

Beat: News

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

East Meets West

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USPA NEWS - The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo has always been an international favourite. Performers from over 48 countries have taken part in the Tattoo, and around 30 per cent of the 220,000 audience each year are from overseas.

East Meets West for 2015

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is quite simply one of the greatest shows on earth. It combines military spectacle, cultural performance, vibrant music and international colour - all in an historic Scottish setting - to deliver a unique event that has drawn millions of people from all over the world for over six decades.

This year's 66th production promises to be more breath-taking than ever. Already, ticket sales are expected to hit record heights as 220,000 people come to Edinburgh to stream up to the Esplanade of Edinburgh Castle during the 3-week pageant. This summer's "East Meets West" themed event is set to be one of the most impressive ever staged: a celebration of the richness of international culture and the creative spirit of human endeavour. Among an array of VIP salute takers across the 25 performances, and fresh from her trip to China, Scotland's First Minister is set to attend during the August run.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop said: "Once again The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo will place Scotland on the world stage, showcasing our rich cultural heritage to thousands of people across the world.

"Through Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, we are pleased to support The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo's collaboration with The Edinburgh Mela to bring Bollywood to the esplanade this August. These dancers will be a great addition to the performers from Australia, United States, Canada and New Zealand that make The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo a global event. Scotland looks forward to welcoming people from across the world to celebrate the music and entertainment that's on offer."

Chief Executive & Producer, Brigadier David Allfrey said: "This year's show is remarkable in so many ways. It is bringing together some traditional allies and some new friends. The performance is set to illustrate that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Some acts have taken a number of years to secure and we are delighted that a huge cast has come together from across the world, so elegantly, and with such a sense of common purpose."

"The Tattoo is much more than a show. It delivers tangible benefits in Defence, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Investment, Tourism and Culture, Heritage and the Arts. The event also generates more than £100 million for the Scottish economy and supports, in large measure, Services and Arts charitable causes each year," he continued. With over 1,200 performers, 140 Chinese entertainers, 50 Bollywood dancers and one or two other surprises, the show is set to present a fertile fusion of military and cultural talent from around the globe.

One guaranteed crowd-pleaser will be the amazing Swiss Top Secret Drum Corps from Basel. They are bringing a newly developed act to Edinburgh with their own special brand of energetic percussion and pyrotechnics - showcasing the very best from the "City of Drummers".

The Producer remarked: "Top Secret are already a firm favourite but they are set to perform faster than ever this year. I watched them in performance in Basel just two weeks ago and they were phenomenal!"

The Tattoo's organisers have scoured the world to gather a cosmopolitan cast of top-class international performers for the 2015 production. "East Meets West" will celebrate the contrasts that exist in our world but also those elements that are largely consistent and on occasion similar.

Performers are coming from all over: Europe, America, Asia, Australasia and Canada. They will share the stage with some of the finest British Armed Forces performers and musicians who will among other features mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

This year's show opens with a specially written "East Meets West" fanfare, composed and by the Tattoo's Principal Arranger Michael McDermott. His experience and special flair in musical arrangement can be detected across the show.

Brigadier Allfrey remarked: "With such history, great music, talented musicians and performers on such a scale, all supported by extraordinary lighting, fabulous technical and administrative support and an incomparable parade ground in front of an ancient castle, our cup is overflowing. We are so lucky!"

Making a first visit to Edinburgh, the impressive Changxing Lotus Dragon Dance Folklore Group will tell a story - through dance and music - of a great dragon emerging from a pond covered in beautiful lotus flowers. The legend has been presented in China for many years to help promote the prospect of good crops and wider prosperity.

The Dragon Dancers are joined by other Tattoo first-timers, the United States Air Force Honour Guard, marking the special relationship between the US and the UK, with a dynamic display of precision drill.

In a major "Battle of Britain" programme, the Massed Bands of the Royal Air Force with the Queens Colour Squadron will add their own pomp and ceremony, showing off their respective musical and drill skills in a meticulous combined display. Under the direction of Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs, RAF Principal Director of Music and 2015 Tattoo Director of Music, the Bands' repertoire will include favourite tunes such as "Aces High" and "Battle of Britain March" framed by a special effects sequence.

