarch of the Scottish fiddle tradition, and attracts visitors from far and wide. With concerts, workshops and guided walks, there is something for everyone. And, as is the case at any festival, the informal and spontaneous music sessions which can arise in pubs and hotels often prove to be memorable highlights.

The festival begins with a solo fiddle concert at the Royal Dunkeld Hotel on the Friday night. Performers will include Hannah Fisher, Roo Geddes and Charlie Walden.

On Saturday morning, Pete Clark and Alastair Savage will be giving a recital in Little Dunkeld Church. During this performance, Pete will be playing a very special instrument – a fiddle which once belonged to Niel Gow and was allegedly his favourite.

The festival is as much a platform for up and coming performers as for established musicians, and the “Young Fiddlers Concert” in the main auditorium of the Birnam Institute on Saturday afternoon will feature musicians from Strathallan and Ardvreck schools as well as the junior school of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Scarcely time to catch your breath before the second of three concerts at the Birnam Institute gets underway, and a diversity of fiddle styles will be on display.

Returning to her Perthshire roots, Hannah Fisher will take the stage, accompanied on guitar by Sorren Maclean. In recent years, Hannah has toured extensively with Idlewild and King Creosote.

Ayrshire fiddle maestro Alastair Savage takes a break from the BBC Scottish Symphony orchestra to play with his long-standing musical companion Euan Drysdale (guitar).

Making their debut appearance at the festival, Roo Geddes and Neil Sutcliffe (accordion) are a very exciting and highly innovative duo. Roo is currently a student at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and, last year, was runner-up in the Niel Gow Fiddle Awards held at Blair Castle.

Completing the bill is West-highland fiddle wizard Archie McAllister, who most often these days is kept busy with the successful band "Skippinish". Archie will be joined by Sileas Sinclair on accordion and keyboards.

Saturday night's concert features the acclaimed North-East style fiddler Paul Anderson accompanied on guitar by Malcolm Jones (erstwhile member of Runrig). They will be followed by the "Routes" quartet, led by fiddler Tricia Mullan.

Many of the performers also present workshops during the weekend, providing a rare opportunity to learn from some of today's top traditional musicians. Apart from fiddle, other instrumental workshops include accordion, guitar and group work.

On Sunday morning at 10.45 there will be a showing of the recently released film documentary "The Groove is not trivial", a semi-biographical account of fiddle Guru Alasdair Fraser's musical life and his infectious enthusiasm for Scotland's music.

Dunkeld & District Strathspey & Reel Society open the Sunday afternoon concert, which also features Plockton Music School, Patsy Reid and Alistair Paterson and, from the USA, Charlie Walden and Pat Plunkett.

Guided walks led by David Martin (10am on Saturday) and by Pete Clark (11am on Sunday) will provide an insight into this bonnie corner of highland Perthshire for visitors who would like to learn a bit more about Dunkeld, its history and its wildlife.

Tickets for all events are available from Birnam Arts (01350 727 674) and further information about the concerts and workshops can be found on line at:

[www.niel-gow.co.uk](http://www.niel-gow.co.uk)