

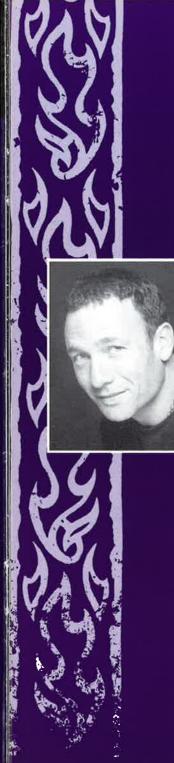
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A MOSAIC OF CULTURES

ARTS ALIVE

AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL IS PROUD TO SPONSOR



closer

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first production of Auckland Theatre Company's 1999 Season, CULTURE OF DESIRE, Patrick Marber's award-winning CLOSER.

The experience of falling in and out of love (and the slippery moments in between) has inspired innumerable plays, poems, songs, novels, and paintings. Indeed most creative expression attempts to make sense of this often-senseless state, from its first blissful rush to that last stab of pain: all the shaking, the aching, and the breaking. With CLOSER, Patrick Marber, one of Britain's hottest new playwrights, turns a youthful eye and razor wit to the subject. Dissecting the deeds committed in its name, he exposes the exquisite intricacy of human behaviour when we are in close emotional proximity, using words to conceal, kindness to betray, and cruelty to proclaim (or justify) our feelings for another. The lethal accuracy of Marber's writing is surpassed only by his audacious comedic style. The play has been described as a PRIVATE LIVES for the 1990's, and, as with Coward, fulfilling the comedy reveals the more somber subtext. To that extent, we have shared much laughter during the rehearsal process. I hope yours tonight is a similar response. After all, LOVE demands a good sense of humour.

I take this opportunity to thank the four gifted performers you are about to see for their spirit and "spunk" in bringing the characters to life. Similarly I extend great thanks for the artistry of Set and Costume Designer Dorita Hannah and Lighting Designer Bryan Caldwell for their creation of the "world of the play".

As ever, we salute our cultural partners, particularly Principal Sponsor Montana Wines and Supporting Sponsor The British Council and gratefully acknowledge the continuing support of TVNZ, Air New Zealand, BDO, Canon Consultus and NewstalkZB. Tonight's performance is made possible through major funding from Creative New Zealand and Auckland City's Arts Alive Programme. ATC is indebted to Paul Minifie and the team at the Maidment Theatre for its support and congratulates him on the magnificent foyer refurbishment. We are certainly pleased to christen the new facilities with this production.

As we begin a year of endings, we wish you prosperity and fulfillment of your heart's desires.

Two D st

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR

principal sponsor

Dear Auckland Theatre Company Patron Desire.

The desire to find solace in love. The desire to balance reason with passion. The desire to resist temptation.

... And, when desire goes horribly astray...

The essential character in CLOSER is the human face of us all. It is this very humanity that ravels and unravels itself to eventually reach no conclusion. As we as voyeurs look on, we see four people embark on a tempestuous journey of self-discovery.

Desire.

The desire to quiet the appetite. The desire to indulge.

Take time this summer to enjoy some of life's finer things sunshine, music, friends, good food and wine, and great theatre!

Montana is proud to join with the Auckland Theatre Company to continue its partnership as Principal Sponsor and welcome you to this exciting 1999 season CULTURE OF DESIRE

The first in this series will surely whet your appetite and provide a thought-provoking start to this challenging theatre season.

It WILL

Peter Hubscher Managing Director



CLOSER by Patrick Marber

No art edges closer to us than theatre. Reading seduces our privacy, painting offers intimacy and our inwardness surrenders to music. Cinema can overwhelm with nearness, but to be close is to be human, to be relating and to be present - and human relationship presently experienced is the raw material uniquely of theatre.