Amongst all the acts recruited and brought together for this year, the perennial highlight remains the traditional march across Edinburgh Castle drawbridge by the Massed Pipes & Drums. There is no sight like it anywhere in the world. Stirring sounds from 14 Regimental and Commonwealth bands, comprising 250 pipers & drummers, tuned to perfection and turning on the style with a matchless display.

Brigadier Allfrey said: "The Pipes and Drums are special. Everyone waits for their moment and you can feel the sense of expectation across the stands. We have added an extra set again this year and are bringing the pipers together with dancers, fiddle players, traditional instruments and Gaelic song. It is stunning!"

"We are particularly proud to present "The Pipers Trail" again with a composite international pipes and drums drawn from the piping family on several continents. They have their own tartan and their own style," he continued.

Each evening over 70 of the finest highland dancers from Australia, United States, Canada, New Zealand and Scotland will present a remarkable display. This year's dance piece is choreographed by former World Champion Aileen Robertson, the Tattoo's Dance Director in an item designed to complement the theme of "East Meets West".

As part of the China-UK Year of Cultural Exchange, sees the Military Band of the People's Liberation Army of China take to the Castle Esplanade this August. The PLA Band is acknowledged as China's leading musical collective, a ceremonial military band which boasts a repertoire of more than 2,000 musical works.

The Producer said: "We are delighted and honoured this great and rare musical instrument has been allowed to come to Edinburgh."

Renowned worldwide for the excellence of its traditional fiddle-based music, the UK's most northerly community of Shetland will once again be represented at the Tattoo. The Shetland Fiddlers - Hjaltibonhoga - will feature 40 players each evening, aged 14 to 60, exemplifying an aural tradition of fiddling; a tradition that has been sustained so successfully across the generations. This is Hjaltibonhoga's second Tattoo season as part of our core programme.

Appearing at the Tattoo for a third time is the Citadel Regimental Band and Pipes. This prestigious military college based in Charleston in South Carolina made its first appearance at Edinburgh Castle in 1991 and then again in 2010. It is the only U.S. military college band yet to be invited to participate at Edinburgh's celebrated Military Tattoo.

In company with the Edinburgh Mela, the Tattoo has joined forces with one of India's leading producers, Delhi-based Teamwork Arts, to deliver a stunning Bollywood Dance Extravaganza. With support from the Scottish Government Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, from New Delhi in India, a company of 12 performers and a choreographer have travelled to Edinburgh where they will join 40 dancers drawn from Asian dance groups across Scotland. Together they will deliver "A Bollywood Love Story" of glitz, glamour and colour.

The Massed Pipes and Drums will then deliver a special performance of “Hector the Hero” with accompaniment by acclaimed Gaelic singer, Maeve Mackinnon. With Major Steven Small, the Director of Army Bagpipe Music on stage, the bands will combine to create what is expected to be one of this season’s special moments.

The entire cast will assemble for the grand finale from the four points of the compass - including The Erskine Stewart’s Melville Schools Choir - to celebrate in a cast party. With balloons, contemporary music and synchronised fireworks, spectators will be joining a remarkable occasion not witnessed previously on the Castle Esplanade.

As the sun sets and darkness falls, with Edinburgh Castle in silhouette, the Lone Piper - an icon of The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo - plays the Scottish soldier’s traditional call to the end of the day. This year, the lament commemorates that particularly Scottish battle in 1915 - with the tune “The Piper of Loos”

Across the month, the Royal Air Force, with historic aircraft, giant transports and Typhoons from a variety of air bases will open the show on a number of evenings in spectacular style with an impressive flypast. The flights are scheduled for: August 8, 10, 14, 15, 19, 20 & 21.

The Producer remarked: “The Tattoo has a quite astonishing pedigree. Each year we look to remain authentic but at the same time innovating; always looking to exceed the expectations of our audience. Our intention is that everyone has an amazing time and a memorable one!”

Some tickets for the 2015 Tattoo (7 - 29 August), priced £25 to £63, can still be obtained at www.edintattoo.co.uk/tickets or acquired by telephone on +44 (0)131 225 1188 or in person from the Tattoo Ticket Sales Office at 34 Market Street in Edinburgh.

Rhidian Taylor, Head of Brand Management, Royal Bank of Scotland said: “We are proud to support The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, an event that celebrates so many great things about Scotland and our culture. We look forward to welcoming our customers and playing our part in what is sure to be another fantastic event.”

Source: The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

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