

Edinburgh International Festival 2011 – programme launched this morning

☒ This year's Festival is promised to be an exploration and celebration of the vibrant and diverse cultures of Asia and the long standing influences on the cultural landscape of the west, and the programme was launched today amid bacon rolls and dumplings for breakfast, Asian music and beautiful flowers at The Hub. We will bring you the story in tweets later.

Artists from China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, as well as North America, Germany, Belgium, Russia, the UK and from across the Arab speaking world gather in Edinburgh for three weeks of classical and contemporary music, dance, theatre, opera and visual arts.

Bringing together east and west The Peony Pavilion, performed by the National Ballet of China with western classical ballet, a classic symphony orchestra, traditional Chinese instruments, and a quintessentially Chinese story demonstrates the ideas and ambitions of Festival 2011. This beautiful and moving ballet is based on a love story by one of China's greatest writers, and contemporary of Shakespeare, Tang Xianzu.

The Tempest is re-imagined by Mokwha Repertory Company from Seoul in a distinctive production weaving Shakespeare's famous tale with fifth-century Korean chronicles. King Lear is deconstructed as a one man tour-de-force by Contemporary Legend Theatre from Taipei.

In another adaptation of Shakespeare, Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe retells the familiar tale of Hamlet setting it in China and performing the tragedy in the extraordinary acrobatic and elaborately costumed style of Jingju opera.


Debussy, Mahler, Messiaen and Schumann were each intrigued and inspired by the colours and sounds of Asia, music explored by artists across Festival 2011. Orchestras taking part this year include the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle Orchestra, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and the Yogyakarta Court Gamelan.

Scottish Ballet and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra perform Kenneth MacMillan's ballet Song of the Earth, set to Mahler's stunning song cycle inspired by Chinese poetry from the T'ang Dynasty, alongside the world premiere of a work created for the company by internationally acclaimed American-based choreographer Jorma Elo.

Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Opera bring a large scale production by Jonathan Kent, designed by Paul Brown, of Strauss's epic opera Die Frau ohne Schatten, spanning life on earth and in the spirit world.

Currently rehearsing in Fez, with actors from across the Arab speaking world, One Thousand and One Nights re-examines the brutal, erotic and enthralling stories of Shahrazad in a production directed by Tim Supple.

Staying in the Middle East, resonating strongly with recent events, Nigel Lowery's production of Semiramide for Vlaamse Opera, conducted by the great Rossini expert Alberto Zedda, is set in the final days of an Arabic dictator's regime.

East and west meet again in Stephen Earnhart and Greg  Pierce's production of The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle, based on the novel by Haruki Murakami. Festival 2011 is proud to present the world premiere of this hypnotic production combining performance, music, puppetry, dance and film.

Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto, one of the world's leading artists, brings two poetic series of work not presented before in Europe. Lightning Fields and Photogenic Drawings reveal

Sugimoto's dramatic exploration of the very nature of photography, presented in partnership with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

A multi-layered exhibition celebrating the rich heritage of Indian and Javanese textile traditions and their continuing influence on innovative contemporary craft practice is presented in partnership with Dovecot Studios.

The Virgin Money Fireworks Concert with over 100,000 firing sequences launched from Edinburgh Castle and choreographed to music performed by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra will fill Edinburgh's skies on Sunday 4 September at 9pm.

Dance at Festival 2011 includes French-Vietnamese choreographer Ea Sola's re-creation of her critically acclaimed meditation on the human cost of war, Drought and Rain, New York-based Chinese choreographer Shen Wei's Re-Triptych, the south Indian Nrityagram Dance Ensemble and Korean choreographer, Eun-Me Ahn and her company's colourful tale of Princess Bari.

The roll call of world-renowned musicians at Festival 2011 includes Kent Nagano and Myung-Whun Chung, Meagan Miller and Yundi making their Festival debuts. Joining them on the stages of the Scottish capital will be Maria João Pires, Ravi Shankar, Amjad Ali Khan, Vladimir Jurowski, Melvyn Tan, Xuefei Yang, Belcea Quartet, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, and Diana Damrau, among many others.

The Legendary Music of Rajasthan is presented in partnership with National Museums Scotland. The voices and instruments of the Langa and Manganiyar desert communities will reverberate around the magnificent redeveloped atrium of the Museum.

Continental Shifts, presented in association with British Council, is a series of talks and discussions exploring Festival 2011 themes and ideas. Contributors include James Kyngé, Dr Sashi Tharoor, Professor Wang Hui, Christopher

Brookmyre, Anita Nair, Shoma Chaudhury and Festival artists.

Public booking opens on Saturday 2 April both online at www.eif.co.uk and by phone on +44 (0)131 473 2000. Tickets start at £10 and a range of discounts are available. Widening access to Festival 2011 sees the introduction of speech-to-text reporting in its talks, discussions and conversations and Talking programmes for foreign language theatre productions. Full performance and venue access information is in the Festival brochure.

Jonathan Mills, Edinburgh International Festival Director, said: 'European artists, explorers and philosophers have drawn inspiration from the Far East for centuries. This Festival draws inspiration from across the diverse cultures of Asia, from Vietnam to China. We very much hope people will come on this exotic and sensual journey and immerse themselves in the beauty and traditions of Asian cultures both ancient and modern.

'We are delighted to welcome new businesses, individuals, trusts, foundations and international partners in 2011, and to see growth in our relationships with continuing partners and our public funders Creative Scotland and City of Edinburgh Council. These investments highlight the continued recognition of the value of the arts to the vitality of national, regional and international communities and are very important in bringing the stages of Edinburgh to life and creating so many memorable Festival experiences.'

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland said: 'Stunning programming, intriguing collaborations and a global perspective are hallmarks of the Edinburgh International Festival. It plays a unique role in Scotland, which is a festival nation, thrilling and inspiring audiences with work of the highest quality. There is nowhere as vibrant as the city of Edinburgh in August, which hums and buzzes with a creative energy unrivalled anywhere, with the International

Festival at its heart.'

Councillor Jenny Dawe, Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, said: 'This year's Edinburgh International Festival theme reflects our shared bonds with other cultures and countries through artistic expression. Notwithstanding the extremely challenging financial pressures facing all public bodies, The City of Edinburgh Council is proud to continue its support of this prestigious and important event and its clear contribution to the reputation of the city both at home and across the world.'

Councillor Steve Cardownie, Edinburgh's Festivals and Events Champion said: 'The Edinburgh International Festival has delivered another triumph of extraordinary work with a fantastic and diverse programme for 2011. Every year, the Festival continues to bring the very best in the arts from across the globe to Edinburgh, greatly enhancing the city's excellent reputation as the World's Festival City. As well as enticing many thousands of people from all over the world to visit Scotland's Capital, the Edinburgh International Festival continues to attract the significant audiences from in and around Edinburgh.'

Edinburgh International Festival 2011 Friday 12 August –
Sunday 4 September