Patrick Marber's *Closer* has quickly become, for many of us, the finest British play of, and about, the nineties - not least for taking this dramatic form of closeness and drawing from it a vivid exploration of contemporary relationships and a stark representing of the needs of love in an intrinsically unloving world

And what makes *Closer* such potent theatre is that the text is written to be realised on stage through that three-way human encounter which is germane to all effective drama - character to character before us, in absurd acted make-believe until given life, authenticity and sympathy by the growing relationship with, completing the trio, ourselves as audience. The real test of truth and feeling in such great plays as Marber's, is how close and then closer, the Alices, Dans, Larries and Annas of the stage can get to us

Yet in the all too contemporary world of *Closer*, the more we share the same world, interlinked by computer and regimented by common languages, the more mysterious, hidden and unidentifiable we individually become. The generic discourse cannot perhaps reach the inner soul, such that, in Alice, Marber has created a woman to whom characters and audience alike yearn closeness but who, as the play ends, remains an enigma.

In the great late twentieth century tradition of British playwriting, Patrick Marber creates words which deflect, provoke and evade our feelings as much as they describe and define them. They tease open some minds and explore some moments but they can also conceal and condemn other minds and moments to mystery and loss.

At the risk of irritating with an already jaded concept, Closer is a play for the millennium for as, in our billions, we turn the year, however wild the party and gregarious the group, we shall all feel the chill of another thousand year loneliness for humanity to mould. It's getting closer.

The British Council applauds the Auckland Theatre Company for producing such a demanding but powerful contemporary British play and is proud to be a sponsor of the production.

Paul Smith
Director of The British Council

Close and Personal

Tom Shone meets Patrick Marber

then again, every moment of it is resonant either to my own life, or to friends who books, and so on." have told me the sad stories of their love affairs," says the 34-year-old Marber "serious" literary writing isn't as big a lazy, shambling and shambolic man: one of when I meet him at the National, a bashful leap as all that, in fact, if you look at the the brightest young stars in the young man with big baleful eyes, who spends most of our lunch burying his gaze in the work. Marber Is, after all, partly waster. tablecloth. "On some level I believe there responsible for the creation of Alan is no such thing as an honest relationship. Partridge, a fictional alter ego of Coogan: he says. "My output is minimal: two plays The best you can hope for is an honest the "chat-show host from hell", whose relationship with yourself.

"One of the starting points for the play was that I hadn't, since the film sex, lies and videotope, seen anything that put my some extent, but soap is about working class people and my plays are about middle-to-lower middle-class people. I just wanted to see something that expressed the conversations I was having that my friends were having - that people In their thirties were all exploring. Sort of post-feminist masculinity... and - oh, all that s***..." He breaks into a big grin.

undoubtedly to do with the fact that, with heart squirms with the secret knowledge only two plays under his belt, the role of playwright still feels relatively new to pretension. "Writing this play was really front." difficult," says Marber, "but it has given

"Closer isn't autobiographical, but enormous leap for a comedian. You know, audiences to see Closer, despite the there are all these comedians writing critical plaudits it has attracted, not to

> perfectly simulated chaos - one week a died on air - that many viewers, unaware

"Great comedy is always sadistic. Any good comedy takes a joke and runs with it into a strange place. With Alan, we always enjoyed humiliating him. The starting point was always, what was the worst thing that could happen. We just wanted to Marber's self-consciousness has immune to embarrassment but whose of his own mediocrity.

"Alan is all of us, really. We all feel a

trying his hand at playwriting, which is an despite his enormous success - despite the destroying nature of it."

mention the fan letters from the likes of His transition from TV comedy to Tom Stoppard - feels himself to be a rather edge of cruelty that ran beneath Marber's theatrical firmament judges himself a

"You only have to look at my output," in two and a half years. It's nothing." It's weekly programme descended into such no use disagreeing with him. No use pointing to his television work; or, before "guest", played by Marber himself, even that, to his work on radio for the show On died on air - that many viewers, unaware the Hour; or, before that, to his four-year generations' romantic concerns in any the show was a spoof, phoned in to slog as a stand up. These are nothing to kind of perspective. Soap does that to complain.

Marber, convinced of his own sloth. "I wasted my twenties," he tries to explain. "I was a stand up comedian and I was gambling, and I was very unhappy relentlessly unhappy for a long period of my life." The gambling started when he went up to Oxford; attendance of a poker punish him and torture him, but for him to club soon turned into regular trips to triumph as well." Partridge was certainly London casinos; he would arrive back at a great comic creation - a man seemingly Oxford in the early hours, bleary-eyed and decidedly poorer, and head straight into his first tutorial.

