

Edinburgh International Festival ready for the off



On the eve of the opening of the 66th Edinburgh International Festival Director Jonathan Mills said:- 'Artists are arriving from around the world, the venues are ready, the doves have taken off across town and we're ready to start showing people just how wonderful the shows we have lined up for audiences this year are. If you haven't already booked there are some tickets still available and I urge you to join us.'

'2012 has proved that through sport and culture people can find common celebration and understanding even in complex and difficult times. It is a special year and we are proud that with the support of our public funders, the City of Edinburgh Council and Creative Scotland, Event Scotland, and the Scottish Government through the Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, as well as our many sponsors and supporters and generous individuals we are able to present an enhanced Festival. With the additions of our theatre spaces at Lowland Hall and NVA's *Speed of Light* on Arthur's Seat we are proud to be making a significant contribution to London 2012 Festival and the World Shakespeare Festival.'



Jonathan Mills

This weekend sees over 12,000 people gathering across the city's theatres, concert halls, the Festival's new venue Lowland Hall and Arthur's Seat to enjoy theatre from Ireland, Japan and Poland, dance from Brazil, musicians from across the UK, America, Germany and South Africa and runners from all corners of the world as the Edinburgh International Festival opens its doors for 2012 on Thursday 9 August.

The Festival is expected to welcome audiences from a third of the world's nations to Scotland's capital city over its three weeks culminating in celebrations across the city for the *Virgin Money Fireworks Concert* on Sunday 2 September.

The Edinburgh International Festival opens on **Thursday 9 August** with *NVA's Speed of Light*, a participatory light and soundscape on Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh's city centre extinct volcano. It is still possible to play an artistic role in the Festival this year by securing a ticket to be one of the walking audience. Carrying a light stick which emits sound, the audience plays a crucial part in the unfolding performance while enjoying views of hundreds of runners in light suits forming shapes and streams of light around the hill, and vistas across the city.

On **Friday 10 August** the **Edinburgh International Festival's Opening Concert** plays to a sold out audience at the Usher Hall. Honouring Frederick Delius's 150th anniversary and one of the core inspirations of this year's Festival, a celebration of the best of humanity, the Festival opens with *A Mass of Life* Delius's most ambitious works for double chorus, soloists and large orchestra, for a rousing beginning to three weeks of the best orchestras and musicians from around the world performing at the Usher Hall.

On **Saturday night 11 August 2012** the Festival's new theatre venue, the Lowland Hall at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, opens with an electrifying Polish adaptation of *Macbeth* by director Grzegorz Jarzyna and his company TR Warszawa. Audiences in Edinburgh have seven opportunities to

catch this powerful version set in the Middle East, **2008: Macbeth**.

The Festival's new partnership with Lothian Buses has created the **Lowland Hall Bus Link** leaving from George Street 90 minutes before performances. Tickets must be bought in advance from Hub Tickets on +44 (0)131 473 2000 or at eif.co.uk

It has taken an expert team of 80 people 16 days and 10,000 crew hours to convert the Lowland Hall into three theatre auditoriums involving over 50 tonnes of kit. In addition to the theatre spaces the team has installed two public bars plus dressing rooms for 56 actors, portable showers and a temporary office space to allow the companies and audiences the most enjoyable experience on site.

Shows open across the city on Saturday. At the Edinburgh Playhouse Brazil's Deborah Colker Dance Company takes to the stage with **Tatyana** its sexy and sensual adaptation of *Eugene Onegin* transferred from Russia to the sultry streets of Rio.

At the Royal Lyceum Barry McGovern entertains full houses with his one man play **Watt** based on a comic novel by Samuel Beckett.

The newly refurbished King's Theatre is the venue for the great Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki's first visit to the UK in almost 30 years with his production **Waiting for Orestes: Electra**.

Sunday 12 August begins with the traditional Festival Service at St Giles' Cathedral, this year featuring a performance from Festival artist Baritone Njabulo Madlala. The service begins at 10.30am and is free for everyone to attend.

Sunday also sees the opening of *Encounters*, a series of provocative and wide ranging key note talks and debates around the ideas and inspirations behind the Festival, in partnership with the British Council Scotland.

At 2pm on Sunday 12 August Robert McCrum delivers the key note speech addressing *What Does it Mean to be British?* followed on the Monday by an exploration of the *Four Nations of the United Kingdom* with writers from Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales.

On Saturday and Sunday evenings in the Usher Hall the Festival presents Edinburgh's own Donald Runnicles conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in a performance of the *Alpine Symphony*, and Waltraud Meier, the world-renown German mezzo soprano in a wonderful programme of dramatic songs.

Over three weeks the Edinburgh International Festival is set to welcome over **3,000 artists from at least 47 nations** including Russia, Brazil, Japan, America, Chile, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Australia, India, Ireland, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Israel, Italy, Norway, Spain, South Africa, Venezuela, and of course Scotland and the rest of the UK to share the live experience of theatre, dance, opera and music.

Following the opening weekend of the Festival, and the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games, the first **International Culture Summit** will be hosted at the Scottish Parliament on Monday 13 and Tuesday 14 August.

The Edinburgh International Festival in partnership with the Scottish Government, the UK Government and British Council, offers this platform and opportunity for cultural delegations from around the world to join in discussing the power and role of culture in international dialogue.

Festival backstage, a partnership with Standard Life and the Scottish Screen Academy at Edinburgh Napier University continues to grow, giving audiences further insights and access behind the scenes of the Festival through a series of films online with contributions from Nicola Benedetti, Sophie Bevan, Kirsty Wark, David Greig and many backstage staff who ensure the Festival show goes on. www.eif.co.uk/festivalbackstage

There are still tickets to some of the Festival's big shows this year. In a Festival that remains **remarkable value**, those aged 26 and under are able to buy the best remaining tickets for just £8 on the day. All young people, students, senior citizens, unemployed, Young Scot, Equity and Musicians Union card holders can buy **tickets half price**.

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