



# The Festival Players Theatre Company

## Press Release

### HAMLET

Location: Culzean Castle,  
Maybole, Ayrshire, KA19  
8LE

Date: Wednesday, July 26,  
7.15pm

(Gardens open from 6pm  
for picnics – bring own  
seating)

Tickets: £11 (children £7)

Box office: (01655)884455

### ALL-MALE “HAMLET” HEADS TO CULZEAN

*Players perform at nine  
National Trust of Scotland properties*

One of Britain’s most popular professional touring theatre companies is heading for **Maybole’s Culzean Castle and Country Park** in South Ayrshire - with an all-male cast performing Shakespeare’s greatest thriller *Hamlet*.

The Gloucestershire-based **Festival Players** are celebrating their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday by staging nearly 70 performances of the Bard’s play across the UK between May and September – including their biggest ever tour of Scotland, which will take in no less than nine National Trust of Scotland properties across Aberdeenshire, Ayrshire, Fife, Dumfries and Galloway and East Lothian.



Award-winning **Manchester** actor **Christopher Hollinshead** (above right and with **Gavin Dobson as Ophelia**) makes a welcome return to the company in the title role, following excellent reviews for his portrayal of Helena in last year’s all-male *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Christopher won the George Benson Prize for his portrayal of Richard III at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, London.

**Walsall**-based **Martin Tomms** plays both Polonius and the Gravedigger. A Festival Players stalwart, Martin played Sir Tony Belch in the 2004 production of *Twelfth Night* and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Other cast members are: Former **Nottingham** resident Paul Strickland (Claudius and Ghost of Hamlet’s Father)

Nathan Hannan from **Stroud, Gloucestershire** (Gertrude, Horatio)

Gavin Dobson (Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Osric), originally from **Darlington**

Adrian Harris (Laertes, Guildenstern, First Player) from **Bristol**.

Their visit to Culzean - Scotland's first country park – with its panoramic views across the Firth of Clyde – opens the Players' Scottish tour. It is followed on Thursday July 27 by **Threave Gardens** at **Castle Douglas, Dumfries & Galloway** and **Brodie Castle** at **Forres, Moray** on Monday, July 31.

August performances will be **Castle Fraser** at **Sauchen, Inverurie**; **House of Dun** at **Montrose, Angus** on Wednesday, August 2; **Pitmedden Garden** at **Ellon, Aberdeenshire** on Thursday, August 3; **Falkland Palace** at **Falkland, Cupar, Fife** on Friday, August 4 ; **Hill of Tarvit Mansion House** at **Cupar, Fife** on Saturday, August 5 and finally **Inveresk Lodge Garden** at **Musselburgh, East Lothian** on Sunday, August 6.



Says director **Michael Dyer** (left): “We have been increasing the number of Scottish performances since first going to the Hill of Tarvit in 2001. We are delighted that we will be performing at nine NTS locations this summer. The Scottish audiences are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and the settings don't come much more glorious than this.”

Dyer admits that in 2005 a few eyebrows were raised when people realised there was not an actress in sight in their version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. “But the feedback proved that people were intrigued by the idea and liked what they saw. Although it might seem unusual today to field an all-male cast it is in fact totally authentic - we are just following in the footsteps of Shakespeare's own Elizabethan Globe Theatre when all the roles were taken by men.”

Dyer, former director of Cornwall's famous open air Minack Theatre, is no stranger to adventurous settings of Shakespeare - in 2001 he advanced the Players' production of Shakespeare's *Henry V* into a First World War scenario. He is looking forward to the challenge of directing what he calls “the ultimate revenge drama”. “The tale of the young Danish prince has fascinated scholars and theatregoers for over 400 years and it's not hard to see why – it is a masterpiece of suspense.”

This year's audiences should have no qualms about how long they will have to sit in the open air concentrating on “the sufferings of a suicidal young man”, he says! “This will be an exciting, witty and fast-moving two hour production. It's essentially a story of a prince's race for revelation and revenge. It's full of intrigue and passion and boasts all the theatrical elements you care to mention – suspense, wit, comedy, pageantry, swordplay and even a ghost!”

The production will also unusually feature original music, specially composed by one of the country's leading singer-songwriters **Johnny Coppin**, who made his name in 70s cult folk-rock band Decameron and whose past collaborations include *Edge of Day*, with well-loved writer Laurie Lee, of *Cider with Rosie* fame, whose poems he set to music.



**Claudius, Hamlet, Gertrude**

**Tickets for the Culzean performances, which starts at 7.15pm are available on 01655-884455, price £11 (£7 for children). [www.culzeancastle.net](http://www.culzeancastle.net). The audience is invited to bring low-backed seats, rugs and picnics.**

Further information on the Festival Players 2006 performances can be found at [www.thefestivalplayers.co.uk](http://www.thefestivalplayers.co.uk)

Ends

July 2006

**For interviews with director Michael Dyer, actor Christopher Hollinshead (Hamlet), or other cast members, high-resolution images and press review tickets please contact: Jane Brace PR on (01243) 789554 or email [j.brace@virgin.net](mailto:j.brace@virgin.net) or Festival Players administrator Sara Dave on (01453) 844610 or [info@thefestivalplayers.co.uk](mailto:info@thefestivalplayers.co.uk)**