What sort of gambler was he? "Impulsive, ill-disciplined. You know, him. Or maybe he can still sense his old bit more vulgar and ugly than we pretend that's why I say I'm lazy. I feel in my heart partner in television comedy. Steve to be. He knows he is a disaster on some that I'm this ill-disciplined shabby fellow Coogan, at his shoulder, ready to poke fun deep level, but he can't show that or the slinking off into the small hours to piss at anything resembling playwrighterly world will eat him for breakfast. He's all my life away. And in the casino I'd be like a dervish of anxiety. I don't remember ever It isn't too fancifut, perhaps, to see enjoying it, just sweating and worrying me the confidence to think that maybe I'm something of the same doleful disjunction but feeling very alive, feeling absolutely, a proper writer as opposed to a comic running through Marber himself, who, viscerally connected to the lonely, soul-

Does he gamble still? He plays poker occasionally, he says. "I am that most dangerous thing: a compulsive who thinks he's not compulsive any more. The alcoholic who likes a little tipple every now and again." There's no real contradiction, perhaps, between Marber's self-perceived laziness and his determination: fear of one feeds the other. His "wasted" years certainly gave him the subject matter for his first play - Dealer's Choice, which revolved around a poker game - and fuelled his interest in sharply drawn dramatic structure: the perfect rescue from lazy, formless

Marber's grasp of dramatic form is even sharper in Closer. "It was always part of the conception of the play that I would write about big ugly emotions contained within some, hopefully, formally beautiful structure," he says: "Which makes it crueler, I think, I'm certainly not on the character's shoulders. I'm seeing them from a distance." His tinkerings with the play - adding new lines, deleting others, eliminating "formal blips" - have continued throughout rehearsals for the performances at the larger Lyttelton. [The play opened at the National's smaller Cottesloe Theatre.] How does he think the play will take to the change? "I think it will be slightly funnier." But then, as Marber knows, and his career amply illustrates, tragedy isn't all that different from comedy: it's simply comedy viewed up

Tom Shone. The Sunday Times, 26 October 1997. Courtesy of The Sunday Times.

Patrick Marber Playwright

Born in London, and educated at Oxford, Patrick Marber had his first play, Dealer's Choice, developed at the Royal National's Studio. It opened at the National Theatre's Cottesloe auditorium in February 1995 with Patrick directing. Subsequently, it



transferred to the Vaudeville Theatre in the West End. In 1995 Dealer's Choice won the Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy and the Writers' Guild Award for Best West End Play. It has been produced in Melbourne, Zurich, New York, Chicago, Connecticut, Vienna and Montreal. Closer, Marber's second play, was commissioned by Sir Richard Eyre, the acclaimed director and former artistic director of the National, and opened at the Royal National Theatre's Cottesloe auditorium in May 1997, also directed by the author. It transferred to the larger Lyttelton auditorium in October of the same year winning the 1997 Time Out Award for Best West End Play and the 1997 Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy. Closer transferred to the West End in March 1998. It won the 1998 Olivier Award for Best New Play. Other theatre includes directing '1953' by Craig Raine at The Almeida, and Blue Remembered Hills by Dennis Potter at the National. For television Marber wrote and directed After Miss Julie for the BBC Performance series and The Curator for the BBC2 series Coogan's Bluff. His extensive television work also includes writing and appearing in The Day Today, The Paul Calf Diary, Knowing Me Knowing You and the BAFTA Award-winning Three Fights, Two Weddings and a Funeral.

SIMON PRAST Director

Simon graduated from Theatre Corporate Drama School in 1984. As producer of the Auckland Theatre Company for the last seven years, he is responsible for presenting over 27 productions to Auckland audiences. In 1998 Simon made his directorial debut with the critically acclaimed production of *Twelve Angry Men* for which he and Auckland Theatre



Company received recognition from Aucklanders as Best Production in the New Zealand Herald and Listener Magazine. Simon is also well known to Auckland audiences for his performances at Theatre Corporate and the Mercury Theatre, which include The Rose Tattoo, Glorious Ruins, Via Satellite, The Merchant of Venice, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Romeo and Juliet. Throughout New Zealand he is recognised for his many television parts including those in Hercules, Xena, Shortland Street and Gloss. In 1998 Simon played the lead in Garth Maxwell's When Loves Comes, which recently featured at the Sundance and Toronto Film Festivals.

