**WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE**

**EVENT 1: OPENING CONCERT**

7pm, Bowhouse, £30 / £23

Approx. 95 mins including interval

Larsson: Pastoral Suite, Op.19

Rodrigo: Concierto de Aranjuez

Schubert: Symphony No. 6 in C, D.589

Sean Shibe, guitar

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Andrew Manze, conductor

The SCO have appeared at every ENF, so who better to open this 20th Festival? Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze offers music telling of three very different places: rural Sweden, royal Spain and imperial Vienna. At its heart – perhaps the most famous piece ever written for guitar – Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez.* It was inspired by the palace and gardens as Rodrigo – blind from birth – experienced them: through touch, floral scents and the sounds of birdsong and fountains. Guitarist Sean Shibe first came to ENF in 2012 shortly after winning the Gold Medal, First Prize, and String Prize at the prestigious Royal Overseas League Competition – a staggering achievement. Since then, his brilliant and thoughtful musicianship has taken him all over the world, winning a string of awards and the admiration of musicians and audiences alike. We are delighted to welcome him back for this concerto and a string of concerts on Saturday at which he will play lute and electric guitar as well as guitar.

Manze closes the concert with a joyful symphony with a poignant history. Schubert wrote it aged 21 and called it his ‘Great’ C Major. Nine years on he wrote another, which would be called ‘The Great’ C Major, but sadly the musicians found it impossible to play, so this earlier work was substituted and the later piece disappeared until decades after Schubert’s death.

**THURSDAY 26 JUNE**

**EVENT 2: DIYANG MEI & FRIENDS**

11.30am, Crail Church, £25 / £18

Approx. 70 mins

Stravinsky: 3 pieces for solo clarinet

Prokofiev: *Romeo and Juliet* (excerpts)

Mozart: Kegelstatt Trio, K.498

Kurtág: *Hommage à R. Sch.*

Schumann: *Märchenerzählungen*, Op.132

Diyang Mei, viola Sergio Pires, clarinet

Many brilliant, inspiring young musicians have come to ENF as students (especially to the ENF Retreat programme) and subsequently gone on to reach the top of the profession. We are thrilled to welcome two of them here: violist, Diyang Mei (now First Principal Viola of the Berlin Philharmonic) and Sergio Pires (Principal Clarinet of the LSO) for a playful programme of solos, duos and trios ranging over 200 years. There’s Mozart and Kurtág in warm, humorous mood, Schumann telling fairy stories, Prokofiev’s Shakespearean ballet – a proper showcase for these brilliant musicians.

**EVENT 3: ‘ALL THINGS COUNTER, ORIGINAL, SPARE, STRANGE’**

2pm, Crail Church Hall, £7.50

Approx. 45 mins

Join Festival Director Svend McEwan-Brown for an introductory session to the complete cycle of Beethoven’s late quartets which will run throughout the festival this year.

**EVENT 4: SCHUBERT 1823**

4pm, Crail Church, £25 / £18

Approx. 65 mins

Schubert: *Die Schöne Müllerin*, D.795

James Newby, baritone Joseph Middleton, piano

Few young singers inspire such critical acclaim as James Newby has enjoyed over the past decade: ‘Lieder is considered a rarefied pursuit. Yet when it’s delivered with the disarming openness of … James Newby it feels like the most direct form of expression there is … he has a wonderfully mellifluous tone, which he can deploy in a confessional whisper or an anguished cry’ (*The Times*). In partnership with Joseph Middleton, he brings us *Die Schöne Müllerin* [The Beautiful Miller Maid]. It is very much a young man’s affair – words and music by men in their mid-20s. Its subject? Love, jealousy and loss, the tale of a lad who falls for the girl who falls for someone else. It is rich in great melodies and piano writing that brings brooks, meadows and woods to life while vividly exploring the inner turmoil of the frustrated lover.

