



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**5th December 2012**

**PRS for Music Foundation and UK City of Culture announce Neil Cowley as Musician in Residence in Derry-Londonderry 2013**

PRS for Music Foundation is excited to announce that Neil Cowley will be Musician in Residence throughout Derry-Londonderry's celebrations as UK City of Culture in 2013. This unique residency is a partnership between PRS for Music Foundation, UK City of Culture 2013 and the Nerve Centre, Derry-Londonderry's music hub and where the residency will be based.

Neil will be working and collaborating with a range of musicians, performers, organisations and communities from across the city and local area to create and perform a large scale, original piece of new music, which will become one of the key events in the UK City of Culture 2013 programme. Through its links with local talent, organisations and communities, the Nerve Centre will pull together a network that Neil will engage and collaborate with, to create a truly unique and inspirational programme of events.

Neil was selected from a group of exceptional creative musicians who were nominated by music industry and arts sector leaders. The final selection panel felt that Neil's talent, musicianship and personality, would have a real impact on audiences in Derry-Londonderry and inspire a broad range of people to take part. The panel also liked Neil's idea of involving people from all walks of life in workshops that would unite people around the idea of creating an "eighth gate" in the City Walls through music.

Neil Cowley studied at London's Royal Academy where his prodigious talent saw him performing a Shostakovich piano concerto at the age of 10. Turning his back on his classical career early on, he entered the world of old school RnB, soul and funk and by the age of 17 had begun to work with many successful bands including The Brand New Heavies and Zero 7.

In 2005, Neil returned to his first love, the acoustic piano, and formed the Neil Cowley Trio which to date have released four critically acclaimed albums. His fondness for grand, commanding sounds and his burgeoning talent as a composer and arranger for trio and strings was showcased in 2012's album 'The Face of Mount Molehill'.

He has an instinctive flair and ingenuity as an entertainer, and is renowned for his captivating live performances. In 2011, Neil appeared in the Sky Arts programme 'First Love' working with comedienne Sue Perkins to conquer her fears and perform a Beethoven Sonata at the Cheltenham Festival.

Over the past years, Neil has been sought for soul and pop acts that require a jazz technique and rhythmic suppleness to their recordings. His work with Adele

on 19 and her global chart topper, 21 made him quite literally 2011's most listened to pianist on the planet.

Neil Cowley said:

"I am truly honoured, proud and excited to be named Musician in Residence for Derry-Londonderry in 2013, as it enjoys its status as the inaugural UK City of Culture. My passion for this position and the forthcoming projects associated with it has been the soundtrack to my existence in the recent months leading up to this. Now finally I can begin a year of discovery, fun and fulfilment as I get to unravel the musical heart of this unique city and its people"

Vanessa Reed, Executive Director of PRS for Music Foundation, said:

"We're delighted to be supporting this residency in the context of the UK's first ever City of Culture in 2013. Neil Cowley is has big ideas and is an extremely talented musician. I'm sure he will generate lots of excitement and curiosity around the creative process he's about to embark on with the Nerve Centre and with other communities in Derry-Londonderry."

Shona McCarthy, Chief Executive of Culture Company 2013, UK City of Culture, said:

"The appointment of a Musician in Residence is a tremendous addition to our City of Culture programme. Having Neil Cowley in place in this important post will be a substantial benefit to musicians from all over the city. I am absolutely delighted to have someone of the calibre of Neil working with us throughout an exciting year ahead."

For further information please contact Sarah Thirtle - [sarah@prsformusicfoundation.com](mailto:sarah@prsformusicfoundation.com).

### **Notes to Editors**

#### **PRS for Music Foundation**

PRS for Music Foundation is the UK's leading funder of new music across all genres. Since 2000 PRS for Music Foundation has given more than £14 million to over 4,250 new music initiatives by awarding grants and leading partnership programmes that support music sector development. Widely respected as an adventurous and proactive funding body, PRS for Music Foundation supports an exceptional range of new music activity – from composer residencies and commissions to festivals and showcases in the UK and overseas.

[www.prsformusicfoundation.com](http://www.prsformusicfoundation.com)

#### **Nerve Centre**

The Nerve Centre, a music hub in the city offering studio facilities, performances space, education and training, will act as a host for our Musician in Residence. It has 20 years experience in music production and performance, and has been instrumental in the development of the music scene within Derry-Londonderry providing full time courses in music production and performance. In 1998 the Nerve Centre opened a bespoke building with performance space, recording studios and rehearsal space. More than 120,000 people a year benefit from the Nerve Centre's wide-ranging programme of arts events, cutting edge projects, creative learning centres, training opportunities, and state-of-the-art production facilities. A successful social economy enterprise, the Nerve Centre employs more than 40 staff at sites in Derry-Londonderry and Belfast.

[www.nervecentre.org](http://www.nervecentre.org)

#### **UK City of Culture 2013**

Derry-Londonderry has been designated as the inaugural UK City of Culture for 2013 which will see a celebration of its culture to local and international audiences through the delivery of a high profile cultural programme. Its mission is to provide cultural access for all within the City and its Hinterland and confidently and creatively connect with the wider world.  
[www.cityofculture2013.com](http://www.cityofculture2013.com)