DORITA HANNAH Designer

Dorita comes to the Auckland Theatre Company's production Closer with fifteen years experience in theatrical design and theatre architecture. Her most recent involvement with the company was designing Travels with My Aunt in 1996. Other Auckland productions include Shadowlands at the Mercury Theatre in 1991 and Henry 8 at Art Space Gallery in 1992. She has



done much work in Wellington including Farewell Speech and Lashings of Whipped Cream at Circa Theatre in 1993 and Henry 8 at Taki Rua. Dorita also designed Nga Tangata Toa and Whaea Kairau for Taki Rua's bicultural theatre company Te Roopu

Whakaari as well as costumes for *Ricordi!*: a performance piece commissioned by the 1996 International Festival of the Arts. In 1996 Dorita's set for *The Visit* at Downstage Theatre won Best Set Design in the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards. As a member of the Performing & Interactive Arts Design Guild of Aotearoa NZ, Dorita has initiated and coordinated *Out of the Dark*, a National Exhibition & Symposium on Theatre Arts Design, which was included in the 1998 International Festival of the Arts. She is currently working on New Zealand's participation at the Prague Quadrennial, an international exposition on theatre architecture and design. Dorita is a Senior Lecturer in Theatre Design at Victoria University.

BRYAN CALDWELL Lighting Designer

Bryan's first design was for Inside Out Theatre's *The Lover and Beloved* at the Mercury Theatre, Auckland in 1987. From that start, Bryan lit over fifteen productions for the Mercury Theatre including *The Cherry Orchard, The Rose Tattoo, The Secret Rapture*, and *Ladies Night*, while continuing to light Inside Out Theatre's productions of *The Decline and*



Fall of a Good Family, The Song of the Civilised Thief, The Crossing, and The Spectacle of One. As a freelancer Bryan has lit and production managed ten productions for the Watershed Theatre including Cabaret, Into The Woods, Assassins, Hamlet, and Pinocchio, and over thirty productions for independent companies, dance, and commercial events. Bryan has had a close collaboration with Production Designer Tracey Collins since 1988, recently co-producing and designing Alice in Wonderland at the Bruce Mason Theatre, and the installations I Had A Thought and Our Name is Object at Artspace, Auckland. For the Auckland Theatre Company, Bryan created the lighting designs for The Wind in the Willows, Vita and Virginia, Julius Caesar, Twelve Angry Men, Honour, Masterclass, All My Sons, Arcadia, Molly Sweeney and Uncle Vanya. This year Bryan is being enticed into new lighting challenges: developing light/music interfaces for the electronic music of Pitchblack, designing his first opera La Boheme for Opera NZ, and interior lighting design.

MARTON CSOKAS Daniel

For Auckland Theatre Company, Marton has previously appeared in Julius Caesar, Arcadia, and Angels in America. Other Auckland productions include Kvetch and Frontmen at the Maidment Theatre and Anglophiles at the Watershed Theatre. Marton's Wellington performances include Closer, which won a 1998 Chapman Tripp



Award for Best Production, Glorious Ruins and Amy's View for Circa Theatre and Te Whanau a Tuanui Jones for the Taki Rua/Depot Theatre. Christchurch audiences have seen him in Icarus' Mother at Canterbury University; Today's Bay at Christchurch Repertory and Dancing at Lughnasa and Casement at the Court Theatre. Marton has appeared in Australia in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of The Herbal Bed and in the Australian tour of Ladies Night. His film credits include Broken English, Twilight of Gods, Game with No Rules and Plain Tastes. For his role in Broken English Marton was nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the New Zealand Television and Film Awards. Broken English also won the award for Best Film at the Verona Film Festival. For television Marton has appeared in Xena, Hercules, Shortland Street, Wildside, Halifax f.p. and GP, for which he was nominated Best Actor at the Australian Film Award. Marton trained at the New Zealand Drama School.

SOPHIA HOWTHORNE Alice

For the Auckland Theatre
Company Sophia has previously
appeared in *The Wind in the*Willows, Social Climbers and The
Seagull. Other Auckland
performances include Little Red
Riding Hood in Into the Woods at
the Watershed Theatre, Lavinia in
Titus Andronicus at the Maidment
Theatre and Juliet in Romeo and
Juliet at the Herald Theatre.



