



International Guild of Town Pipers

Bringing history to life

From medieval times up to the early 19th century, European towns and cities employed bands of civic musicians. Duties included playing through the town at night, waking townsfolk on dark winter mornings by playing in the street, and playing for civic occasions. **The International Guild of Town Pipers** exists to promote interest in the history and music of the Town Pipers and to encourage the formation of new performing groups. We maintain a website, which has extensive information on the history of waits and the modern revival bands.



Town pipers are known as Waits in England, Stadspijpers in the Netherlands, Stadtpfeifer in Germany and Pifferi in Italy

Every two years we organise a Waits' Festival, where multiple bands of pipers/Waits gather for a weekend to meet, swap ideas, and perform. Members of the guild range from individuals and academics to gifted amateurs and professional musicians.

2026 will be the year of our 11th festival and we are looking for a city or town to help us host the event. Past festivals have been held in York, Lincoln, Kings Lynn, Worcester, Gloucester and 's Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands.



Our bands perform on replicas of period instruments and wear clothing of the era they represent. The Town Pipers of old provided entertainment to the citizens of their town and our aim is to continue this tradition by providing free outdoor musical performances during our festivals.



The Festival of the IGTP



Our charity's objectives are "to advance the education for the public benefit in Early Music" and the festival is one of the ways that we accomplish this.

At our last festival, the guild provided 36 free performances around the centre of the host city, culminating in the "Great Noyse", a concert by all of the 60 musicians taking part. These performances brought to life the historical locations in which they were staged and helped to attract a new audience both to the location and to the music performed. We were also able to provide a band to accompany the cathedral choir and together they performed a renaissance motet at morning mass on Sunday. This was followed by a musical parade through the city centre by all participants.



The Guild can....

Organise workshops for adults or children

Host talks and lectures on the history of town pipers

Demonstrate historical instruments

Provide professional early music concerts

Celebrate Your Town

The festival can be a great way to encourage increased footfall into your town, bringing visitors to your businesses.

Versatility

The Guild's festival has been held as an independent event in the past, but it can also be used as part of a larger event when sponsors may wish to increase the numbers of people visiting a venue or a certain part of their city or town.



An outline festival programme

Friday

Bands arrive, evening rehearsal and reception.

Saturday

Bands play around the host city or town at pre-agreed locations and times. Evening social event for participants.

Sunday

Rehearsals followed by a procession leading to The "Great Noyse" Late pm bands disperse depending on travel arrangements.

Creating a Partnership

The guild is seeking partner organisations to stage mutually beneficial events. For example, an historical property can advertise a period music day to attract more visitors. The guild will provide the performances in return for free use of the building. Advertised free street performances by the guilds' members may improve footfall to a particular street or area.

Workshops and talks can be linked to the National Curriculum for schools, or add to a gallery or museum's planned programme of lectures.



In return for its proven track record in creating visitor interest, the Guild would seek practical aid and sponsorship to help towards costs. We would be happy to tailor these requirements so that they match your event.

"It was strangely moving to hear what a stirring sound all those shawms...could make against the stunning backdrop of the cathedral"
 Helen Mason- Lincoln Early Music Festival





All the above is open for discussion and the guild is always looking for new elements. In the past these have included re-enactment events, mystery plays, playing on a medieval ship and performances from castle walls and towers.

The International Guild of Town Pipers is unique in being able to provide such a large and spectacular gathering of period musicians who are willing to work with sponsors to create a programme of enjoyable and educational events.

If you require more information and wish to see more photographs of past festivals then please visit our website at www.townwaits.org.uk

Alternatively you can email us at contact@townwaits.org.uk

