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## Ballyshannon festival strikes high note as 5,000 squeeze into town

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Music could be heard on every street corner of Ballyshannon from Thursday night into the small hours of yesterday morning.

More than 5,000 musicians, and music lovers from Ireland and around the globe flocked to the small market town in Co Donegal at the weekend for three days of non-stop music, workshops and partying.

Such was the popularity of the 29th annual Ballyshannon Folk Festival that all the head-

line acts - which included Kila, Dervish and John Spillane - sold out, while every B&B and hotel in the area was packed.

Brendan O'Reilly, chairman of the organising committee and owner of Dicey Reilly's pub, estimated the festival would generate more than €500,000 for the local economy.

"Musicians and tourists have travelled here from all over Ireland and the world. Some musicians have come from Scotland, France, Norway and Texas, while we've also been privileged to have 50 dancers from

Dorset perform," he said. Lee Akerman, from Switzerland, could be found sipping her drink in Dicey Reilly's and listening to one of the many sessions taking place. It was her fourth Ballyshannon festival.

"I love this festival because something's going on in every corner of the town and it draws in a large audience. I went to see Matt McGranghan, Lasairfhiona Ní Chonaola and Dervish play at the Abbey Centre, and thought they were all brilliant."

Garda reported no major incidents during the festival.

But Tankred Dorst, who never directed an opera before in his life, brought the *Ring* back to basics, saying in advance that he wanted to tell the story "without any major reference to today's events".

"This year's production exceeds the artistic standards of the previous years," said Arnold Jacobshagen, a musicology professor at Bayreuth University.

The 80-year-old Dorst was asked to take over as director by Wolfgang Wagner after the first choice for the job, *Dancer in the Dark* director Lars von Trier, stood aside abruptly.

Dorst is a popular German dramatist best known here for his mythical 1981 production *Mertin or The Barren Land*, making him an appropriate choice to tackle the Ring's mixture of German and Scandina-

power or world cinema. Considering the story little wonder that the Ring - first performed in its at the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876 - so fascinated Hitler. Long before his power he was a regular to Bayreuth and became friend of Richard Wagner, daughter, Winifred.

"She was allowed to by his nickname, Wolf, became a kind of a family for him," remembered Wolfgang Wagner, his son, in a recent interview.

"When he became chairman he offered him [formal form]. But he retorted that it was our question. We know each other for a long time, he said, stay with *Dur*."

Wolfgang Wagner said:

Sweltering temperatures have brought a plague of jellyfish to Spain's eastern seashores, forcing holidaymakers to stay out of the sea, the Red Cross reported.

The unwelcome visitors have flourished thanks to a glut of plankton brought on by higher sea temperatures and a decline in natural predators like dolphins.

The Red Cross has treated more than 10,000 jellyfish stings this summer so far in the eastern region of Catalonia, a spokesman for the organisation said. (Reuters)

