

For immediate use

# EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 08 8-31 AUGUST

August 7, 2008

## **Record-breaking start as curtain rises on Edinburgh International Festival 2008**

- Dance to the top: *Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray* set to become the most attended dance show in Festival history, with dance sales overall at a ten-year high.
- Record-breaking internet bookings, 17% up on last year; with over half of all sales in the last week taken over the web
- Over 13,000 people booked to enjoy performances in venues across the city in the first weekend.

### **Usher Hall: open for business**

At the Usher Hall, the excitement grows ahead of the Opening Concert - *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* which begins at 7pm on **Friday August 8**. The world leading cast for this tragic-comic satire, includes **Susan Bickley**, **Jeffrey Lloyd Roberts**, **Giselle Allan** and **Hannah Gordon** as narrator. **HK Gruber** conducts the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** and the massed voices of the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus** are led by **Christopher Bell**.

The Usher Hall, still midway through its multi-million pound redevelopment, is open for business for Festival 08 thanks to grand efforts, come rain or shine, from the project contractors and builders. As a thank you for getting the venue ready on time, all involved - carpenters, plasterers, electricians, painters and cleaners – have been invited to Usher Hall concerts.

### **Dancing with the Stars**

In one of the biggest dance programmes ever seen at the Festival, featuring the fabulous **Nina Ananiashvili** dancing the role of *Giselle* for the first time in Britain with the **State Ballet of Georgia**, sales for dance have reached a ten year high.

**Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray**, is already the biggest selling dance show at the Festival in the last decade, and with three weeks of booking still to go, this re-telling of Oscar Wilde's gothic fable is set to become the biggest dance event in Festival history, seen by over 10,000 people.

### **Clicking with the Audience**

Online bookings for the Edinburgh International Festival are up 17% on last year, with a massive 51% of tickets sold via [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk) in the last week alone. The brand-new website boasts a host of new features, including "try before you buy" video-clips and behind-the-scenes audio interviews.

### **Sales & Sell-Outs**

Ticket sales for the 2008 Festival – which runs until **August 31** and reaches its finale with the spectacular **Bank of Scotland Fireworks Concert** – have already exceeded **£2m**. Although tickets for most shows are still available, the following events are among those that have already sold out: **the Opening Concert, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Israel in Egypt, Alfred Brendel, Roby Lakatos** and **Gabriela Montero**.

Jonathan Mills, Festival Director, said: "This is the most exciting moment of the year. After months of planning and work artists are about to unleash their creative energy and ideas on thousands of people across the city's venues.

I'm delighted to welcome everybody to the Festival and particularly to the Usher Hall, where there is a fantastic line up of concerts I hope you'll enjoy. There is an incredibly exciting diversity and intensity of performances to see – to borrow another's phrase 'you can sleep in September'. Come and join in this celebration!"

- ENDS -

For further media information please contact the Edinburgh International Festival press office + 44 (0)131 473 2020 or 07810 383 091, [press@eif.co.uk](mailto:press@eif.co.uk)

Editors Notes

Featuring world class new and classic drama, opera, music, and dance, the **2008 Edinburgh International Festival** runs from **Friday 8 August to Sunday 31 August** across the city in theatres, concert halls and opera houses attracting

audiences from around the world to Scotland's picturesque capital. Full details are available at [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk).