

Virgin Money Festival Fireworks tonight rounds off the 2011 Festival

✘ The world's Festival set to finish with over 100,000 bangs and whistles tonight.

The grand finale, the *Virgin Money Fireworks Concert* is launched from Edinburgh Castle tonight with over 100,000 fireworks choreographed to music including Tchaikovsky, Glinka and Borodin played live by The Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Princes Street Gardens and broadcast live on Forth One and Forth Two. Crowds are expected to congregate across the city to enjoy this annual spectacular.

Four tonnes of explosives and more than 100,000 fireworks will be used at the Virgin Money Fireworks Concert tonight bringing Edinburgh International Festival 2011 to a close.

"There has been a tremendous atmosphere at Festival performances, enriching exchange and journeys undertaken, political and cultural delegations from across the globe cultivating relationships with Scotland and the UK through the Festival, and a fantastic critical and audience reaction to this year's artists." Jonathan Mills, Festival Director

The opening weekend set the tone for Festival 2011 when a glorious Korean *Tempest*, a tour-de-force Taiwanese *King Lear* and the National Ballet of China's stunning *Peony Pavilion* entertained and moved audiences who responded with standing ovations.

Building bridges through arts and culture, the Festival continues to play a crucial role for Scotland and more widely the UK in the area of international relations and cultural diplomacy.

Diplomats, cultural leaders and officials from countries and regions including Korea, China, Indonesia, India, Taiwan, Flanders, Japan, Vietnam, Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, the United States and Canada were among those to meet with the Festival and attend events in 2011.

The Edinburgh International Festival this year continued to build its **international profile** with launches in India, Indonesia, Korea and China resulting in increased media presences from these and other countries during the Festival in Edinburgh.

Audiences flocked from 75 countries to enjoy the Festival this year, travelling from nations including China, Romania, Tunisia, Thailand, Iceland, India, Hungary, New Zealand, Norway, Vietnam, Qatar, Botswana and Barbados.

Over 2,500 artists from 38 nations performed at the Festival, from countries including Lebanon, Denmark, Czech Republic, Finland, Belarus, Egypt and Syria as well as countries across Asia.

Scotland performed to great acclaim on this international stage with Scottish Ballet's new commission by Jorma Elo, made possible with support from the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, and featuring the Royal Scottish National Orchestra receiving critical acclaim as did the performances of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Festival shows which received **5 star reviews** include *The Tempest*, *Peony Pavilion*, *Opening Concert*, *Qatsi Trilogy*, *King Lear*, *Orlando paladino*, Argerich and Goerner, Melvyn Tan, BBC SSO performing Jonathan Harvey, *The Sixteen*, *Thaïs*, *The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan*, Angelika Kirchschrager, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Osborne Weithaas Tetzlaff Trio, Magdalena Kožená, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Scottish Ballet, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Amjad Ali Khan, Philharmonia Orchestra, Ravi Shankar, Shen Wei's *Re-Triptych* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

Audiences engaged with the Festival in the **digital** sphere with large increases in its Twitter reach, influence and impact. On Facebook the Festival's page received more than 800,000 impressions over August and an album of photos of Ravi Shankar by Festival Photographer Eoin Carey received almost 12,000 page impressions alone.

Working to make the Festival as **accessible** to as many as possible paid off in the increased take up of facilities and ticket discounts for disabled patrons. New this year were speech to text reporting and talking programme notes for foreign language productions.

There has been a terrific engagement with the Festival on a level beyond performances with over **4600 attendances** at dance workshops, talks, conversations, masterclasses and schools projects over Festival 2011.

The Festival's Friends scheme for people in their 20s and

30s **IN** saw an increase in membership this year with particularly popular events proving the behind-the-scenes tours of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *One Thousand and One Nights* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

New supporters and sponsors this year include Virgin Money, Shell UK Limited, and HSBC. Major donor Harold Mitchell Esq, AC joins the Festival's incredible individual supporters who demonstrate their belief in the Festival generously. Standard Life developed its relationship with the Festival this year initiating Festival backstage, a series of films produced in association with Edinburgh's Napier University exploring beyond the stages of the Festival and available online at www.eif.co.uk/festivalbackstage.

The global musical talent and great humanitarian, **Valery Gergiev** was appointed new Honorary President of the Edinburgh International Festival on 1 September following a memorable performance of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* with the Mariinsky Opera at Edinburgh's Festival Theatre.

Soprano Erin Wall brought the house to its feet in a stunning performance of the title role in Massenet's *Thaïs*, dedicated to the memory of former Festival Director **Lord Harewood**, who passed away in July this year.

BBC Radio 3's broadcasts of Festival concerts began this week and continue throughout September with opportunities to catch 5 star performances from Donald Runnicles and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra performing Mahler 2 and Freiburg Baroque's superb performance of *Orlando paladino* still to come.

Jonathan Mills, Edinburgh International Festival Director

said: “This was a challenging Festival, one that asked audiences to take a risk and to join us on a distinct and remarkable journey. I am pleased that we are where we need to be financially, but I am particularly delighted that there has been such a terrific response to the programme and that shared aspects of our cultures and humanities have been so clear and accessible to Festival audiences. We’ve enjoyed some stunning performances, I’ve been moved, entertained and gripped by artists across dance, theatre, our visual arts, music and opera in what I think has been a very special Festival.”

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop said: “Edinburgh’s Festivals are known all over the world. This year we again welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors from across the globe, who came to Scotland to experience the culture, creativity and immense talent on show at our festivals. The 2011 EIF programme celebrating Scotland’s links with the Far East has helped to promote greater cultural understanding between nations, further strengthening our relationships and raising our profile internationally.”

Councillor Steve Cardownie, Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh, said: “With another fantastic year for Edinburgh’s Festivals drawing to a close, it is worth reflecting on the tremendous benefits the summer events bring to our city.

“As the 2011 Festivals Impact study suggests, the Edinburgh Festivals bring immense economic benefits to the city, as well as instilling civic pride both locally and nationally.

“The Capital this year was thriving, with a number of

outstanding performances in venues across the city – I am very much looking forward to next year already.”

Festival 2012 will be launched on Wednesday 14 March and runs from Friday 10 August to Sunday 2 September.

One project already announced as part of Festival 2012 is *Speed of Light* by conceived and produced by NVA and set to transform Edinburgh’s iconic mountain, Arthur’s Seat for three weeks next summer, part of the Cultural Olympiad and funded by Legacy Trust UK. Register interest in taking part at www.SpeedofLight2012.org

Some facts and figures behind Festival 2011:

Over 10 and a half thousand people enjoyed Shakespeare inspired Asian shows *King Lear*, *The Tempest* and *The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan*, each show receiving five and four star reviews.

Over 9,700 tickets have been issued for One Thousand and One Nights and 50 hours and fifteen minutes is the time the actors in the company will have spent on stage at the Festival.

23 vehicles courtesy of Renault ferried artists around the city.

Artists have received 550 bottles of Festival whisky distilled

and blended by Springbank Distillery.

The electric cables for The Qatsi Trilogy alone mounted to over 2 kilometres in length.

Debuts included Philip Glass, Yundi Lee, Xuefei Yang, Diana Damrau, Rene Jacobs, the National Ballet of China, the Nrityagram Dance Company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, Contemporary Legend Theatre, Eun-Me Ahn Company, Company Ea Sola and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra.

Almost 300 artists and crew travelled from the Mariinsky Opera in St Petersburg to stage *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

There were close to 400 costumes required to retell the tales of One Thousand and One Nights.

In 2011 the Festival filled more than 6,500 bed nights in hotels with artists alone.