

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Uist premiere set for film celebrating Canna folklorist

A new film celebrating the footage collected by Margaret Fay Shaw will premiere at an event in South Uist on 3 May.

Created by the National Trust for Scotland's Canna House archivist, Fiona J Mackenzie, *Solas* (Gaelic for light) uses rediscovered film shot by the US-born folklorist who dedicated her life to documenting Gaelic song.

The screening takes place as part of the Moladh Uibhist weekend.

Margaret Fay Shaw left the world a fascinating collection of images and invaluable film of a lifestyle which no longer exists. She not only took film and photos in the Outer Hebrides but also on the Isle of Canna, where she lived with her husband, fellow folklorist John Lorne Campbell, from 1938 when they bought the island, until her death at the age of 101 in 2004.

This film collection was recently re-digitised by the National Trust for Scotland, who have cared for the island since 1981, to ensure its preservation for years to come. In the process of carrying out this work archivist Fiona J Mackenzie uncovered some previously unseen film, including footage of such historically important events as the first plane landing on the Cockle Strand on Barra, 1936.

Solas uses Margaret's images, films and words to tell the story of her life and the people in that life. Using two broadcasts which Margaret made for the BBC in the 1950s and the words of her close friend and companion, Basque born Magda Sagarzazu, their own recorded voices tell how their lives were affected by the islands, the people, the animals, crofting, the birds, the songs and the sounds.

The film also uses samples from the sound archive recorded by John Lorne Campbell during the 30s and 40s in the Hebrides, primarily Barra, South Uist, Eriskay and Canna.

During the production of the film, Fiona was also keen to demonstrate how an archive can also inspire new and current creative work. Lewis piper, James Duncan Mackenzie, was commissioned to produce a new soundtrack for the film, inspired by watching the films and responding to them. James and his musicians spent a week in Canna House, using the films to produce a suite of new music. The Canna House front door, the Canna Steinway piano, John Lorne Campbell's

bugle, Margaret's typewriter and the servant's bells all make an appearance in the music.

Fiona said: "I am delighted that we have been able to produce this lovely piece of work, to profile the work of an incredible woman who had the foresight to save for the world today, a piece of Scottish lifestyle which would have otherwise disappeared.

"It is only right that the film is premiered in the middle of the community which took Margaret to their hearts and were so generous with their time, language, love and culture. Margaret said that Uist was the place 'where she was loved the best' and we hope that this will be evident in the film. South Uist was where I personally first studied the songs collected by the Campbells and I am pleased to be able to give a voice and vision to Margaret's work.

"We are very grateful to the National Trust for Scotland USA Foundation for making this project possible and also for the opportunity to prove that archives can be a living entity, not merely a collection of boxes on the shelf.

"All of the people involved in the production, the editor, the musicians, the studios, have been inspired by the work of Margaret and John Lorne Campbell and all are keen to continue this work, using the wonderful resources contained in Canna House today, to celebrate the life and work of these two incredible people. John and Margaret Campbell would be delighted that we are using the old to create the new."

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For more info / photographs, contact Fiona J Mackenzie, fmackenzie@nts.org.uk 01687 462473, Mobile 07818 630616 (after May 1, due to lack of mobile coverage on Canna) or Sarah Cuthbert-Kerr - sckerr@nts.org.uk

Editor's Notes:

Images: A video trailer of Solas and selection of images are available for download here: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/09U153>

- Folklorist Margaret Fay Shaw first came to Scotland as a teenager from Pennsylvania, in 1920. She was orphaned at an early age and her family decided to send her to St Bride's school in Helensburgh, in an attempt to get Scotland, the home of her forefathers, to 'sort her out'. It was in Helensburgh, at a school recital, that Margaret first heard Gaelic being sung by Victorian song collector, Marjory Kennedy Fraser, and she decided there and then to make Gaelic song her 'life's quest', to find the 'pristine version'. Margaret spent six years living in the remote hamlet of North Glendale, South

Lochboisdale, South Uist, between 1929- 35 and over the course of these years , she became one of the world's first female photographers and cinematographers, documenting a disappearing way of Hebridean life.

- The premiere takes place in St Peter's Hall, South Uist, Friday May 3, 7pm and lasts 30 mins. It will be followed by a ceilidh dance. The event is part of the Moladh Uibhist weekend organised by Ceolas, the Uist Arts and Cultural organisation. <http://www.ceolas.co.uk/2019/03/27/moladh-uibhist-3-5-may/>
- The premiere is part of a programme of projects which will take place between 2019 - 21, to create awareness of the film collection including film festivals and broadcast.
- The soundtrack was composed by James Mackenzie, watching Shaw's original films and responding to them. James is a member of the band "Breabach". The musicians involved in the recording of the new soundtrack were –Ross B Wilson, Neil Ewart, Allan Nairn, Katie Mackenzie, and Yvonne Lyon.
- The film was produced by Fiona J Mackenzie and the films edited by Peter Wolsey.
- Magda Sagarzazu was the previous archivist in Canna House and has spent most of her life on Canna. Her father Saturnino Sagarzazu from the Basque Country was a close friend of John Lorne Campbell.
- Fiona Mackenzie recently produced the first collection of Shaw's photographs in "Eilean" published by Birlinn Ltd.
- The National Trust for Scotland is the charity that celebrates and protects Scotland's heritage. It relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work of caring for the natural and built heritage of Scotland for everyone to enjoy.
- Every day, the hundreds of thousands of members, donors, volunteers and staff at the charity help to protect Scotland's natural and national treasures for us all to enjoy. From coastlines to castles, art to architecture, wildlife to wildernesses, we do what we do... for the *love* of Scotland. Join us at www.nts.org.uk/love