**EVENT 5: BEETHOVEN LATE QUARTETS I**

7pm, Kilrenny Church, £30 / £23

Approx. 95 mins including interval

Mozart: Quintet in Gm, K.516

Beethoven: Quartet in E-flat, Op.127

Elias Quartet Gary Pomeroy, viola

The big journey that runs through ENF 2025 begins here: four of the finest string quartets in the world come together to perform five of the greatest pieces ever written for this line-up. Beethoven’s late quartets are simply without equal. Written around 200 years ago, they take you into his wonderful inner world of deep thought, jokes, reflections, and not a few surprises. Transporting, absorbing, poignant and hilarious by turns, there are many passages of utterly arresting beauty. Each piece is totally different from the others but as a group they offer an incomparable listening experience, especially live, and especially when performed by these ensembles.

Most of the concerts pair Beethoven with a contrasting work – here, it is Mozart‘s G minor quintet: like all his works in that key, it has its brooding side, but also infectious humour and vitality.

The four string quartets involved in this cycle are those that have made the greatest impact at ENF over the past two decades. The Elias came first in 2010, and were such a hit that they returned in 2011, when *The Scotsman* wrote: ‘While it is unusual for an ensemble to feature at the East Neuk Festival in consecutive years, no-one was going to be disappointed that the exception would be a return visit by the young Elias Quartet.’Since then, they have undertaken their own huge Beethoven project which you can read about at <http://thebeethovenproject.com>

**FRIDAY 27 JUNE**

**EVENT 6: BEETHOVEN LATE QUARTETS 2**

11.30am, Kilrenny Church, £25 / £18

Approx. 70 mins

Adès: *Arcadiana*, Op.12

Beethoven: Quartet in B-flat, Op.130 [*Grosse Fuge*]

Castalian Quartet

Beethoven was famously plagued with second thoughts and might mull on his ideas for years before finding their final form. The second of his late quartets is one of the most famous examples. Its original finale (the *Grosse Fuge* of its title) was so profoundly challenging to contemporary listeners and players alike that it divided even his most loyal and trusted supporters. Years later, Beethoven offered an alternative, but he never relinquished his belief in the original and it is this that the Castalian Quartet profoundly believe is the right way to end an astounding piece.

The Castalian Quartet have been living with Op.130 – and with Ades’ music – for many years and have inspired high praise for both. They came to ENF first in 2017 and were immediately reinvited having thrilled one critic to write ‘The revelation … was the silvery playing of the Castalians’ (*The Arts Desk*).

**EVENT 7: ONE MIDSUMMER’S DAY**

2pm, Crail Church Hall, £7.50

Approx. 45 mins

Writer and naturalist Mark Cocker came to ENF years ago to give a deeply memorable talk about his immense book about British birds (*Birds Britannica*). He is a matchless observer and thinker about nature – birds especially – and humanity’s relationship and impact upon it. He is fascinating on specific creatures but also tackles the biggest of big pictures: his recent ‘*One Midsummer’s Day*’ is subtitled ‘Swifts and the Story of Life on Earth’. We have asked him to return to read and discuss the book in a book club-ish format – why not read it in advance and come primed to discuss?

**EVENT 8: SCHUBERT 1827**

4pm, Crail Church, £25 / £18

Approx. 70 mins

Schubert: *Winterreise*, D.911

Mark Padmore, tenor Joseph Middleton, piano

In high summer, we leave for a chilling, winter journey. Through some of the most memorable songs he ever wrote, Schubert tells the story of a young man, disappointed in love, leaving home and losing himself in the winter landscape. Walking further and further from home – physically and mentally – he encounters strange characters and creatures and ominous landmarks. There is probably no other song cycle in which the piano is so much the dramatist as this, reflecting both the inner turmoil of the singer as well as setting the scenes in this icy world. Both Mark Padmore and Joseph Middleton have lived with this music for decades and performed it with many different partners: they bring a profound knowledge and insight, but above all their own intense interpretation of this wonderful music.

