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PERTH FESTIVAL CLOSES WITH RECORD AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

After more than three magical weeks during which Perth was transformed by more than 800 performances by 1,000 artists from Australia and around the world, the 2010 Perth International Arts Festival is drawing to a close.

Artistic Director Shelagh Magadza's third Festival has engaged with Perth more deeply than ever, with audiences not only attending performances, but becoming part of them.

These extraordinary weeks in the life of our city were enlivened by free events including the Lotterywest Festival Celebration, the visual arts program, Haircuts by Children, Lotterywest Floating Films and Perth Writers Festival Family Day, which invited audiences to be a part of the fun.

Spanish company La Fura Dels Baus kicked off the Perth Festival in stunning style as 20,000 West Australians converged on the Supreme Court Gardens for an opening night Perth will never forget. This aerial spectacle featured 54 Perth volunteers and 14 WA acrobats. For these lucky locals, participation in this jaw-dropping show will remain a personal highlight for years to come.

Danish visual artist Jeppe Hein's *Appearing Rooms* has become the runaway hit of the Festival's visual arts program, attracting thousands of people to the outdoor water installation at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, with squeals of delight filling the Cultural Centre each day as audiences of all ages dart through the sculpture's water jets.

Canada's Mammalian Diving Reflex collaborated with Roseworth Primary School 8–10 year-olds to offer Festival audiences free haircuts! They also gave Festival artists discerning feedback in the Children's Choice Awards, with Norway's Jo Strømgren Kompani taking out the Best of the Best award for *The Society*.

Audiences embraced the strange yet poignant sensation of acting in their own play in *Etiquette* as local talent guided by international artists created an intimate Festival experience.

Artistic Director Shelagh Magadza said: "From big ideas about humanity to moments of wonderful intimacy and playfulness, this Festival has been a thrilling three weeks.

"Artists from around the world created magical moments in our city and without exception have said how much they have enjoyed the warm and generous audiences of Perth.

"The moments we have shared with each other and with them will be treasured memories. Our community can be very proud of the strong international reputation that this festival enjoys."

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Highlights of the 2010 program reflect Perth audiences' taste for infinite variety. The finely honed power of Maly Drama Theatre's critically acclaimed *Life and Fate* offered the artistry of a company at the pinnacle of world theatre. Audience favourites included Headlong's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*; Druid Theatre's *The Walworth Farce*; France's Compagnie Montalvo-Hervieu's *Good Morning, Mr Gershwin*; the magical nights of music created by Antony and the Johnsons; and the Hilliard Ensemble.

Sydney choreographer Shaun Parker's *Happy As Larry*, and a new production of Benjamin Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*, both Perth Festival co-commissions, also played to packed houses.

West Australian theatre was also a highlight as Perth Festival premiered two new works, Thin Ice's *Love Me Tender* and Deckchair Theatre's *Grace*. Black Swan State Theatre Company's *The Sapphires* played to full houses over a two-week run.

To date, the Perth Festival is well on track to reach box office and paid attendance targets, with seven weeks of the iconic Lotterywest Festival Films still to run. The film season still holds much to see including the multi-award winning Michael Haneke film *The White Ribbon* and the highly anticipated Australian premiere of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Festival General Manager Julian Donaldson said: "The 2010 program has enabled our audiences to experience moments of joy, wonder and enrichment that only come about at Festival time. We are on track to meet our target of 190,000 tickets sold and \$4.1 million in ticket sales. We are pleased that the count of people in Perth and the Great Southern, experiencing either a paid or free event, will very likely exceed 350,000."

Perth Festival's newest specially curated program at the Astor Theatre featured shows that combined contemporary live music with compelling film. The innovative program drew a strong audience to lively inner-city Mt Lawley.

Beck's Music Box was once again the vibrant hub of the Festival as performers from around the globe created 23 unforgettable evenings of music, comedy and dance against the dazzling backdrop of the Perth city skyline. From the high-energy beats of Breakestra on opening night to the rhythms of the Hypnotic Brass Ensemble's closing night party, with Sharon Shannon, Yo La Tengo, Calexico, Dirty Three and the legendary Marianne Faithfull in between, Beck's Music Box was filled to capacity on many a night.

