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PRESS RELEASE



Star performance from London theatre

London theatre is booming as record numbers of theatregoers continue to flock to the capital's shows. All types of production are doing well, with Plays in particular posting excellent results.

Figures released today by the Society of London Theatre reveal total attendances for the year-to-date to be 2.5% up and box office receipts are up 3.5% on the same period last year. And, as the summer progresses, the usual overseas audiences are being swelled by UK theatregoers rediscovering the theatre capital of the world as many choose to stay at home rather than holiday abroad.

Matching last year's record numbers was expected to be tough against a background of economic crisis – and First Quarter results reflected this with total attendances 5% down year-on-year. But Second Quarter results surged back up with an increase of 8%. For the first half of the year to the end of June, just under 7 million visits (6,998,919) had been made to the major London theatres – and the first two weeks of July have also been particularly strong.

Musicals remain the most popular shows with 61% of all theatregoers (4,696,211) attending London's world-famous productions. But plays are enjoying a vintage year. In the year to date, play attendances represent a quarter of all theatre visits, up 19% year-on-year at 1,886,586. Opera and dance report strong figures, as do such shows as stand-up comedy and entertainments which add to the variety of the West End.

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

“Why are we doing so well? We've got some great shows at the moment – basically, it's as simple as that. I'm particularly thrilled that Plays are thriving as their demise has been regularly reported in the past. Today, the Play is alive and well and living in the West End alongside our brilliant Musicals and our world-class Dance and Opera. There's nowhere in the world that matches London for the breadth and quality of its theatre.”

Richard Pulford, Chief Executive of the Society of London Theatre added:

“Today's figures are a real cause for celebration – not just for the theatre industry, but for the London economy generally. At a time of economic uncertainty, it's marvellous that people aren't retreating into their shells. Instead, they're choosing to come together in our theatres to be entertained, challenged, and uplifted.”

For further information or to arrange an interview please contact: Julia Hallowell, Press and Media Co-ordinator or Emma de Souza, Development Manager, The Society of London Theatre

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- Nica Burns, President of the Society, Richard Pulford, Chief Executive of the Society and Paul James, Commercial Manager of the Society are available for interview. Please contact Julia Hallawell or Emma de Souza at SOLT.
- Top line figures for last year (2008): Total attendances: 13,892,460, Total revenue: £483,679,423. A full analysis of last year's record-breaking box office has recently been published by the Society. The Annual Box Office Date Report 2008 is available priced £45 + £5 p&p - telephone 020 7557 6700 - further details at www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/reports
- 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. Year-to-date statistics quoted above refer to the period Jan 1st - July 18th 2009.
- Another positive indicator of the popularity of London theatre is the current success of the Society's annual Kids Week in the West End promotion (14-28 August), which has to date sold over 41,000 tickets. Offering free activities and tickets to 28 top London shows for children aged 5-16, Kids Week is an attractive option for families choosing to holiday at home this summer - see www.kidsweek.co.uk
- September will see the launch of a new pan-industry initiative by SOLT called 'Celebrate The Play' to promote London-wide plays in the autumn season. The objective is to maximise the current commercial success of plays and to encourage new and more regular attendance at theatres producing new plays, classics, comedies and family shows through building a dedicated e-list of playgoers.
- **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.