**EVENT 9: BEETHOVEN LATE QUARTETS 3**

7pm, Crail Church, £30 / £23

Approx. 95 mins including interval

Mozart: Quintet in C, K.515

Beethoven: Quartet in C#m, Op.131

Belcea Quartet Diyang Mei, viola

In this concert, we reach the heart of Beethoven’s late quartets, both numerically (it is the third of five) and in stature. It was reputedly Beethoven’s own favourite, and a work that left all who heard it in awe. Figures of the stature of Wagner, T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf are among the many who were both inspired and intimidated by its astounding achievement. Schubert reputedly said ‘After this, what is left for us to write?’ Certainly, it is unlike anything they would have heard before. The Belcea Quartet are joined by Diyang Mei to open the concert with Mozart’s sublime Quintet in C.

**EVENT 10: TOM SMITH SEPTET**

7.30pm, Anstruther Town Hall, £20

Approx. 75 mins

Rising stars come no brighter than saxophonist Tom Smith, praised by such jazz supremos as Django Bates (‘So passionate, punchy and joyful’), Jason Yarde (‘fantastic sound’) and Soweto Kinch (‘technically outstanding … and punchy, soulful tone’). He’s played venues as different as the Royal Albert Hall and Pizza Express, and having sold out multiple shows at Ronnie Scott’s, there is quite a buzz around him and his various line-ups: we love his septet which brings together some of the most talented young jazz musicians in the UK to play a bluesy, joyful, exciting and super-entertaining set.

[To avoid confusion, please note that Tom Smith is not Tommy Smith of the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra]

**SATURDAY 28 JUNE**

**EVENT 11: SHIBE TRAIL 1: LUTE**

11am, Dreel Hall, £10

Approx. 35 mins

One of the truly exciting things about following Sean Shibe’s career over the past decade has been to join him delved right back into the past to explore pre-guitar music with lute and also bring thing bang up to date with electric guitar. So, over the course of today, he plays music of 5 centuries on lute, guitar and electric guitar in 3 intimate Anstruther venues; close up music. To close the day we’ve invited Nizar Rohana, a master of an instrument that predates them all - the Oud – to end this journey with music that is both contemporary and ancient. Each concert lasts around 40 minutes, allowing time between them to enjoy Anstruther, grab a bag of chips…

First off: Lute! Music written down 5 centuries ago in Scotland in the Rowallen and Straloch manuscripts paired with French dances from Pierre Attaignant’s collection from a century earlier.

**EVENT 12: BEETHOVEN LATE QUARTETS 4**

11.30am, Kilrenny Church, £25 / £18

Approx. 55 mins

Beamish: *Epilogue*

Beethoven: Quartet in Am, Op.132

Elias Quartet Sally Beamish, viola

There is nowhere in Beethoven’s music where you are brought more intimately into contact with the man himself than in his Op.132. At its heart lies the *Heiliger Dankgesang*, a hymn of thanks for deliverance from suffering: Beethoven’s later years were plagued by illnesses which would ultimately overwhelm him: given his frailty, it is amazing his last masterpieces were ever written. His gratitude for whatever relief he enjoyed is the sunlight in this piece, which explores a profound and intimate inner world. No less a figure than T.S. Eliot grasped this: ‘There is a sort of heavenly, or at least more than human gaiety, about some of his later things which one imagines might come to oneself as the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering; I should like to get something of that into verse before I die.’

The Elias Quartet is joined by composer/violist Sally Beamish in another work rooted in prayer. Her *Epilogue* is inspired both by the quiet Quaker gathering sometimes held at the close of day – the epilogue of the title – and a theme by Tudor composer Thomas Tallis. Perverse though it may sound to open a concert with an epilogue, this short work sets the scene beautifully for Beethoven’s immense quartet.

**EVENT 13: BIG PROJECT: ZULU VOYAGE**

12pm, Bowhouse, £5 (under 7s go free)

Fully accessible promenade performance

Approx. 45 mins

It’s inspiring to stand on the Fife Coast and visualise the thousands of journeys that have started in its harbours over the centuries. Ships left to work the fishing grounds, to pursue trade routes and to visit the many far distant countries we know to have had strong connections to this place. At different times, different types of boat have held sway, but few capture the imagination more potently than the Zulu. Invented around the time of the Zulu wars (hence the name) they could be stronger, larger and faster than previous boats, but they enjoyed only a brief half-century of dominance before petrol and war ended their usefulness: carcases of these beautiful boats were left to rot on beaches all the way up the East Coast.

Harpist/composer Esther Swift has been inspired by this tale to create a new piece for a grand coming together of Fife musicians of all ages from St Andrews Music Project, Fife Youth Jazz Orchestra and East Fife Community Ensemble and tells it through sound and story, matched by visuals by artist Esme McIntyre. Come hear the story!

**EVENT 14: SHIBE TRAIL 2: GUITAR**

1.30pm, St Ayle, Anstruther, £10

Approx. 35 mins

One of the truly exciting things about following Sean Shibe’s career over the past decade has been to join him delved right back into the past to explore pre-guitar music with lute and also bring thing bang up to date with electric guitar. So, over the course of today, he plays music of 5 centuries on lute, guitar and electric guitar in 3 intimate Anstruther venues; close up music. To close the day we’ve invited Nizar Rohana, a master of an instrument that predates them all - the Oud – to end this journey with music that is both contemporary and ancient. Each concert lasts around 40 minutes, allowing time between them to enjoy Anstruther, grab a bag of chips…

For this second concert, Shibe turns to guitar and plays Bach alongside music written especially for him by Thomas Adès – the first time the ‘Forgotten Dances’ will be heard in Scotland.

**EVENT 15: SCHUBERT 1828:I**

3pm, Crail Church, £25/£18

Approx. 55 mins

Schubert: *Schwanengesang*

Mark Padmore, tenor James Newby, baritone Joseph Middleton, piano

*Schwanengesang* is not a song cycle like Winterreise, say, but more of a gathering together of his last songs. He set verse by two poets ranging from humorous to poignant – a reminder that though these may be Schubert’s ‘swan songs’ he was a young man who should have enjoyed decades more of life and music. We have the luxury of not one but two wonderful singers to perform them – quite who will do what will be agreed by them – and a matchless pianist in Joseph Middleton.

**EVENT 16: SHIBE TRAIL 3: ELECTRIC**

3.30pm, Erskine Hall, Anstruther, £10

Approx. 40 mins

One of the truly exciting things about following Sean Shibe’s career over the past decade has been to join him delved right back into the past to explore pre-guitar music with lute and also bring thing bang up to date with electric guitar. So, over the course of today, he plays music of 5 centuries on lute, guitar and electric guitar in 3 intimate Anstruther venues; close up music. To close the day we’ve invited Nizar Rohana, a master of an instrument that predates them all - the Oud – to end this journey with music that is both contemporary and ancient. Each concert lasts around 40 minutes, allowing time between them to enjoy Anstruther, grab a bag of chips…

For the 3rd concert of the day, Shibe goes Electric. At the heart of this performance is the piece that really put Shibe on the map as a very special artist was Steve Reich’s Electric Counterpoint. Even Reich – who is famously difficult to please – was blown away by his recording. He wrote it for jazz guitarist Pat Metheney, and it’s about the most joyous music we know.

**EVENT 17: NIZAR ROHANA**

5.30pm, St Ayle, Anstruther, £20

Approx. 65 mins

To close a day of lute, guitar and electric guitar, we go properly ancient and modern. The Oud is the ancestor of all those other instruments: its origins are properly lost in the mists of time. We know it has been played for at least a milennium, and musicians like Oud master Nizar Rohana are the latest in an unbroken chain of musicians who have relished its delicacy, rhythm, subtlety and rich sound world over the centuries. He brings his latest work to the festival in a mesmerising solo performance.

**EVENT 18: SCHUBERT 1828:2**

6.30pm, Crail Church, £30 / £25

Approx. 90 mins including interval

Janáček: String Quartet No 1 (‘Kreutzer Sonata’)

Schubert: Quintet in C, D.956

Pavel Haas Quartet Ivan Vokač, cello

Janáček and Schubert make a wonderful combination that we have experienced many times at a ENF – especially in the performances of the Pavel Haas Quartet. There is something about the sheer theatrical intensity of Janáček that contrast to beautifully with Schubert’s more spacious work. So here we have Janáček telling Tolstoy’s tale of passion, jealousy and murder in music of vivid, almost cinematic immediacy alongside Schubert’s immense, reflective masterpiece. The time-stopping pathos of the quintet’s famous slow movement is balanced by the sheer propulsive joy of the last two movements.

