



THE SCOTSMAN

Over Lunan: Spectacular event recalling 8000-year-old tsunami staged on Scottish beach dunes

It is a spectacular new event connecting the sand dunes of a little-known Scottish beach with an 8200-year-old tsunami, the birthplace of human civilisation, mythological floods and modern-day conflicts and climate change.

By [Brian Ferguson](#)

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Over Lunan will run until 19 September at Lunan Bay. Picture: Alasdair Smith

The crescent-shaped Lunan Bay, near Arbroath, is playing host to an open-air production combining sound and light effects with live music and drama this month.

Audiences of around 50 a night at the promenade-style show will witness the transformation of the bay, which is dominated by a 12th century castle built to repel Viking invaders, during the run of “Over Lunan.”

A cast of around 20 local performers appear in the production, which also features live conch and carnyx players and a soundtrack recorded by the St Salvator's Chapel Choir of St Andrews University.



A cast of around 20 local performers will be appearing in Over Lunan. Picture: Alasdair Smith

The show, which was delayed for 12 months by the pandemic, was originally commissioned to be the finale of celebrations to mark the 700th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath.

It will reflect on the concerns over the current “fragility” of the world as it grapples with major weather events by recalling the impact of the Storegga Slide, a series of submarine landslides which were the largest mass movement for 50,000 years. They triggered a massive tsunami which reached up to 65 ft

The show will explore how Lunan Bay's origins can be linked to mythological stories of the Apkallū - half-fish, half-human sages who were said to have emerged from the sea to bring knowledge to the people of Mesopotamia, where the world's earliest civilization developed in part of the world now home to Iraq and parts of Syria and Turkey. Over Lunan, which is staged as darkness is falling around the bay, explores how the Apkallū would respond if they were to emerge from the sea one last time onto the shores of Angus. The show, which will run until 19 September, has been masterminded by the leading artist and outdoor event specialist Angus Farquhar, whose company Aproxima Arts was commissioned by the Arbroath 2020 festival and Hospitalfield, the arts centre created on the site of a former leprosy and plague hospice in Arbroath.

Farquhar has worked with the writer and theatre director Purni Morell and composer Andrew Knight-Hill to create Over Lunan.



Audiences of around 50 will be watching Over Lunan this month. Picture: Alasdair Smith

Farquhar said: "When I was first asked by Hospitalfield to do some kind of finale event for Abroath 2020, I started off looking at doing some kind of open democracy event in the Abbey, but became really interested in the medieval history of walks through this area, which is why Hospitalfield was built in the first place by monks in the 13th century. "I had been thinking about an event for 2000 or 3000 people, rather than audiences of just 50. My long-time....."

.....collaborator James Johnson and I went up and down the coastline and when we hit Lunan Bay we felt the dune complex there was just head and

shoulders above anywhere else. "Angus hides its lights under a bushel – it's full of hidden gems. A lot of people go to Dundee and Aberdeen, but completely miss out the most remarkable bit of coastline, with its geology and history. Lunan Bay is absolutely world-class but it's surprising how many people don't know about it.

"For all of us on the project, there's been a sense of discovery. Once we started discovering the history of the Angus area everything else just seemed to fall in to place." There are whole series of connections that we've made and there are leaps of imagination.

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"We've stitched something together that runs through geographical space and historical time. Over Lunan makes an unusual set of associations, but they really play with your imagination."

Farquhar has previously staged major outdoor events on Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, the Old Man of Storr in the Isle of Skye, Glen Lyon in Perthshire at the ruined remains of St Peter's Seminary in Argyll.





Over Lunan has been in development for more than two years. Picture: Angus Farquhar

Farquhar said: "I have spent a long time looking at different landscapes in Scotland and decoding them in hopefully interesting ways for audiences." My big public art installations and production pieces have always been about visiting a new piece of landscape, bringing people there and giving them a new way of seeing them and moving through them.

"It was very weird that the first time we actually got together as a team at Lunan Bay was just three days before the country went into lockdown, so it was the

last thing that we all did. From then, we all went into Zoom-land, like everyone else.

"It's been very strange to back again, with real people, working outside, doing what we love.

"We've dreamt of doing this for two and a half years. We sat in the dunes the other night as the sun was going down and it really felt like the last days of summer."



Around 50 audience members will be watching each performance of Over Lunan in Angus.

The 12-month delay for the live event inspiring the creation of a radio piece to accompany Over Lunan, which ticket-holders are being urged to listen to before they head to the sold-out show.

Like the in-person production, it draws parallels between the coastal location in Angus and the ancient cultures of the Middle East.

Farquhar added: "There are some really powerful elements that we are playing with in Over Lunan.

"As always, we want the audience to go on the kind of journey we've been on about finding out about this particular place and world history.

"When we talk about places like Syria or Iraq it is always in this immensely negative context of war and destruction.

"Over Lunan is also a celebration of their culture and its impact on the world."