

**Press release for immediate use  
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**Friends and family of late folk musician Martin Matthews to launch final album of his work in aid of charities close to his heart**

*Donations made on ordering the album will go to The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, Macmillan Cancer Support and end of life charity Marie Curie*

The friends and family of influential folk musician Martin Matthews are set to release an album of his work in aid of three charities close to his heart. *No Time Like The Present*, a collection of 17 tracks featuring pieces composed by Martin, and others with treasured personal connections, was recorded in the final months of his life before his death at 71 in August 2023.

Working alongside friend and music producer Sean Taylor, Martin, from Lanchester, Co Durham, was committed to creating an audio record of tunes he hoped will one day become a key part of the traditional session repertoire.

A much-loved figure in the North East's vibrant folk music circuit, having played regularly in sessions across the region for more than 40 years and performed in 12 different groups including The Champion String Band, The Rub and Cuig, the skilled banjo player had toured North America and Canada, and recorded four earlier albums in partnership with Sean, cementing his reputation not just as a custodian of folk music, but as a pioneer.

Bassist and producer Sean, who collaborated with Martin for more than 20 years, said: "Martin was a perfectionist in everything he did. Even through the difficult months and years of his illness, he was determined to get this album finished. He considered it a job that needed to be done, and done well.

"We managed to record everything before he died, but in true Martin fashion, he left me with extensive notes addressing each and every point of the album he felt should be refined during the production process. Over the past year, I've worked to fulfil those wishes as best I could and while I'm sure there are things he'd still want to change, I think we've produced something he'd be proud of."

Grandfather-of-two Martin was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2020. As well as receiving invaluable support from end of life charity Marie Curie as well as Macmillan Cancer Support, he was provided with pioneering treatment by The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, part of Newcastle Hospitals Charity, during the course of his illness.

Martin undertook a clinical trial of a new cancer drug at the Sir Bobby Robson Cancer Trials Research Centre at the Northern Centre for Cancer Care, Freeman Hospital in Newcastle.

Patients come from across North East England and Cumbria for treatment at the centre, which offers hope for people with advanced cancer. The research and clinical trials undertaken there are part of long-term national and international efforts into the disease.

His wife Maria, originally from Newry, Co Down, said: "The support we received from these organisations during Martin's illness is something I, along with our wonderful daughter Cate, will always cherish. Their kindness and practical assistance during such a challenging time made a world of difference to our experience. Martin was truly grateful for all they did for him, and it was his firm wish that proceeds from this album, one he was incredibly passionate about, went to them in order to support other families facing a cancer diagnosis."

Among the tracks featured on the album is *The Connemara Set*, a tune named in honour of the musician's namesake, his great-grandfather Martin Mannion who emigrated to England in the 1860s from Clifden in Connemara, Co Galway. He, along with many other famine emigres, found employment in the North East coalfield.

Another piece is *Mr Coyne's Jigs*, a tune for Mr Peter Coyne, a surgeon at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, who operated on Martin in June 2021. In the sleeve notes of the collection, written before his death, Martin told how it was thanks to the work of Mr Coyne and other medics that he was "given more time to complete this album". The album's title, *No Time Like The Present*, is taken from a piece written for Martin by his old friend and master luthier, Stefan Sobell.

Fiddler Paul Archer, who made a number of Martin's instruments and played with him for almost 50 years, features on the album, along with around 20 other musicians. He said: "While Martin faced his own health battle, I was diagnosed with dystonia in my right arm, a condition that meant I could no longer play as I used to. But given our long-shared history on the music scene, he managed to include me on a number of tracks by using earlier recordings. That's something that meant a lot to both of us, particularly for an album that was so important to him as he bravely faced the inevitable."

Guitarist Andy McLaughlin, who also features on the album, added: "Martin was hugely influential and innovative in his approach to folk music, and we hope this album will serve as a fitting legacy to his work. He was a virtuoso on his instrument, a fantastic composer and everyone who knew him couldn't help but appreciate just what a clever and creative talent he was. He was absolutely focused on finishing this album as a way of contributing meaningfully to the art form he loved, and we couldn't be prouder of helping him along the way."

*No Time Like The Present* will be available from November 16 2024, with people invited to make a charitable donation with their order. Email [maria.matthews52@gmail.com](mailto:maria.matthews52@gmail.com) to order your copy or visit [www.martinmatthews.uk](http://www.martinmatthews.uk) to find out more.