**EVENT 19: KATHRYN TICKELL AND THE DARKENING**

7.30pm, Anstruther Town Hall, £20

Approx. 75 mins

We’re thrilled to welcome one of the legends of the folk scene to Anstruther. Kathryn Tickell is one of those musicians who connects across all kinds of musical boundaries and brings her own distinctive voice to all she does. She’s performed classical, experimental and many different kinds of traditional work over the years, and comes now with her band, The Darkening [Northumbrian for twilight]: musicians mostly from the North-East of England who take inspiration from the wild, dramatic Hadrian’s Wall country and explore the connecting threads of music, landscape and people:  Amy Thatcher (accordion, synth, clogs, vocals), Kieran Szifris (octave mandolin), Joe Truswell (drums, percussion); with Stef Conner (vocals, lyres).

**SUNDAY 29 JUNE**

**EVENT 20: BEETHOVEN SEPTET**

12pm, St Ayle, Cellardyke £25 / £18

Approx. 65 mins

Alexander Janiczek, violin Robert Plane, clarinet

Diyang Mei, viola Alec Frank-Gemmill, horn

Philip Higham, cello Ursula Leveaux, bassoon

Graham Mitchell, bass

More than 20 years ago, the very first event took place which would lead to the creation of ENF – a performance of Beethoven’s Septet in Elie Church. Following its success, one thing led to another and suddenly here we are welcoming back some of the players from that original performance to perform it afresh. It is the perfect festive piece for our 20th birthday. In many ways it is the opposite of Beethoven’s late quartets: there is no sense of him striving to write the music of the future – he simply scores a popular hit with irresistible zest and joy. Famously, its runaway success came to irritate him so much he disclaimed authorship on several occasions.

**EVENT 21: EUAN STEVENSON TRIO**

2pm, Anstruther Town Hall, £20

Approx. 75 mins

#### “In performance, it’s all about class and quality: Stevenson has a beautiful touch, caressing the keys Bill Evans-style but rhythmically perfect too…” [Jazzwise Magazine]

Stevenson relishes and ongoing dialogue with the jazz greats from Ellington to Evans, bringing his own distinctive style and pianistic flair to classics and new discoveries alike. Come enjoy some delightful jazz on a Sunday afternoon.

**EVENT 22: BEETHOVEN LATE QUARTETS 5**

3pm, Bowhouse, £30 / £23

Approx. 120 mins including interval

Sibelius: Andante Festivo

Beethoven: Quartet in F, Op.135 [Pavel Haas Quartet]

Beamish: *Field of Stars* for four quartets [world premiere]

Mendelssohn: Octet, Op.20 [Belcea and Castalian Quartets]

Belcea Quartet

Castalian Quartet

Elias Quartet

Pavel Haas Quartet

4x4: Four string quartets join forces to complete 2025’s cycle of Beethoven’s late quartets and play an octet and a … what shall we call it? A hextet? In fact, a hextet is computer terminology for ‘a 16-bit aggregation’: in the absence of anything better to describe a piece for 16 players, we’ll borrow that. These are the string quartets which have made the greatest impact at ENF over the years, all of them more usually to be heard in the great concert halls of the world than here in the Bowhouse – and that makes this occasion all the more unmissable.

With Beethoven’s Op.135 the Pavel Haas Quartet conclude 2025’s cycle of late quartets. It is a wonderful piece not least because, having journeyed far in the preceding four pieces, he returns for his last quartet to something more like the traditional quartet his great forebears Haydn and Mozart knew. As warm and heartfelt as it is profound, it is a poignant, affirmative end to a life’s work. As Beethoven was writing his late quartets, the 16-year-old Felix Mendelssohn was pulling off the astounding feat of writing his octet – a masterpiece which has never failed to delight and astonish players and listeners alike.