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SOLT awards 2010 Laurence Olivier Bursaries

Ten talented second year drama students from across the UK have been awarded prestigious Laurence Olivier bursaries worth a combined total of £37,500 from The Society of London Theatre (SOLT), to assist them in their final year of studies. Five further students have been awarded funding from Behrens bursaries from the E M Behrens Charitable Trust.

Established in 1987 to commemorate Lord Olivier's 80th birthday, the Laurence Olivier bursaries aim to help students at the end of their second year of drama school who have potential talent but are facing financial difficulties in completing their studies. The demands of third year course work make part-time jobs almost impossible and it is at this stage that students who have managed to finance two-thirds of their course are in particular need of financial help.

Having succeeded in the highly competitive audition process, the winning students were announced at a ceremony at SOLT on Thursday 1 July. In presenting this year's recipients with their bursaries, Nica Burns, President of SOLT, said:

"Congratulations to all our 2010 bursary winners. The standard was really high this year, and this year's winners should feel very proud. The life of an actor is full of people saying no but do not be daunted - you are all here because these people have said yes! So you must start on your ladder to stage, small and large screen success with hope and joy and enthusiasm because the greatest thing about being in the theatre is that it's a fantastic community. You're not just doing a job, you join a family of people who are as passionate about it as the day that they started, like you are. And it is the most wonderful community to be part of."

The 2010 bursary winners are looking forward to following in the footsteps of previous recipients whose names include such luminaries as Ewan McGregor, Paterson Joseph and Michael Sheen.

This year's bursaries are awarded as follows:

Laurence Olivier Bursaries:

Josephine Brightwell at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London

Peter Clements at the Drama Centre in London

Joan Iyiola at the Bristol Old Vic theatre school

Ajjaz Awad-Ibrahim at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts in London

Alex Mugnaioni at the Rose Bruford College in Kent

Adam Urey at the Birmingham School of Acting

Majid Mehdizadeh at Manchester Metropolitan University

Daniel Easton at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London

Naomi Heffernan at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London

Kathryn Rutherford at the Guildford School of Acting

The Behrens Bursary

Francine Challands at Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts

Behrens additional sums

Aaron Mwale at the Guildford School of Acting

Clifford Lynette at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff

Anna Simmons at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts

Raj Bajaj at the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts in London

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Images available of recipients at awards presentation with Nica Burns, President of the Society of London Theatre (group/individual).
- Individual press releases about each recipient available on request.
- Background information: <http://www.solt.co.uk/bursaries.html>
- The Society of London Theatre is the trade association which represents the producers, theatre owners and managers of the 52 major commercial and grant-aided theatres in central London. The organisation exists in order to promote theatregoing, develop audiences, and to serve, protect and promote the interests of those engaged in theatre across London, through activities including: The Laurence Oliver Awards, tkts ticket booth, the Official London Theatre guide, Theatre tokens and the annual promotions Kids Week in the West End and Get into London Theatre.