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## PRESS RELEASE

### West End theatre tops half a billion pound mark in record year

For the first time ever, box office receipts to London theatre topped the half a billion pound mark in 2009 as record numbers of theatregoers attended plays, musicals, opera and dance in the capital.

The Society of London Theatre announced today that total box office revenues for 2009 were £504,765,690, up +7.6% on a like-for-like basis on the previous year.

Fuelling this were record attendances which passed the 14 million mark for the first time. The new record total of 14,257,922 is up + 5.5% on the same period in 2008.

2009 was the seventh consecutive year in a row that new attendance and revenue records have been set, but the size of the increases, achieved against a backdrop of economic recession, represent a stunning performance by the sector. The taxman will have welcomed VAT receipts of more than £75 million, whilst the additional spend by theatregoers on things such as transport, restaurants and hotels will have provided vital stimulus for the London economy.

Plays in particular had a spectacular year with total attendances of 3,637,714 being + 26% up on 2008, whilst Opera, Dance and Entertainments were up +7%. Musical were - 2% down for the year, though this was primarily due to the early months of 2009 – by the final quarter, attendances were +4% up and many shows announced record figures.

Welcoming the results, Nica Burns, President of the Society of London Theatre said:

“Britain’s artistic community continues to create exceptional work. The extraordinary quality and breadth of productions available nightly in London explains these record figures in such a difficult year economically. Whilst our musicals continue to flourish, 2009 was an outstanding year for plays – proving that audiences respond to challenge and stimulation as well as toe-tapping entertainment. Excellence is everything – look no further than London’s theatre which adds a great deal more to London’s revenue than just the ticket sales.”

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact: Julia Hallawell or Emma de Souza on 020 7557 6700 or [julia@soltma.co.uk](mailto:julia@soltma.co.uk) and [emma@soltma.co.uk](mailto:emma@soltma.co.uk)

## Editors' notes

### 2009 Key results:

- Total attendances: 14,257,922 (new record). Previous best year was 2008's 13,892,460
- Total revenues: £504,765,690 (new record). Previous best year was 2008's £483,679,423
- 2009 attendances and revenue by genre  
Musicals: Attendances 8,651,631 Revenue: £328,938,769  
Plays: Attendances 3,637,714 Revenue: £97,373,778  
Other (= Opera, Dance, Performances, Entertainments etc): Attendances = 1,968,577  
Revenue £78,453,143
- Box office figures are compiled on behalf of the industry by the Society of London Theatre, and relate to the 52 major theatres, both commercial and grant-aided, in Central London
- Nica Burns, President of the Society of London Theatre, Richard Pulford, Chief Executive of the Society and Paul James, Commercial Manager of the Society are available for interview. Please contact the Society.
- **The Society of London Theatre**  
Founded in 1908 by Sir Charles Wyndham, the Society of London Theatre is the trade association which represents the producers, theatre owners and managers of the major commercial and grant-aided theatres in central London. Today the Society combines its long-standing roles in such areas as industrial relations and legal advice for members with a campaigning role for the industry, together with a wide range of audience-development programmes to promote theatre-going.
- **The Laurence Olivier Awards**  
The Society of London Theatre will present the 2010 Laurence Olivier Awards on Sunday, March 21 at the Grosvenor House. Nominations will be announced in the week beginning 8 February. For more details on the Laurence Olivier Awards, please contact Colman Getty on 020 7631 2666.

For additional facts and figures on the West End, please visit  
[www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/stats-and-facts/](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/stats-and-facts/)

## Background facts and figures for London Theatre in 2009

- Society of London Theatre initiatives included Kids Week 2009, which sold 51,302 tickets during its annual 2 week event, the highest number ever in its 12 year history. 2009 was also a record-breaking year for Theatre Token sales which were up by 8% on the previous year.
- New plays in 2009 included the hugely successful *Enron* and *Jerusalem*, giving the Royal Court two consecutive West End transfers for the first time since the 1960s and Alan Bennett's *The Habit of Art* at the National.
- Acting talent on stage included Rachel Weisz, James McAvoy, Dominic West, James Earl Jones, Anna Friel, Jude Law, Helen Mirren and Judi Dench.
- Newcomers to the West End included Melanie Chisholm, Diana Vickers and Lenny Henry.
- Highlights of London Theatre in 2009 included unprecedented queues for returns for *Waiting for Godot* with Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart; the first Old Vic season in the transatlantic Bridge Project with Ethan Hawke, Rebecca Hall and Simon Russell-Beale; a steady increase in the number of Sunday performances and the sell-out Donmar West End season at Wyndham's Theatre.
- At the National Theatre, the millionth Travelex £10 Ticket was sold at the end of the 2009 season. The partnership between Travelex and the National Theatre which began in 2003, has played to an average attendance of 90%. The National Theatre's production of *War Horse* that transferred to the New London has been seen by over half a million people including HM The Queen.
- Stephen Daldry's *An Inspector Calls* has run for more than 5,000 performances for more than a decade, making it the most successful West End play revival ever.
- Anniversaries included the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *The Lion King*, making it the 9<sup>th</sup> longest-running show in West End history. *Billy Elliot*, about to celebrate its 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday in March, had its best weeks ever over the Christmas period, and *Priscilla* will also celebrate its 1<sup>st</sup> birthday in March.
- *Sister Act* sold its 500,000th ticket, broke the Palladium's box office records for the highest ever taking on a single show and London's oldest nun celebrated her 90th birthday watching *Sister Act*.
- *Grease* celebrated its second birthday at the Piccadilly Theatre on 25 July 2009 and is now the longest running show in the venue's history.

- Mamma Mia! grossed its biggest weekly amount in the show's history, making Mamma Mia! the highest weekly grossing show ever at the Prince of Wales Theatre.
- Sales for Oliver! broke all previous records at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane during the October half term. The record was previously held by the musical of The Producers in 2004.
- The Donmar West End season at the Wyndham's Theatre played to 96% capacity, with 13% as first time bookers.
- Wicked welcomed its 2 millionth theatregoer on 11 May 2009.
- At the Open Air, The Importance of Being Earnest played to 96.5% capacity, breaking all attendance records at the theatre plus Hello, Dolly! was the highest grossing production in the history of theatre, at £1.2m
- Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake at Sadler's Wells was seen by well over 80,000 people in just over 6 weeks of whom 62% were 1<sup>st</sup> time attenders. The show also grossed in excess of £2.5 million
- The RSC's London season at the Novello Theatre with Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Taming of the Shrew completed its run in 2009 playing to over 75,000 people, 1 in 4 were new to the RSC.
- Nimax's new children's programming ensured that over 100,000 children under 7 attended a performance of either the Gruffalo or Going on a Bear Hunt in the West End.
- During the five and a half month theatre season at Shakespeare's Globe in 2009, over 345,000 theatre-goers experienced a play (the most ever) averaging over 87% of full capacity attendance across the entire season. Over 40% took advantage of the £5 'groundling' tickets – a significant achievement for a company that still operates without public subsidy.
- Annie Get Your Gun broke all Young Vic box office records! It opened with the highest advance sales for any Young Vic show, it took the highest takings in any one single day and overall the show took the most at the box office in Young Vic history.
- Avenue Q, which is moving aside from The Gielgud Theatre to make way for Hair, has just announced that it will transfer to The Wyndhams Theatre after a rip-roaring autumn and Christmas, with figures standing at the highest they have been since it opened nearly four years ago.