



# Urras Shomhairle

## The Sorley MacLean Trust

Scottish Charity Number SCO30622

### **“Hallaig - A Celebration of Sorley MacLean”** **To be performed at Celtic Connections**

The poetry of world-famous Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean is to be celebrated for the first time at the forthcoming Celtic Connections festival with his poems set to music by some of Scotland’s most eminent traditional music composers and performed by an invited selection of the best traditional musicians.

The concert at Glasgow City Hall on Sunday, January 18, 2009 will include the premiere of a setting of Sorley’s most famous poem ‘Hallaig’ by leading Scottish classical composer Stuart MacRae. This was specially commissioned by the Sorley MacLean Trust for Celtic Connections.

‘Hallaig’, written in the early 1950s, is Sorley MacLean’s most famous and discussed poem. It is celebratory and has been described as “elegiac, luminous and mirky, set in a past but very much in the present”. The places named in the poem are on the island of Raasay where MacLean was born, and Hallaig itself was a small community on the east coast, the last of whose inhabitants were cleared from the area a hundred and fifty years ago. The poet imagines the people of that community but, although they and their identification with the place have been doomed to extinction, some vital element survives and defies the ravages of time as long as the poet’s imagination can still revivify that vital element in the language of the people.

Other works featured in the concert were commissioned by the Trust for the Year of Highland Culture festival and were performed at six venues throughout the Highlands in June, 2007.

Archie Black, Chair of Urras Shomhairle, the Sorley MacLean Trust, said: “The concert will celebrate the rich legacy bequeathed by the late Sorley MacLean, using his poems as the inspiration for the creation of a number of new musical works. We are delighted that someone of the stature of Stuart MacRae has participated in this venture and his composition together with those of the other composers - Mary Ann Kennedy, Eilidh Mackenzie, Marie-Louise Napier, Allan Macdonald, Blair Douglas, Donald Shaw, Allan Henderson and Kenneth Thomson – will provide a not-to-be-missed treat for all aficionados of Gaelic music. Also featured will be a composition by the Irish composers Louis de Paor and John Spillane and a couple of items produced as a result of the Gaelic and music residencies established by the Trust at the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton. The songs will be performed by Mod Gold Medallists Jenna Cumming, Kirsteen MacDonald, James Graham and Alasdair Whyte. Also taking part will be the

renowned Glasgow Gaelic Musical Association and the award-winning Glasgow Ilay Junior Gaelic Choir. This is an all-star line-up which will be a magnificent addition to the Celtic Connections festival and a wonderful chance for the people of Glasgow and beyond to enjoy an unforgettable cultural experience."

The various composers and singers will also be accompanied by a formidable House Band comprising Gordon Gunn, Jack Evans, Christine Hanson, Dougie Pincock, Brain McAlpine, Mary Ann Kennedy and Mary McCarthy and the whole event will be compered by Mary Ann Kennedy.

Archie Black added: "The output of the original project was enthusiastically received by six Highland audiences in 2007. This concert will be a special New year treat for a Glasgow-based audience, combining the beauty of Sorley's poems with fine musical settings created specially to enhance the power of his words. Celtic Connections is a perfect platform to showcase the work of the bard and the hugely talented field of musicians and performers we have in Gaelic at this time."

Tickets for the performance on Sunday, January 18 (7.30pm start) are available from Celtic Connections at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (tel: 0141 353 8000); online through [www.celticconnections.com](http://www.celticconnections.com)

The Sorley MacLean Trust gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from the PRS Foundation in respect of the Stuart MacRae and Mary Ann Kennedy commissions.

For further information on the contents of this news Release and the work of Urras Shomhairle, please contact: Archie Black, Chairman, Urras Shomhairle, 16 Elm Park, Inverness IV2 4WN (Tel: 01463 230588 email: [archieblack@inbhirnis.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:archieblack@inbhirnis.fsnet.co.uk)) The Trust has retained the services of Project Director Ken Thomson for the Celtic Connections concert. For further information about the concert programme and the performers please contact Ken Thomson: Telephone: 0141 3347773

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