Sophia also performed in *The Sound of Music* and *The Crucible* at the Mercury Theatre and has appeared on the Wellington stage as Kate Hardcastle in the Downstage Theatre production of *She Stoops to Conquer*. Sophia's film performances include *When Love Comes*, which recently featured at the Sundance and Toronto Film Festivals, *Savage Honeymoon*, which will open later this year, and *Destroying Angel*. Sophia won the TVNZ Young Achievers Award in 1995, which enabled her to study opera in New York. Sophia trained at Limbs, The performing arts school, Danceworks and The Actors Space.

THERESA HEALEY Anna

For the Auckland Theatre Company Theresa has previously appeared in Honour, Uncle Vanya and Three Tall Women. Other Auckland productions include Via Satellite, The Merchant of Venice, Private Lives and Rose Tattoo at the Mercury Theatre and in Macbeth at the Aotea Centre. She has also performed in Wellington in Baby Doll, Secret Rapture, Black Halo



and Via Satellite at Circa Theatre. Dunedin and Christchurch have seen Theresa in The Share Club, The Foreigner and Objection Overruled at the Fortune Theatre and Bus Stop at the Court Theatre. Theresa played the much-loved nurse Carmen in Shortland Street with other television credits including Destination Planet Earth, Double Booking, Bread and Roses, and Marlin Bay. Theresa's film appearances include Hercules & Xena (Universal Studios Theme Park Production), Angel Wings, Bread and Roses, Taking Liberties, Casual Sex and Kitchen Sink. Theresa was trained at the New Zealand Drama School.

JEFFREY THOMAS Larry

Jeffrey has been a writer and actor for twenty years. As an actor he has worked in New Zealand, Australia and the UK with leading roles in series like the BBC's Bowen A'I Bartner, Shark in the Park and the mini-series The Sound of Silence for which he was nominated best supporting actor. He has written for several TV series including Gloss, Marlin Bay (one episode of which was



nominated for best TV script) and most recently *Plainclothes*. In the Welsh language he devised and wrote many episodes of the successful TV drama series *Mwy Na Phapur Newydd*. His stage play *Playing the Game* was first performed at Circa Theatre, and a revised version was subsequently produced in the UK, first at Theatr Clwyd and then The King's Head, London whence it transferred to the West End. He has written two books, including a collection of stories for children, and also written and directed one short film, *Making Money*. More recently he has appeared regularly in the US television series *Hercules* playing Jason the legendary leader of the Argonauts. For Auckland Theatre Company Jeffrey performed in the critically acclaimed *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*.

Auckland Theatre Company
Presents

closer

By Patrick Marber

Closer was developed at The Royal National's Studio and opened at the Cottesloe Theatre, May 1997

CLOSER opens on Broadway, with the author as director, in March 1999

This is the first production of the Montana 1999 CULTURE OF DESIRE season

Characters, in order of speaking

Alice Dan Larry Anna Sophia Hawthorne Marton Csokas Jeffrey Thomas Theresa Healey

Director
Designer, Set and Costume
Lighting Designer
Wardrobe

Stage Manager
ASM/Props
Technical Manager
Audio Visual Consultant
Stagehand
Set Construction

Simon Prast
Dorita Hannah
Bryan Caldwell
Flona Nichols
Elizabeth Whiting
Fritha Walker
David Bell
T.O. Robertson
Michael Hodgson
Amber McWilliams
Third Stage Ltd.

Internet scene software written by

Paul Groothuis

Music by björk 'Homogenic'

There will be a 15-minute intermission

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Hospital

It is a mighty force that of mere chance, absolutely irresistible

delicate forms instance as the charm illusory, of a human b

Chance Joseph Conrad

Studio

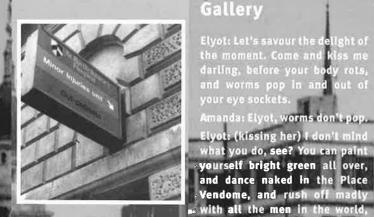
'I don't believe,' said Mr Prendergast, 'that people would ever fall in love or want to be married if they hadn't been told about it. It's like abroad: no one would want to go there if they hadn't been told it existed. Don't you agree?'

