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## THE WORLD'S FIRST ANNUAL FESTIVAL CELEBRATING SAMUEL BECKETT HAPPY DAYS ENNISKILLEN INTERNATIONAL BECKETT FESTIVAL

The world's first annual festival to celebrate the work and influence of Nobel Prize writer Samuel Beckett is announced today. HAPPY DAYS will take place each year in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, where Beckett spent his formative years attending Portora Royal School.

The inaugural HAPPY DAYS, 23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> August 2012, is collaborating with the London 2012 Festival, the culmination of the Cultural Olympiad, and coincides with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Enniskillen.

HAPPY DAYS is the first annual, international, multi-arts festival in Northern Ireland since the launch of the Belfast Festival in 1962. As with the Edinburgh Festival in 1947, HAPPY DAYS will be a major cultural event bringing diverse communities together, mixing local and international audiences and artists.

The Festival will present events of wide, popular appeal including:

- the work of Beckett, with world and UK premieres of his major and lesser-known works;
- the influences on Beckett, including music and comedy;
- those Beckett has influenced, including Irish, UK and international writers, directors, actors, visual artists, musicians, comedians, circus artists and individuals prominent in their fields.

There will also be a range of events reflecting Beckett's favourite sports.

The full HAPPY DAYS artistic line-up will be announced in April 2012. Some highlights of the 2012 Festival, announced today, include:

- **Robert Wilson** directing and acting in *Krapp's Last Tape*, a UK & Irish premiere by a world acclaimed international Director. Presented in association with Change Performing Arts.
- **Ian Bostridge** singing Schubert's *Winterreise*, Beckett's most favoured piece of music. Ian is one of Europe's most in-demand tenors, especially in the genre of German *Lieder*.
- **Antony Gormley** will design a stage element (to form part of a Beckett production in Australia in 2013) which will be installed and publicly exhibited for the first time as part of HAPPY DAYS. Antony is renowned for his large-scale public sculptures such as the *Angel of the North*, *Gateshead* and *Inside Australia*.
- **Atom Egoyan's** kinetic artwork, *Steenbeckett*, an inspirational response to the role of film in our understanding of Beckett. Atom is an acclaimed film and stage director and winner of four major awards at the Cannes Film Festival. *Steenbeckett* is presented in association with Artangel.
- World class writers **Edna O'Brien**, **Alice Oswald**, **Melvyn Bragg** and **John Banville**.

HAPPY DAYS is funded by Arts Council Northern Ireland, Fermanagh District Council and the London 2012 Festival.

HAPPY DAYS Founder & Artistic Director, **Sean Doran** said: "I am delighted to return to where my professional festival career began (Derry 1992) and where I had many rewarding artistic experiences as Artistic Director of the 1997 & 1998 Belfast Festivals".

**Arlene Foster**, Northern Ireland's Tourism Minister, said: "HAPPY DAYS is a perfect complement to the wide range of events that already take place around the Fermanagh Lakelands. Culture is a key ingredient that sets Northern Ireland apart from competing destinations, and festivals such as this are crucial in attracting visitors. Innovative events help to raise the profile of a destination and I have no doubt this initiative has the capacity to grow to a level where it can attract overseas tourists. It will benefit the local economy by generating additional spend on accommodation, hospitality and travel".

Chairman of Fermanagh District Council, Councillor **Thomas O'Reilly** said: "We are very excited about the inaugural HAPPY DAYS which includes a wide variety of arts and sporting events. Fermanagh is proud of its association with Samuel Beckett and it is fitting that this innovative Festival is taking place in Enniskillen, the County Town".

**Ruth McKenzie**, LOCOG Director of Culture (Cultural Olympiad), said: "I'm delighted that this festival, dedicated to one of the greatest world writers Samuel Beckett, will be collaborating with the London 2012 Festival. With world class writing, comedy, music, and amazing scenery, HAPPY DAYS is bidding to become one of the great world festivals and we're pleased to be supporting it".

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival**

The London 2012 [Cultural Olympiad](#) is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Spread over four years, it is designed to give everyone in the UK a chance to be part of [London 2012](#) and inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially among young people.

The culmination of the Cultural Olympiad will be the [London 2012 Festival](#), bringing leading artists from all over the world together from 21 June 2012 in this UK-wide festival – a chance for everyone to celebrate London 2012 through dance, music, theatre, the visual arts, fashion, film and digital innovation.

Principal funders of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival are [Arts Council England](#), [Legacy Trust UK](#) and the [Olympic Lottery Distributor](#). [BP](#) and [BT](#) are Premier Partners of the Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival.

For more details visit [www.london2012.com/festival](http://www.london2012.com/festival)