

# Scottish International Storytelling Festival launches at Inchcolm



*Photo © Peter Dibdin*

The 21st Scottish International Storytelling Festival is launched on Thursday 8th September by **Fiona Hyslop MSP**, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, against the stunning backdrop of Inchcolm Abbey on Inchcolm Island. The 2011 Festival theme is **An Island Odyssey: Scotland and Old Europe**, with the central programme strand supported by the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund and the Festival on Tour strand supported by Scotland's Year of Islands.

Culture Secretary **Fiona Hyslop** said:-“The 2011 International Storytelling Festival is bigger and more creative than ever. With events taking place in most of Scotland's cities and across our islands, it is a fantastic celebration of our unique culture and natural environment. Bringing together song, music and dance alongside storytelling, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

“Scotland has a vibrant tradition of storytelling. It has helped preserve and enrich Scottish culture through the centuries and continues to carry our traditions and heritage around the world today. The festival is a vital showcase of this ancient art form and that is why the Scottish Government provides support through our Expo fund, ensuring new talent and creativity flourishes in Scotland and internationally.”

This year is the Festival's biggest yet, with a program that weaves the Mediterranean into Edinburgh and across 14 Scottish islands between the 21st and 30th October, presenting 45 events featuring over 41 performers (13 of whom are international guests), showcased in 31 venues, providing the perfect autumnal entertainment of yarns, music, dance, art, workshops and talks to take you into the winter season.

The Festival works with many partner venues, including **National Museums Scotland**, **Scottish Poetry Library** and the **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh** to offer a vibrant programme of events throughout the capital, as well as partner events in **Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, The Cumbraes, Bute, Mull and Iona, Skye, Lewis, Harris, Benbecula, Barra, Orkney, Fair Isle** and **Shetland**. Each Scottish isle has been twinned with a Mediterranean atoll, giving festival goers the opportunity to explore the cultural wealth of isolated communities through their rich storytelling traditions and authentic voices, with music and dance accompaniment.

While Edinburgh instalments explore the Mediterranean and Scottish pairings in Island Nights events throughout the 10 day run, the Festival on Tour strand offers the fantastic opportunity to experience in-situ yarn-weaving events, highlighting the close links stories have with traditions, as storytelling truly captures the landscape, ecology and character of place. Many of the Islands have also organised their own mini-festivals in coordination with the Storytelling Centre, such as the **Orkney Storytelling Festival**, the **Mull and Iona Storyfest** and a strong storytelling strand through **Faclan: The Hebridean Book Festival**.

Among this year's Festival highlights are the innovative series of free **Meet the Storyteller** events at the Storytelling Centre, showcasing the diversity of tale-weaving, as each evening's raconteur brings their own infusion of flavours from their homeland, be it Mediterranean or Scottish. Every night a different storyteller will share an episode of the Odyssey; the perfect narrative to showcase the appeal and allure of travel, as well as exemplify storytelling in a chronicle full of storytellers. The series of events will culminate on the Festival's final weekend with an unprecedented retelling of the complete Odyssey in two parts, **The Odyssey: The Wanderings of Odysseus** and **The Odyssey: The Return of Odysseus**, performed by a myriad of storytellers and musicians from across Europe in the atmospheric, gothic setting of The Hub.

In a build up to the Olympics in 2012 and the Commonwealth Games in 2014, the Festival embraces the opportunity to delve into the fascinating history of the Olympics by exploring the classical nature and philosophy of its origins, from **Eleni Theodoraki**, Edinburgh University Lecturer and appointed Core Commissioner for the Olympics Council who presents **Fame and Fortune: The Olympic Games Ancient and Modern**. The Olympics also provide a perfect theme for our family events with our series of **Gods, Goddesses, Heroes and Champions** events, as well as our Educators Day **Team Olympus**, exploring the history of Greek Myth and how to interpret and deliver these tales to children of all ages.

An array of storytellers and performers who originally hail from various Mediterranean islands join us including Corsican storyteller **Francette Orsoni**, Cypriot printmaker **Hambis Tsangaris** and raconteur **Heleni Achilleos**, Greek dancer **Sofia Papadia** from the Ionic islands, Sardinian storyteller **Enedina Sanna** and musician **Enzo Favata**, while **Stella Kassimati** and

**Geoff Mead** showcase Crete.

They are joined by a stellar line-up of Scottish performers covering the broad expanse of Scottish traditions including **David Campbell, Liz Lohead, Aileen Finlay, Hamish Moore** and **Ewan McVicar**.

The annual Scottish International Storytelling Festival is a brand leader for storytelling in Scotland and its grassroots network, a platform for established and emergent talent, an educational innovator, and an ambassador for Scotland's traditional arts and its contemporary cultural identity.

The Festival runs from **Friday 21st October until Sunday 30th October 2011**. Tickets are on sale now from the Scottish Storytelling Centre's box office (0131 556 9579) and partner venues.

A full programme is available online at [www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk](http://www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk) or from the Scottish Storytelling Centre and many venues around Edinburgh. Further information on the Festival can also be found at [www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk](http://www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk) and online bookings for events at the Centre and The Hub can be made through [www.hubtickets.co.uk](http://www.hubtickets.co.uk)