



*The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric*  
courtesy of National Library of Scotland  
Moving Image Archive

# The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric (1933)

**Silent film screening with new live score by  
Inge Thomson and Catriona Macdonald**

The Hippodrome Silent Film Festival (est'd 2011) (aka HippFest) is Scotland's first and only festival of silent film with live music, centred in and inspired by Scotland's oldest cinema, featuring exceptional screenings, commissions, workshops and community events. HippFest undertakes year-round activity and has established a reputation for excellence in commissioning new music and touring.

A new accompaniment for *The Rugged Island* was commissioned with funding from Creative Scotland and premiered at the 14th Hippodrome Silent Film Festival (20 March 2024). This undisputed hit of the 2024 HippFest is now available to book for touring to venues across Scotland.

Find out more about previous [HippFest tours](#)



Falkirk Council



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



**HippFest**  
Silent Film - Live Music - On Tour



The Scotsman



The Quintessential  
Review



A Young(ish) Perspective

## **An extraordinary film from the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive directed by Jenny Gilbertson**

The Rugged Island is A beautiful 'story documentary' made by pioneering Scottish filmmaker Jenny Gilbertson showing life, love and work in Shetland's rural crofting communities.

Jenny's husband-to-be plays Johnny: a young man torn between his duty to home and his love for Enga, with the promise of a new life in Australia. Hailed by John Grierson - father of the British documentary movement - as "one of the best descriptions of life in the country anybody has yet made", this tender and beautiful dramatisation of Shetland life surpasses the bounds of both fiction and non-fiction filmmaking.

A rough screener is available to view here: [Full record for 'RUGGED ISLAND, the : A SHETLAND LYRIC' \(0991\) - Moving Image Archive catalogue \(nls.uk\)](#)

### **Presented with a live performance of newly commissioned music**

Hippfest commissioned one of Scotland's most in-demand composer producers Inge Thomson to create a new live score for this remarkable film. The premiere met rapturous response and requests for further performances. Thomson, herself from one of Scotland's most remote crofting communities, brought in multi award winning Shetland fiddler Catriona Macdonald, and between them they make a soundtrack both ancient and modern. The perfect foil to Gilbertson's feminal work.

## **Inge Thomson**

Inge Thomson is an award-winning musician who has been creating music for over 30 years as a composer, producer, lyricist, multi-instrumentalist and performer. Although best known as a long-term collaborator with The Karine Polwart Trio, in her own right Inge creates large scale multi-media works, produces content for radio and film soundtrack, performs and records in solo capacity and in cross-disciplinary collaborations including projects with scientists, visual artists, animators, theatre makers and textile artists. Recent high profile commissions include BBC Radio 3 Slow Radio piece Fair Winds (2022) and the 2021 BBC Na Trads Award nominated, Wild Edges.



Image credit: Kat Gollock

# Catriona Macdonald

Catriona Macdonald is a proud bearer of one of the world's great fiddle traditions, that of the Shetland Isles. Catriona at once embodies the strength and spirit of her heritage with the freshness and diversity of a thoroughly modern performer and composer. Her superb playing and great charisma have established her a worldwide reputation as both a solo artist, and as a founder member of Scottish fiddle band Blazin' Fiddles and International string group String Sisters. She is currently a Senior Lecturer and Degree Programme Director for the BA in Folk and Traditional Music course based at Newcastle University.



Image credit: Kat Gollock

“

*The film is a **gorgeously evocative postcard from the past** with the location perfectly served by Jenny's camerawork... It's just lovely to look at and **cinematically satisfying** especially with the new accompaniment. This was provided by Inge Thomson and Catriona Macdonald who provided an **intoxicating air of emotion and location...** Together they infused their music with a **vibrancy and authenticity** to match the filmmakers own.*

”

Paul Joyce, Ithankyou Review, March 2024

## Press and media coverage

BBC News Shetland (news) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001w122>

Rare Shetland 'masterpiece' among film festival's line-up <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24111458.rare-shetland-masterpiece-among-film-festivals-line-up/>

Interview: Inge Thomson & Catriona Macdonald (HippFest 2024) <https://snackmag.co.uk/interview-ing-thomson-catriona-macdonald-hippfest-2024>

The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric (feature) <https://www.scottishbanner.com/2024/03/08/the-rugged-island-a-shetland-lyric/>

Jenny Gilbertson's slice of life... The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric (1933), with Inge Thomson, Catriona Macdonald, HippFest at Home (review) <https://ithankyouarthur.blogspot.com/2024/03/jenny-gilbertson-slice-of-life-rugged.html>

Review: The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric - Soundhouse Winter Festival 2024 <https://theqr.co.uk/2024/11/29/review-the-rugged-island-a-shetland-lyric-soundhouse-winter-festival-2024/>

REVIEW: Soundhouse: The Rugged Island - A Shetland Lyric <https://ayoungishperspective.co.uk/2024/11/30/review-soundhouse-the-rugged-island-a-shetland-lyric/>



<b>Format</b>	DVD / MP4 / DCP
<b>Screening ratio</b>	4:3
<b>Language</b>	Silent with English intertitles
<b>Certificate</b>	Not certificated, recommended U(niversal)
<b>Running time</b>	Approx. 1 hr
<b>Content advisory</b>	Some shots of dead animals
<b>Screening license</b>	3rd party, via Falkirk Council
<b>Instruments</b>	Accordion, Sampler, Floor tom, Cymbal, Glockenspiel, Whistles, Flute, Pedal board, Fiddle
<b>Costs</b>	£1,525 per venue + musicians' accommodation, travel and subsistence/meals.
<b>Available dates</b>	By negotiation Sep – Oct 2025
<b>Tech requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screen</li> <li>• Cinema server (DCP) OR Projector OR pc/laptop (MP4) OR DVD player</li> <li>• Adequate PA to cover venue, run in stereo</li> <li>• Adequate power for performer equipment</li> <li>• Mixing desk with minimum 8 inputs</li> <li>• Mics/instruments: provided by musicians</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing</b>	A digital media pack will be supplied, including image/video assets, equads, eflyers and template copy for a variety of online formats.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Tour venues will be required to provide Box Office report within one week of screening date. Please share your professional standard photographs documenting the performance for use in HippFest reporting and evaluation

## Branding requirements

Venues must include the following credit and logos in all marketing related to the event:

*The tour and this performance was originally commissioned by HippFest: a world class Festival for silent film, cultivating an international community with an adventurous appetite for extraordinary cinema. The commission was supported by Creative Scotland's National Lottery Open Fund for Organisations. Screening material courtesy of the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive.*

## Assets

Podcast with Inge and Catriona: Composing for The Rugged Island: in Conversation with Inge Thomson and Catriona Macdonald by HippCast (spotify.com)

Online presentation: Jenny Gilbertson: 'A Real Illuminator' (youtube.com)

Programme notes: the-rugged-island-a-shetland-lyric-1933-dr-shona-main.pdf (hippodromecinema.co.uk)

## Images

[Linked here](#)



Image credit: Kat Gollock