



Press Release: 27 July 2011

WEST END SHOWS OPEN NEW BOOKING PERIOD ENABLING THEATREGOERS TO BOOK NOW FOR SUMMER 2012

The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) today announced that for the first time ever more than half the West End's shows have extended their booking periods to offer sales 15 months in advance, anticipating an increased demand for theatre tickets as millions flock to the UK in 2012.

The theatre industry plans to capitalise on London's high international profile in the run up to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in June 2012 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in July/August 2012 so visitors can plan a theatre trip into their itinerary now.

2011 has seen the opening of many acclaimed new musicals with those booking into 2012 including *The Wizard of Oz*, *Shrek The Musical*, *Million Dollar Quartet* and *Ghost The Musical* as well as the new production of the Broadway hit *Rock of Ages*, and the RSC's transfer of Roald Dahl's *Matilda The Musical* which open this autumn.

Classic long-running popular shows announcing extended 2012 booking periods include *The 39 Steps*, *Billy Elliot the Musical*, *Blood Brothers*, *Dreamboats and Petticoats*, *Jersey Boys*, *Legally Blonde the Musical*, *Les Misérables*, Disney's *The Lion King*, *Mamma Mia!*, *The Mousetrap*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Stomp*, *Thriller Live*, *War Horse*, *We Will Rock You*, *Wicked* and *The Woman in Black*.

London theatre is a magnet for the world's finest theatrical talent, with performances on the London stage over the coming year from Kevin Spacey, Ralph Fiennes, Mark Rylance, Vanessa Redgrave, Sir Patrick Stewart, David Suchet, Dominic West, Michael Sheen, Thandie Newton, James Earl Jones, Kristin Scott Thomas and Jude Law.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: "My message to the good folks around the world is 'Come to London in 2012 for a year like no other!' We will be taking centre stage and whether you are coming for the Games or any other time during the year, surely no visit to our magnificent city will be complete without enjoying the spectacular entertainment London theatre has to offer. The capital's theatre industry delivers the greatest shows on earth every night with a star-studded line-up of critically acclaimed and Olivier and Tony Award-winning productions. Visitors from around the UK and across the globe should snap up their tickets now for our world-class drama, musicals, dance and opera."

SOLT President, Mark Rubinstein, said: "London theatre is something for everyone to be proud of and is a great ambassador for UK plc. The economic impact of London theatre on the UK economy is estimated at £2.6 billion per annum and we are thrilled that the doors of London theatres will be open for business as usual throughout 2012 with a huge range of superb productions ensuring that a great night out at the theatre is a must-do for millions."

As the official body for London theatre, SOLT offers the most reliable and up to date information for theatregoers in 2012, from guidance on ticket buying to travel planning, via its website officiallondontheatre.co.uk, which also features all the latest theatre news, opening nights and a peek behind the scenes of the theatre capital of the world.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- SOLT is reporting healthy sales figures for the second quarter of 2011, with advance bookings looking particularly strong. With seven years of year-on-year growth, total Box Office Revenues in 2010 reached a new record level at £512,331,808, which again topped £500 million, and attendances totalled 14,152,230, exceeding the 14 million mark for only the second time since records began.
- The most recent Arts Council of England report estimated that British theatre generates £2.6 billion annually for the UK economy in addition to the income derived directly from the sale of tickets, with £1.5 billion of this coming from the West End. The additional spend by theatregoers on transport, restaurants and hotels provides a vital stimulus for the London economy. VAT on tickets sold in SOLT-member theatres contributed £76,304,737 to the Treasury in 2010, the highest figure ever.
- The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) is the 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 Olivier Awards with MasterCard, **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. Visit www.officallondontheatre.co.uk for further information.