

PRESS RELEASE

A musical pageant retold by Gregynog

Wales's most prestigious classical musical festival has launched its programme for 2017 and it promises to be the most ambitious yet. Gregynog Festival will this year take Pageantry as its overarching theme and present musical performances, dance productions, historical exhibitions and fascinating talks at a host of venues across Wales from 16 June to 2 July.

Gregynog is Wales' oldest extant classical music festival, but its most significant predecessor was the Harlech Castle Musical Festival. Drawing on 20 years' research, the programme for Gregynog Festival's Pageantry season is inspired by those glorious summers, a century ago, when a remarkable creative community gathered in Harlech, including celebrity artists, photographers, authors and dancers as well as musicians, and thousands of people used to flock to be part of wonderful performances within the Castle walls.

Among the many highlights of the 2017 season will be pianist Llyr Williams and saxophonist Amy Dickson at Chirk Castle, an especially commissioned dance piece by Light, Ladd and Emberton performed in the twilight on Harlech Beach, and enlightening talks by such luminaries as Peter Lord and Hazel Walford Davies.

For Rhian Davies, the festival's curator, the programme is the culmination of two decades of research:

"I have always been fascinated by the creativity and foresight of the remarkable artistic community that gathered in Harlech a century ago. There are fascinating stories to recall, such as Cyril Scott's recital for Prime Minister David Lloyd George at his Cricieth home, and impromptu concerts in the Great Hall of Plas Wernfawr, the site of today's Theatr Ardudwy, that once featured a piano duet by Harriet Cohen and George Bernard Shaw. I'm also celebrating the pioneering practice of Arnold Dolmetsch, notably his work on the medieval music and instruments of Wales.

"Held at appropriate locations across Wales, each concert revives repertoire by one or more members of the group and many of these compositions were written in Harlech or inspired by Welsh landscapes and legends, quite timely considering we are beginning our journey through the Year of Legends in Wales."

The Festival takes place in Aberystwyth, Chirk and Gregynog as well as a long weekend in venues all over Harlech itself, and headline artists include the Ricercar Consort, directed by Philippe Pierlot,

recorder virtuoso Michala Petri with harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, lutenist Thomas Dunford, clarinettist Robert Plane with the Gould Piano Trio, violinist Sara Trickey and pianist Clare Hammond, Scottish Gaelic folksinger Joy Dunlop, and pianola player extraordinaire Rex Lawson.

An innovative addition this year will be a special production commissioned by Gregynog Festival from the dance collective, Light, Ladd and Emberton, and performed in response to the tides on Harlech Beach. Performer Eddie Ladd herself is very much looking forward to the experience: “As with all the festival in 2017, this dance production is inspired by the fertile creativity and imagination of the artists that visited Harlech a century ago, especially the dance and movement pioneer Margaret Morris. The myths and histories of Harlech as well as the breathtaking landscape of the north Wales coastline will make the piece a wonder for all the senses.”

The Festival also includes a full supporting programme of talks, films, excursions, exhibitions and community outreach events to give context and encourage engagement and participation by residents and visitors alike.

For further information and to buy tickets visit www.gregynogfestival.org or call 01686 207100.

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Notes to the Editor

The Gregynog Festival is a lottery funded project for the Arts Council of Wales, a Signature Event of the Major Events Unit, Welsh Government (Visit Wales), and the only Welsh member of REMA, the European Early Music Network based at Versailles.

Launched by sisters Gwendoline and Margaret Davies at Gregynog Hall, Tregynon, near Newtown in 1933, the Gregynog Festival is Wales’ oldest classical music festival.

The granddaughters of industrialist, entrepreneur and politician, David Davies, who came from Llandinam, Powys, they became philanthropists travelling throughout Europe, passionate about art and music, and bequeathing over 260 works from their collection to the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, where many are now displayed.

The Gregynog Festival attracts visitors from all over the world into Wales as well as having a social and economic impact on the local community through its investment in concerts, workshops, talks and outreach projects.