



**For immediate release**

**Celebrate the Play- Spotlight on Drama  
100 Years of the Society of London Theatre**

2008 is the centenary year of The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) and to mark the occasion the society will be joining forces with major performing arts events, festivals and theatres across the capital to celebrate London theatre past and present.

As part of these celebrations, SOLT is launching ***Celebrate the Play- Spotlight on Drama*** in May with a focus on how plays and playwrights have made a unique contribution to British Society and the cultural landscape in the last 100 years.

Highlights of the Celebrate the Play month include a platform event on the 'state of the play' at the Royal Court on May 7<sup>th</sup>, chaired by Michael Billington with a panel comprised of theatre producer Sonia Friedman, Almeida Theatre's Artistic Director Michael Attenborough, director Edward Hall, playwright Roy Williams and writer/director Peter Gill.

May 7<sup>th</sup> marks the date of the very first play staged in the West End (*The Humorous Lieutenant* which opened in 1663) and the 44th anniversary of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* being staged for the first time.

All current plays in the West End and leading theatre companies, including the RSC, the National and Royal Court, are participating in some way and, during the month of Celebrate the Play, there will be unique access to archives, cast and the creatives whose contribution ensures that London remains the world capital of theatre.

In addition to the events above, there will be a number of events specifically staged as part of the Celebrate the Play month – these include:

- 9 May: Time to Talk - with Janet Suzman, Rose Theatre, Kingston
- 10 May: In Spitting Distance: Post Show Talk, Barbican theatre
- 11 May: An Evening with Aeronwy Thomas, hosted by Tricycle Theatre
- 12 May: That Face Post Show Q & A, Duke of York's theatre
- 14 May: Pinter's Craft, hosted by Lyric Hammersmith
- 14 May: Acting with Facts – Docudrama, hosted by National Theatre
- 15 May: Backstage tour of the Fortune theatre
- 19 May: The Birthday Party – Gala Performance, hosted by Lyric Hammersmith
- 19 May: Michael Frayn: Stage Directions – Writing on Theatre, hosted by National Theatre
- 20 May: The Mousetrap: Full day of events, St. Martin's theatre
- 21 May: Acting Pinter, hosted by Lyric Hammersmith
- 21 May: Time to Talk – with Peter Hall, Rose Theatre, Kingston
- 28 May: Time to Talk – with Timothy West, Rose Theatre, Kingston

SOLT will be participating in a number of other events throughout the year which will all be given a special centenary theme. These include a specially commissioned Centenary walk of London's Theatreland which will take place on the last Sunday of every month from April through until September. The walks will give a unique insight into how theatre has changed over the last 100 years and will be led by Diane Burstein, a registered blue badge guide and an expert in theatre history. **West End Live**, a free annual celebration of live theatre will take place in Leicester Square in June; **The Big Dance**, a week long event celebrating dance will take place in July and **Open Rehearsal** in September will give the public a behind the scenes look at the arts. For more information on all these events please go to: [http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/theatreland\\_at\\_100/](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/theatreland_at_100/)

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

- 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.
- For interviews with representatives from SOLT and their members, please contact Colman Getty
- For logos and images please contact Colman Getty
- Information about all Centenary events will be available on [www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk) from 20 February

Places on the walking tours are limited and must be booked in advance. For more information or to book, call the Society of London Theatre reception on 020 7557 6700 or e-mail [walkingtours@soltma.co.uk](mailto:walkingtours@soltma.co.uk).

- 2007 has seen record attendances in London theatre, of 13.6 million with an extra 1.25 million visits to plays, musicals, opera and dance in the capital.
- The *Laurence Olivier Awards* were created in 1976 as the Society of West End Theatre Awards to recognise excellence on the London stage, and became The *Laurence Olivier Awards* in 1984 when Lord Olivier agreed to have his name associated with them. Since then, winners have included a roll-call of legendary names and the awards event attracts high profile and extensive media coverage. For more information please go to [www.OlivierAwards.co.uk](http://www.OlivierAwards.co.uk)

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