

About Christopher Tait

Christopher Tait is Scotland's leading Robert Burns reenactor, performing for audiences from the USA and throughout Europe to South East Asia. He explains why he loves playing Scotland's most famous poet.

"I've been performing in costume as Robert Burns for over 20 years and professionally for 15 years. My passion for Burns' poetry started at Flora Stevenson's Primary school in Edinburgh, where I won the Burns' Federation competition for excellence in recitation of Scottish poetry.

"I was reciting poetry at Burns Suppers in Edinburgh when I realised that to add more theatre to my performance I should offer audiences the unique chance to watch Burns himself perform his own works. So, I had a period costume and wig made for me and soon made a name for myself!"

Performing worldwide, Chris has been asked to appear as Burns in some amazing locations including New York, London, Dubai, Singapore and Jakarta.

"I once gave a performance in Pushkin Square, Moscow under the statue of Russia's most famous poet, Alexander Pushkin. While I was performing the poem 'To a Mouse' a Russian policeman pushed his way through the crowd aiming straight at me. He stopped inches from my face and said 'You are Robert Burns?' He then vigorously shook my hand and watched the rest of the show.

"I have also appeared on a 1920s motor yacht in the middle of Lake Washington, Seattle. The Commodore of the Seattle Yacht Club, who was of Scottish descent, was celebrating his 60th birthday."

Once he is 'in character', Chris bears a striking resemblance to the man himself.

"It takes around thirty minutes to transform myself. While I'm applying the make-up, fixing my wig and changing into costume I'm focusing on my script for the evening and relaxing. I like to be alone for a few minutes prior to taking the stage."

Burns night is celebrated all over the world but each country marks the occasion with its own flavour.

"In America the National Anthems for the US and Britain are sung, in Russia it's Flower of Scotland!"

"American audiences love the theatrical aspect of my show. I can also interact with them as I can with no other audience."

Chris has had many great experiences performing as Burns but the most memorable took place in the poet's own cottage.

"Making a film of Burns' life in the Burns Cottage in Alloway was poignant. We spent three days filming in the cottage, starting at 4am due to traffic noise!"

"Walking around the cottage in the dead of night in the image of Burns himself was a special experience for me.

"I love performing Tam O' Shanter. It's full of power and passion. I add the famous missing lines to this piece, which makes my rendition quite unique. The lines were deemed politically incorrect at the time the poem was first published. They were later included in centenary edition copies of Burns' works but have never been added to modern day copies. You can hear my rendition in my film, Robert Burns Live"

So what is it which makes Robert Burns so popular across the world?

"People all over the world can relate to his poetry and song. It is a tribute to the poet's remarkable powers of perception and his keen observation of humanity that many of the words that he wrote are as relevant today as they were in the 18th century.

"I especially enjoy appearing in Russia. Russian hospitality matches that of the Scots. They are a welcoming people who adore and appreciate the arts. They appreciate the wide variety of subjects dealt with in his works. There is so much that is applicable to so many different aspects of Russian life."

Although he was born in 1759, the words of Robert Burns still ring true in 2014.

"We continue to use the words penned by Burns today. 'The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley', 'Oh wad some pow'r the giftie gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us'. These are immortal words."

Given that the words of Burns are still so relevant to today's society, Chris thinks Burns would be enthusiastic about Scotland's current music and literary scene.

"Burns appreciated all that was good in Scotland. He would be fascinated by the advances in musical technology and devour the modern day classics of Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and J K Rowling. Although I'm not sure what he'd make of Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting!"

Chris also appreciates his homeland and would recommend anyone to come and live here:

"Scotland is a nation rich in culture and history. We are producing world-renowned academics and are at the forefront of pioneering new advances in medicine and technology.

2009 was the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns and Chris was chosen by Visit Scotland to become the face of the Homecoming Scotland celebrations. "It was a great honour to lead the year long festivities. I performed in front of 20,000 people at the Clan Gathering in Holyrood Park, Edinburgh and gave countless media interviews and television appearances, from Sports channels to UK wide news programmes".

Christopher's many television appearances include the BBC documentary, Cooking up Burns in 2006 and in 2013, a part on the CBS TV show, The Amazing Race.