



Above: Bill Morris.

The Cultural Olympiad – a once in a lifetime opportunity

Bill Morris, London 2012 Director of Culture, Ceremonies and Education outlines the opportunities within the Cultural Olympiad

One word is consistently used when we talk about London 2012. Whether it's Seb Coe talking to young sportsmen and women in Northern Ireland, our CEO Paul Deighton talking to small businesses in Manchester or me talking to the cultural sector. That word is Opportunity. It's a word I use very often when talking about the Cultural Olympiad and a word I will probably repeat more than once in this article – and I make no apology for that, because this is what the Games

and the Cultural Olympiad provide – opportunity. A once in a lifetime opportunity!

Can dancers and dance companies, both large and small, share in this opportunity? Absolutely!

But let's start with the basics. What is the Cultural Olympiad? The London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games are not just about sport. They will also celebrate culture, learning, community and language – in London, in the UK and around the world.

Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of

the modern Olympic movement, said the Olympics is “the wedding of sport and art”. Inspired by de Coubertin's ideal, we've created a Cultural Olympiad that seeks to provide cultural experiences and opportunities that have been inspired by the Olympic and Paralympic spirit.

Cultural and educational programmes will combine with sport to make the 2012 Games a spectacular, participatory experience across the Nation and we hope provide lasting change and value. What could be a better legacy than to create new opportunities to inspire young people to explore theatre, music, visual arts and of course, dance – in all its forms.

The Cultural Olympiad launched last year with a very successful weekend of events, called Open Weekend. Around 650 events – mostly new, some existing – all over the country were part of the weekend and over three quarters of a million people attended – many of them new to such cultural events. The weekend was so successful it's going to become an annual event, details will be announced soon.

The Cultural Olympiad can broadly be divided into three sections:



Above: Launch of the Cultural Olympiad, 2008.



Above: Launch of the Cultural Olympiad, 2008.



Above: Launch of the Cultural Olympiad, 2008.

“...this is what the Games and the Cultural Olympiad provide – opportunity. A once in a lifetime opportunity!”

- **Mandatory Ceremonies** – including the Handover Ceremonies in Beijing this year, The Torch Relay, Medal Ceremonies and, of course, our Opening and Closing Ceremonies in 2012

- **Major Projects** – a number of major cultural projects featured in the London 2012 bid, these are currently being planned and will form the backbone of the Cultural Olympiad

- **UK Cultural Festival** – the Games and the celebrations leading up to them will not just take place in the many communities of London, or just in the big institutions.

We want to spread the benefits as far as possible across the UK over the four years from summer 2008, so the Cultural Olympiad will encompass hundreds of local and regional events as part of our nationwide celebration.

The major projects are coming together now and we'll be announcing further details of these in due course –

including news of Artists Taking the Lead - a project in which the UK Arts Councils are investing in new 2012 related works of art all around the country, Unlimited - a set of commissions for the disability arts sector and Sounds - a huge music project led by the BBC.

Inspiring Grassroots Involvement

So how can people get involved at a more grassroots level? There are a number of opportunities and we have launched something called the Inspire Programme which is a version of our brand. This will be awarded to excellent projects which are inspired by London 2012 and are non-commercial. Projects which become part of the Inspire Programme are able to use the brand on posters, brochures and the like as well as tapping into the wider London 2012 programme. London 2012 is the first Games to create such a programme and we're very excited about the opportunities it presents. Full details

are on our website, but I must be clear that we are not a funding body so any applications made will need to have funding in place.

The Cultural Olympiad is for everyone across the UK and we're keen to hear from projects all over the country. Throughout the UK we have a team of Creative Programmers who will be co-ordinating the Cultural Olympiad in their own area and should be the first point of contact for any questions. You can find contact details for the Creative Programmers and updates about our plans on the 2012 website. You can also sign up to our monthly e-newsletter 'Create' which contains the latest news from the Culture team here at London 2012.

Our job is to be an effective catalyst enabling you to share in the gold dust of the Games and exploit its opportunities to the full. We look forward to hearing your ideas.

visit www.london2012.com/culture