

Festival draws to a close with a bang

✕ The 2014 Edinburgh International Festival came to a close tonight with the Virgin Money Fireworks Concert, performed by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, marking the final event of Sir Jonathan Mills's eight year tenure as Festival Director.

2014 has been acclaimed as an outstanding year for the International Festival, with critical and popular successes across the board, including *The James Plays* by Rona Munro, *Inala* featuring Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Pina Bausch's *Sweet Mambo*, Back to Back's *Ganesh versus the Third Reich* and a much lauded Usher Hall concert series, playing to an 80% capacity overall.

Audiences have packed theatres and concert halls across the city, with the Festival taking more than £3.15 million in ticket sales income, passing the £3million mark for the first time.

Jonathan Mills said: "The true measure of success is the audience's experience and we've received so much great feedback. There has been a fantastic atmosphere at shows across the Festival. I'm really delighted that the *James Plays* have been such a hit, and wish the National Theatres of Scotland and Great Britain, and the other shows now transferring from the Festival to London and around the world, the very best of luck.

"Our audiences from Scotland, the UK and 75 other nations around the world have greeted our artists with huge warmth, with so many of those artists telling me how exciting it is to play to such enthusiastic and knowledgeable audiences, and enjoying their visit to Edinburgh immensely.

"Once again we've been treated to the world's finest artists

sharing their creativity and their work, which has ranged from the epic to the intimate, from east to west and everywhere in between. I am thrilled that we are able to offer a wide range of ticket prices to our Festival goers for such wonderful experiences, and make it something everyone can get involved and immersed in.

“I am also delighted with our work this year on extending the Festival’s reach, making us even more accessible both to those already here and further afield through media and digital partnerships. We created over 50 podcasts and films with Sinfini Music, offering people exploring our music programme the richest possible information, which has attracted over 8,000 listens from over 50 countries. We also streamed beautiful intimate rehearsal moments with Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Kronos Quartet, Michael Houstoun, and Collegium Vocal Gent in association with the Guardian; while BBC Radio 3 broadcast live from The Queen’s Hall each weekday morning and will also broadcast a week of concerts recorded during this Festival from 15 September.”

Since his first Festival in 2007 Jonathan Mills has presented Festival programmes with themes ranging from the Scottish Enlightenment to the influence of the cultures of Asia on western artists, presenting new and unfamiliar ideas and artists to audiences whilst also ensuring the Festival continues to feature the world’s leading artists and companies.

He has also initiated a strategy to capitalise on and build on the huge international reach and influence of the Festival, forging formal links with a wide range of international organisations and encouraging cultural, civic and business exchange. Under his leadership, the Edinburgh International Festival has organised international launch events in more than 35 cities, from Sydney to Sarajevo, and Beijing to Warsaw.

The Edinburgh International Culture Summit was also the brain child of Jonathan Mills, bringing together the British Council, the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament in a partnership with the Edinburgh International Festival, to debate the importance of culture and the arts with Culture Ministers from around the world in 2012 and 2014.

Jonathan Mills commented: "It has been an incredibly exciting and challenging eight years in the one of the best jobs in the world. The audiences, the stakeholders, the artists and the staff have made it such a pleasure. I wish Fergus Linehan, my successor the very best in taking the Festival forward into the future."