

Book Festival closes with tribute to Morgan

✘ The Edinburgh International Festival public programme closed last night with a moving tribute to Scotland's first national poet, Edwin Morgan who died last week. Richard Holloway chaired the final event in Charlotte Square Gardens which featured readings and personal tributes from 14 of Scotland's top poets including Douglas Dunn, Janice Galloway, Hamish Whyte, Liz Lochhead and Jackie Kay.

The 2010 Festival has featured over 750 participants from 50 countries including Nobel Laureates Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Seamus Heaney, Poets Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and Keorapetse 'Willie' Kgositsile from South Africa as well as 10 of the 13 authors long-listed for the 2010 Man Booker Prize. Highlights of the 17 day festival included the first appearance in Edinburgh of A S Byatt, the delivery of the Donald Dewar Memorial Lecture by ex-Chancellor Alistair Darling, exclusive pre-publication readings from Seamus Heaney, Will Self and Michael Frayn and launches of memoirs from Candia McWilliam, Vidal Sassoon and Nicholas Parsons. Amongst the international authors, Alberto Manguel, Joyce Carol Oates, Garry Trudeau and D B C Pierre were welcome additions to the programme.

Peter Mandelson spoke at his first public event to promote his memoir, *The Third Man* to a capacity audience, and closed his event with his proposed Oxford Dictionary definition of the new word 'mandelsonian' as "subtle, strategic, hard working and ultimately very loyal."

Around 200,000 people visited Charlotte Square Gardens during the Festival, to enjoy events, browse the

bookshops and to relax in the sunshine. Ticket sales were on a par with 2008 with 76% of all tickets sold. A figure marginally down on 2009 which was an exceptional year.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said "My first year as Book Festival Director has been a hugely fulfilling and enjoyable experience that has fittingly culminated in the tribute to Edwin Morgan in a year when we have welcomed more outstanding poets than ever before. We have built upon the core of a hugely successful festival by introducing new innovations including the UNBOUND 'festival within a festival', the Readers First Book Award and working with a range of Guest Selectors. These have been extremely well received both by authors and audience alike. I am delighted with the level of ticket sales which demonstrates that despite the uncertainty in the economy, arts and culture continue to play a vital role in people's lives."

The RBS Children's Programme enjoyed sell out events and record signing queues for Robert Muchamore, Cressida Cowell and Julia Donaldson as well as welcoming new writing from John Boyne, Garth Nix, Cornelia Funke and Francesca Simon. The RBS Schools programme welcomed over 12,000 children from primary and secondary schools across Scotland, culminating in 3,000 primary school pupils enjoying exclusive access to events in Charlotte Square Gardens today.

The Book Festival will continue on-line through the autumn and winter months with new, specially commissioned writing from Scottish, international and children's authors on the subject of 'Elsewhere', which is supported by the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund. Video recordings featuring highlights of events with authors in the Elsewhere programme will be available

for download. In addition, audio recordings of many of the events from the 2010 Book Festival will be available at www.edbookfest.co.uk from mid-September.

The 2011 Edinburgh International Book Festival will run from 13 to 29 August 2011 and the programme will be announced in June.