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December 2004

DRAMA ACADEMY CELEBRATES FORTY YEARS OF CRUELTY

This December, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) is celebrating the 40th anniversary of one of the most talked about theatrical events of the 1960s – the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Theatre of Cruelty* season. Directed by Peter Brook, it was an experimental season that shocked audiences and critics alike. Much of this groundbreaking work took place at LAMDA's own MacOwan Theatre in Earl's Court. To celebrate the Academy's involvement in this seminal moment in British theatre, our final year students will present Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* or, to give it its full title, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as performed by the inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the direction of Monsieur de Sade* – a play which explores the nature of power and revolution in a French asylum.

Opening at the MacOwan Theatre on Thursday 2nd December 2004, the *Marat/Sade* will run for two weeks, culminating in a special commemorative performance for an invited audience. Workshop performances as part of the RSC's experimental season in 1964 led to Brook's innovative production of *Marat/Sade* at the Aldwych Theatre, featuring LAMDA's President, Timothy West, and Glenda Jackson among others.

LAMDA's 2004 production of the *Marat/Sade* promises to be a challenge for cast and audience alike. Commenting on the play, director Mark Bell says, 'The *Marat/Sade* is not an easy play. Our students are having to apply everything they have learnt over the past two years at LAMDA, as well as undertake a phenomenal amount of research into the historical context of the play and specific psychiatric disorders, in order to create their roles. It is a process which will push them both individually and artistically.'

Forty years ago, LAMDA was at the very centre of the decade's most exhilarating venture in theatrical experimentation. Today the Academy is still at the cutting edge of theatrical innovation, with such initiatives as the LAMDA Long Project, wherein students collaborate with established playwrights and directors to devise new work, participating in the play-making process. Now, with its recent affiliation to the prestigious Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CCD), LAMDA is sure to remain at the forefront of professional theatrical training, continuing to enrich the UK's cultural landscape.

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