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Press release

London theatre posts record results for 2008

London theatre enjoyed a record-breaking 2008 as audiences flocked to musicals, plays, opera and dance performances in the capital. Both attendances and box office revenues reached new levels as the sector proved resilient in challenging economic conditions.

The Society of London Theatre announced today, Monday 26 January 2009, that attendances for the year 2008 totalled 13,807,286, up 1% on the previous record set in 2007.

Box office revenue totalled £480,563,674, up 3% on 2007's record figure, generating record VAT receipts for the Treasury.

Musicals ended the year 1% up year-on-year. Plays were 1% down, though enjoyed a strong final quarter. A good year too for dance, opera, performances and entertainments which collectively rose +5% year on year.

The sector was not immune to the economic downturn with a slight lessening of demand in the second half of the year. However, a strong Christmas period pushed year-end results to unprecedented levels.

The figures relate to the 52 theatres represented in membership of the Society of London Theatre which include all the commercial West End together with the major grant-aided London theatres.

Commenting on the results, Nica Burns – the President of the Society of London Theatre – said:

"It was a quite remarkable year. Behind these figures are many very talented hard-working people putting on and selling world-class shows that people actually want to see. There's a lot of economic doom and gloom out there, but it would seem people still want to be entertained and stimulated in numbers."

Chief Executive of the Society Richard Pulford added:

"These figures are good news for the performing arts, and for the UK economy. Theatregoers are out there spending money not just at our box offices but in hotels, restaurants and shops in the capital. 2009 will undoubtedly be tough, but we start the year with the theatre capital of the world in good health."

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact:

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Editors notes:

2008 Key results:

- Total attendances: 13,807,286 (new record). Previous best year was 2007's 13,636,540
- Total revenues: £480, 563,674 (new record). Previous best year was 2007's £469,938,749
- 2008 attendances and revenue by genre
Musicals: Attendances 9,046,375 Revenue: £334,408,647
Plays: Attendances 2,928,094 Revenue: £71,930,361
Other (= Opera, Dance, Performances, Entertainments etc): Attendances = 1,832,817 Revenue £74,224,666
- 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 Colman Getty
- **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**
Nominations for the 33rd Laurence Olivier Awards which reward excellence on the London Stage will be announced in the week of the 2nd February ahead of the Awards Ceremony on Sunday 8th March at the Grosvenor House Hotel, London. For full details, visit www.olivierawards.co.uk or contact Jill Cotton or Katy MacMillan-Scott at Colman Getty Tel 020 7631 2666 or jill@colmangetty.co.uk/
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