'I don't think you can be quite right,' said Paul; 'vou see, animals fall in love quite a lot, don't they?"

'Do they?' said Mr Prendergast. 'I didn't know that. What an extraordinary thing! But then I had an aunt whose cat used to put its paw up to its mouth when it yawned. It's wonderful what animals can be taught. There is a sea lion at the circus, I saw in the paper, who juggles with an umbrella and two oranges.'

'I know what I'll do,' said Grimes. 'I'll get a motor bicycle.'

Decline and Fall **Evelyn Waugh**



London Fuck IRC

I am moved by fancies that are curled around these images. At Home

The notion of some infinitely gentle infinitely suffering thing.

Preludes T S Eliot

Aquarium

Oh. Life is a glorious cycle of song,

A medley of extemporanea; And love is a thing that can never go wrong,

And I am Marie of Romania.

Dorothy Parker

Landance Club

interminable. Ha n or was this itsel a coffin that yo r through th less, recounting enting ontrollable events tha induced you to become something unforeseen. And so fast! So quickly! Everything runs away, beginning with who you are, and at some indefinable point you come to half understand that the ruthless antagonist is yourself.

Philip Roth

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTY OF THE

Restaurant

The Catcher In the Rye

everybody.

J D Salinger

Don't ever tell anybody anything.

If you do, you start missing

Private Lives

Noel Coward

Gallery

Infidelity is as much about the drama of truth-telling as it is about the drama of sexuality. It is only because of sexuality that we think about truth at all; that we find honesty and kindness at odds with each other.

yot: (kissing her) I don't mind

what you do, see? You can paint

yourself bright green all over,

and dance maked in the Place

Vendome, and rush off madly

and I shan't say a word, as long

Amanda: Thank you dear. The

same applies to you, except that

if I catch you so much as look at another woman, I'll kill you.

as you love me best.

The successful lie creates an unnerving freedom. It shows us that it is possible to for no one to know what we are doing. The poor lie - the wish to be found out - reveals our fears about what we can do with words. Lying, in other words, is not so much a way of keeping our options open, but of finding out what they are. Fear of infidelity is fear of language.

Monogamy Adam Phillips

Surgery

Museum

wot) love is a thing.

it is a fire, it is a coal

The Hunting of Cupid

George Peele

It is a prick, it is a sting.

It is a pretty, pretty thing;

Whose flame creeps in at every

dimining the state of the state

To every action there is always an opposed and equal reaction: or the mutual actions of two bodies upon each other are always equal, and directed to contrary parts.

Principia Mathematica **Issac Newton**

Hote

What thing is love for (well I 'Goodbye,' he said to her at the station a Only at later, who had subsi what he l her body stark nak that this b lost to him because he himself, of his own free will, had driven It away, he inwardly called himself an idiot and had a mind to slap his own face.

Milan Kundera

Postman's Park

[Human lives] are composed like music. Without realising it, the individual composes his life according to the laws of beauty even in times of greatest darkness.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being Milan Kundera



Postman's Park

The public gardens known as Postman's Park were laid out in 1880 on the site of the former churchyard of St Botolph, Aldersgate, and set amongst the commercial buildings of the City of London.

Its name derives from the General Post Office which formed its southern boundary; it was a welcome green space used by postmen between spells of duty.

In 1887 the artist GF Watts R.A., suggested that Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee be marked by a memorial commemorating the stories of the many acts of heroism in everyday life. In his letter to The Times Watts wrote, 'The character of a nation as a people of great deeds is one, it appears to me, that should never be lost sight of. It must surely be a matter of regret when names worthy to be

remembered and stimulating and instructive are allowed to be forgotten.' The idea was not taken up and The Watts Memorial of Heroic Deeds we see today, a 50-foot long open gallery, was undertaken by Watts himself. He also erected the first of the glazed Doulton tablets which line its walls. In his address at the opening ceremony in 1900, the Bishop of London said that they were opening not merely a public space, but something which was intended to be a record of high and noble deeds. The Park and memorial to this day remain largely unchanged.



Photos by Hugo Glendienning



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