


Edinburgh International Book Festival opens to crowds



Photo courtesy of Edinburgh Inspiring Capital

The Edinburgh International Book Festival opened on Saturday to record crowds and capacity audiences for most events. Christos Tsiolkas, one of the ten authors longlisted for the 2010 Man Booker Prize who will be appearing in Charlotte Square Gardens over the next 17 days, opened the Festival when speaking about his book, *The Slap* while Philip Pullman debated the nuances of *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ* with the former Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries in a keynote event chaired by the former Bishop of Edinburgh, Richard Holloway.

The Book Festival started a little earlier than normal with BBC Radio 4's Today Programme broadcasting live from Charlotte Square Gardens to an audience of 5 million across the UK. Presenter Jim Naughtie was joined by a range of guests including former Chancellor Alistair Darling, who will deliver The National Library of Scotland's Donald Dewar Memorial Lecture at the Book Festival on Tuesday 17 August, and James Robertson who launched his new epic novel, *And The Land Lay Still*, at an emotional event last night. Darling admitted that things had been 'close to the brink' when he received a phone call from the Royal Bank of Scotland to say that the bank was going to fail in two hours, and asking what he was going to do about it. Commenting that he had a high pain threshold, "Which was just as well given what's happened over the last three years," Darling denied that there was a rift between him and Gordon Brown.

 Over 17,000 people visited the gardens to attend events and

enjoy the sunshine including the former PM, Gordon Brown, who brought his son to see the Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. Actor Dominic West was also spotted and Ian McDiarmid, who played the Emperor in Star Wars, appeared playing the part of Frank Sinatra in an event with Andrew O'Hagan. O'Hagan, who was also accompanied on stage by Suzanne Bertish and Andrew Hawley, announced that a film adaptation of his book, The Life and Opinions of Maf the Dog, and of His Friend Marilyn Monroe, will shortly go into production starring George Clooney as Frank Sinatra and Angelina Jolie as Marilyn Monroe. It is not yet known who will be playing Maf the dog.

The Book Festival continues until Monday 30 August with appearances still to come from Nicholas Parsons, Vidal Sassoon, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, A S Byatt and Man Booker Prize winners D B C Pierre and John Banville among many others. Tickets for events are available [on-line](#), in person at Charlotte Square Gardens from 9.30am to 8.30pm daily until 30 August, or by phone (0845 373 5888).

[googleMap name="Charlotte Square Garden" description="Book Festival" width="400" height="400"]Charlotte Square Edinburgh[/googleMap]