The Perth Writers Festival offered three days of stimulating discussion, with a sold-out opening address, Professor AC Grayling's lively and thought-provoking *Ideas That Matter*. The Perth Writers Festival Precinct at the University of Western Australia saw more than 20,000 people through its grounds. Thousands of children and parents enjoyed the Perth Writers Festival Family Day and crowds packed venues for "Unusualist" Raymond Crowe and writers including Andy Griffiths, William Dalrymple, David Finkel, Salley Vickers, Patrick Gale, Monty Don, Irvine Welsh and Barry Lopez. The Perth Writers Festival also played host to a group of visiting international writers' festival directors, who will now take Australia's finest authors to the world.

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A highly successful education program saw schools offered a diverse selection of events and opportunities for students from primary through to tertiary. Young audiences flocked to *Les Sept Planches de la Ruse*, *The Tragical Life of Cheeseboy* and *The Society*. Increased awareness and accessibility of our program via initiatives such as subsidised costs, online teaching resources and specialised workshops drove the Perth Festival education program.

The regular series of Artist Talks saw some of the world's finest creative minds share their ideas in 20 lively discussions with audiences and members of Perth's own creative community, while a series of Artist Walks helped audiences explore Perth via the visual arts on a guided tour of the Art:City artworks.

Once again the hugely popular Great Southern program included highlights from the Perth Festival such as the Portico Quartet, the pick of the Lotterywest Festival Films and fine music from the Hilliard Ensemble alongside a raft of exclusive and local events including the Australian Chamber Orchestra 2, Playmakers and the quirky public crochet project with a serious intent, Aggregate. Great Southern audiences are among the Festival's most enthusiastic.

FESTIVAL FIGURES

- ❖ 209 events
- ❖ 437 free events
- ❖ 820 performances
- ❖ 2 co-commissions: Happy As Larry and Peter Grimes
- ❖ 2 world premieres: Grace and Love Me Tender
- ❖ 3 jazz and 10 fine music concerts
- ❖ 10 theatre productions from Russia, Ireland, Norway, England, France and Australia.
- ❖ 3 dance events
- ❖ 9 visual arts exhibitions
- ❖ 28 bands, 16DJ's, one cabaret artist and two nights of comedy performing over 23 nights at the Beck's Music Box
- ❖ Over 100 authors presenting 120 Perth Writers Festival events
- ❖ 23 Lotterywest Festival Films screening at two open-air cinemas over 20 weeks
- ❖ \$13.5 million budget
- ❖ \$3.9 million box office to date
- ❖ On track to reach 190,000 paid audience target with seven weeks of films to come

The Perth Festival continues until the end of the Lotterywest Festival Films on 18 April. Sessions begin at 7.30pm. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* additional late-night screenings at 18 – 21 March 10.45pm, Somerville only.

With another year of record attendance at both Somerville and Joondalup Pines, the best is still to come.

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DATE	SOMERVILLE/JOONDALUP PINES
1–7 March	Freedom (M)/Skin (M)
8–14 March	The White Ribbon (M) /Freedom (M)
15–21 March	The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (MA)/ The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls (PG)
22–28 March	Max Manus (M) /The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (MA)
29 Mar–4 April	Soul Kitchen (MA) /Max Manus (M)
5–11 April	The Sicilian Girl (M)/ Soul Kitchen (MA)
12–18 April	Mother (MA)/ The Sicilian Girl (M)

For details of all remaining films visit perthfestival.com.au

For further information, interviews or images please contact:

Rania Ghandour
+61 8 6488 8618 / 0403 025535
rghandour@perthfestival.com.au

Joanna Trilling
+61 8 6488 8637/ 0421 351 379
jtrilling@perthfestival.com.au

Perth International Arts Festival

Founded in 1953 by The University of Western Australia, the Perth International Arts Festival is the longest running international arts festival in Australia and Western Australia's premier cultural event. The Festival has developed a worldwide reputation for excellence in its international program, the presentation of new works and the highest quality artistic experiences for its audience. For over 50 years the Festival has welcomed to Perth some of the world's greatest living artists and now connects with over 300,000 people each year.

Shelagh Magadza is the Artistic Director 2008-11.

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