

**Edinburgh International Festival at the centre of the cultural world as fireworks bring another successful year to a close.**

Artists, audiences and government delegations from around the world flocked to a record breaking Edinburgh International Festival 2010.

The Festival welcomed record numbers of diplomats, delegations and cultural leaders from Mexico, Finland, Australia, Korea, Abu Dhabi, Netherlands, Slovenia, India, Ireland, Germany, New Zealand, China, Chile, Singapore, Italy, South Africa, Indonesia and Switzerland, alongside UK and Scottish politicians, attending meetings and performances.

It was a strong year for international audiences with people coming from 73 countries, over one third of the world's nations. Those represented include much of Europe, Australia, the United States, South Africa, Brazil, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Latvia, Kenya, Chile, Iceland, Bahrain, Madagascar, St Lucia and Panama. The Festival welcomed media from around the world including many countries in Europe, the United States, Mexico, Chile, Australia, building on our international launches earlier in the year.

Over 2,300 artists from California, New York and New England, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Samoa, New Zealand, Australia, Spain, Holland, Germany and the UK gave Festival 2010 its distinctive appeal showcasing the cultures of the 'New World'.

Closer to home over 700 Scottish artists took part including those in the National Youth Choir of Scotland, the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of Scottish Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Scottish National Orchestra Junior Chorus, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra as well as individual artists including Steven Osborne, Donald Runnicles and Tommy Smith.

Edinburgh residents showed tremendous support for the Festival with almost 50% of ticket buyers coming from EH postcodes, with many booking for friends and relatives from elsewhere as well as for themselves.

The Festival is delighted that more and more people are taking advantage of the accessible and affordable ticket prices, with an increase in take up of almost all the available discounts.

Many Festival performances garnered 4 and 5 star reviews including *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Songs of Ascension*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Bliss*, *Idomeneo*, *Rhapsodies in Red*, *White and Blue*, *Grupo Corpo*, *Água*, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The series of concerts at Greyfriars Kirk *Treasures and Traditions* which travelled from Guadalupe to Bolivia via Rio picked up a Herald Archangel Award.

Nearly 1 in 3 events were total sell outs. Sell out shows included *Vieux Carré*, *Caledonia*, *Sun Also Rises*, *Porgy and Bess*, many of the Greyfriars events, Sarah Connolly, Steven Osborne, Simón Bolívar String Quartet, *El Niño*, *Idomeneo*, Russian National Orchestra, Bank of Scotland Fireworks Concert, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Mahler Symphony No 8.

The Festival earned its highest ever ticket sales income with over £2.67m taken at the box office, a 3% rise on last year.

Scale is still at the heart of the Festival's audience experience; over 300 people were on stage for Mahler Symphony No 8 last night and *The Gospel at Colonus* and *Caledonia* were each seen by over 9,000 people. 80% of available seats to performances were snapped up.

Sharing the Festival in its fourth year hosted over 200 children from Edinburgh and Raploch's Big Noise project at The Hub where they experienced the Venezuelan Simón Bolívar String Quartet up close.

The Festival's new membership scheme aimed at people in the 20s and 30s, IN enjoyed a successful launch this year. Events continue year round, with the next taking place in early September.

This year we said goodbye to Sir Charles Mackerras our honorary president who died in July. His passing was marked on two occasions at the Festival - his scheduled performance of *Idomeneo* conducted by Sir Roger Norrington was

dedicated to his memory, and a tribute in words and music on 1 September at a concert featuring the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which first employed the young Charles Mackerras in the 1940s.

Tonight the Festival's grand finale the Bank of Scotland Fireworks Concert will fill Edinburgh's skies, estimated to reach an audience of 250,000 across the city and beyond.

Festival performances continue to be broadcast into September on BBC Radio 3, those yet to come include *El Niño*, Joyce DiDonato, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, *Idomeneo* and Llyr Williams. These are just part of an increased coverage of the Festival by the BBC which has included a special edition of Classics Unwrapped, Brian Taylor's Big Debate, In Tune and extended coverage through The Review Show and Culture Show.

Jonathan Mills, Festival Director, said: "We've had a successful year financially which is fantastic, but what is more important, I believe is that we have more than measured up to our name. We have helped to transform Edinburgh, bringing the vibrant, vital cultures of the New World to its residents' doorsteps, and we have showcased this wonderful city to the world. We've welcomed artists, audiences and politicians from all over the world to the city; in our audiences alone over a third of the world is represented. The bridges the Edinburgh International Festival builds for the city, Scotland, and the UK and the level of engagement and profile it creates strengthen our nation as we prepare for London 2012 and Glasgow 2014. And on our journey celebrating cultures and creativity we have, I believe, presented a truly vibrant, engaging Festival."

Culture Minister Fiona Hyslop said: "Edinburgh is well known as the festival capital of the world and the record-breaking success of this year's Edinburgh International Festival can only strengthen Scotland's global reputation as a place of cultural and creative excellence."

Councillor Steve Cardownie, Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "This year's Edinburgh International Festival ticket sales and attendance data are fantastic, especially the high turnout by Edinburgh residents. This proves that not only is the International Festival an enormous draw for

visitors from all over the world, its exhilarating programmes of music, dance and theatre are extremely popular with the home crowds as well."

ENDS

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