



**For immediate release**

## **BBC marks 100 years of London's Theatreland**

BBC News is marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the West End theatre industry with a special series of TV and radio reports throughout Tuesday July 8<sup>th</sup>. The day coincides with the publication of figures confirming that 2007 was the best year ever for attendances in the West End.

The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) - the representative body for London's major theatre owners and producers - was formed in 1908 and with it the concept of Theatreland.

Today, London Theatre is more popular than ever before with record-breaking attendances in 2007. As the national broadcaster, the BBC - which was perceived by many as a threat to live theatre when it was founded in 1922 - has played an important role in enthusing new audiences for the Theatre Capital of the World - most notably in recent years with primetime programmes such as 'Any Dream will Do' and 'I'd Do Anything',

SOLT's annual report shows that in 2007, attendances were a record-breaking 13.6 million and London theatre remains London's number one tourist attraction. As an industry its economic impact exceeds £1.8 billion.

The BBC Theatre Day will feature a range of interviews and features venturing backstage with top shows and quizzing industry figures including new SOLT President Nica Burns, who commented:

"We are 100 years old and in rude health with record-breaking attendances to some of the best theatre in the world. We create fabulous entertainment, we're doing it better than ever, and that's why so many people from both the UK and overseas love the West End."

As well as the BBC Theatre Day, SOLT has been running events throughout the year celebrating aspects of theatre. Still to come on 10<sup>th</sup> July at the Royal Festival Hall we will be celebrating the best of West End choreography as part of the GLA's Big Dance festival. August 15-29<sup>th</sup> sees Kids Week in the West End - a fortnight of family fun enabling children to experience a West Show for free. People will have access to many historic theatre buildings as part of Open Rehearsal weekend on 26, 27 and 28 September. And from October the Victoria & Albert Museum will mount an exhibition of photographs by the acclaimed theatre photographer, Reg Wilson at the Playhouse Theatre.

For details of BBC Theatre Day and other Centenary events, contact Emma de Souza at SOLT.

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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 Emma De Souza
- For logos and images please contact Emma De Souza
- 2007 has seen record attendances in London theatre of 13.6 million, a rise of 1.25 million visits to plays, musicals, opera and dance in the capital.

**Calendar of Centenary Events**

- July 10th - The cast of Dirty Dancing, Chicago, Grease and Into the Hoods celebrate the best of West End Choreography at this free event at 12pm at the Royal Festival Hall.
- August 15 - 29th- Kids Week in the West. Free theatre tickets and activities for children age 5 -16 [www.kidsweek.co.uk](http://www.kidsweek.co.uk)
- September 26,27 and 28 - Free theatre tours of London Theatres including a free centenary walk of London's Theatreland led by Blue Badge guide Diane Bernstein. A full list of participating theatres will be available on August 1st
- The V&A will be bring their touring exhibition of the work of the acclaimed photographer Reg Wilson to the Playhouse theatre during the month of October.

Full details of Centenary events and activities can be found in the Theatreland At 100 section of [www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk)