

For Immediate Release

Royal Patron Joins Stars to Launch LAMDA's 150th Anniversary

London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA) Patron, Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra, joined stars of the stage and screen to launch the Academy's 150th Anniversary celebrations this month. In the world's oldest surviving grand music hall (Wilton's Music Hall, East London), the UK's oldest drama school marked the launch with a two-week run of Kander and Ebb's *Cabaret*, culminating in a royal gala performance on Wednesday 16 February. Academy president Timothy West CBE and alumni Ruth Wilson (2010 Laurence Olivier Award winner), Toby Stephens, Dame Harriet Walter DBE, Lesley Joseph, Patricia Hodge, Nathaniel Parker, Anthony Head, Samuel Barnett (*The History Boys*) and 2009 graduate Sam Claflin (*Any Human Heart & Pirates of the Caribbean 4: On Stranger Tides*) joined LAMDA throughout the run – to raise a glass to their alma mater and support the next generation of talent preparing to follow in their footsteps.

From its beginnings as the London Academy of Music in 1861, LAMDA has become one of the UK's most prominent drama schools, training actors, directors, stage managers, technicians, writers and producers for careers across the global performing arts industry. Through LAMDA Examinations, the UK's leading statutory awarding body for speech and drama, it reaches a further 80,000 individuals worldwide each year. During its anniversary, LAMDA aims to extend its reach even more to promote the vital contribution that drama schools make to the performing arts industry and to engage and inspire diverse new audiences.

Launching the Academy's birthday celebrations at the royal gala, LAMDA Principal, Joanna Read, said: "*LAMDA has been fuelling the industry with new talent since 1861. We nurture the artists and technicians who will go on to secure the future of the performing arts in this country and beyond.*"

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Photographs are available on request. Captions:

- 1. Jane Eyre & Mr Rochester reunite at the launch of their alma mater's 150th Anniversary celebrations. [L to R] LAMDA alumni Ruth Wilson and Toby Stephens.** Photograph by Richard Hubert Smith, 2011.

Principal
Joanna Read

Patron
HRH Princess Alexandra,
the Hon Lady Ogilvy KG GCVO

President
Timothy West CBE FRSA

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Michael Oliver
Simone Reynolds
Sir Donald Sinden CBE FRSA
David Suchet CBE
Brian Tilston LLAM Hons.
Dame Harriet Walter DBE
Matthew Warchus
Michael White

2. **LAMDA President Timothy West CBE welcomes recent graduate Sam Claflin to the Academy's Royal Gala performance of *Cabaret*. [L to R] Sam Claflin, Timothy West CBE and Prunella Scales CBE.** Photograph by Richard Hubert Smith, 2011.
3. **LAMDA old boys turn out to celebrate LAMDA's 150th Birthday. [L to R] Samuel Barnett, Anthony Head, Sam Claflin and Nathaniel Parker.** Photograph by Richard Hubert Smith, 2011.
4. **Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra joins LAMDA alumni [L to R] Samuel Barnett, Anthony Head, Sam Claflin and Nathaniel Parker.** Photograph by Richard Hubert Smith, 2011.
5. **Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra [R] and Principal Joanna Read [L] congratulate the cast of LAMDA's 2011 production of *Cabaret*.** Photograph by Richard Hubert Smith, 2011.

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Notes to Editors:

- Celebrating its 150th Anniversary in 2011, LAMDA is the oldest drama school in the United Kingdom. Its graduates shine internationally in theatre, television, radio and film.
- Recent alumni award-winners include Rory Kinnear and Nancy Carroll, who won Best Actor and Best Actress respectively at the 2010 *Evening Standard* Awards and David Suchet CBE, who was named Best Actor for *All My Sons* at the 2011 Critics' Circle Theatre Awards.
- LAMDA is an affiliate of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama – a publicly-funded higher education institution comprising eight affiliate schools and established to strengthen access to vocational performing arts training for talented students, regardless of their background.
- LAMDA provides a range of acting, stage management & technical theatre courses, as well as special programmes in directing, musical direction, movement instruction and scenic design.
- In recent years, over 98% of LAMDA's stage management & technical theatre graduates have found work in their chosen field within weeks of graduation.
- LAMDA has gained a reputation as a source of innovative new writing. Two of the original works devised and first performed at the Academy (Mark Ravenhill's *Mother Clap's Molly House* and Di Trevis' *Remembrance of Things Past*) have since transferred to the National Theatre. A further new work, Robin Soans' *Mixed Up North*, toured as an Out of Joint production in 2009.

- LAMDA Examinations remains a sector leader, examining in over 30 different countries and making the organisation truly international. The majority of its examinations are accredited by the UK regulator, Ofqual.
- LAMDA Business Performance (LBP) combines expertise in drama training with the communication, team-building and public speaking skills required in the corporate sector.
- LAMDA moved to the Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham in 2003 after purchasing its Talgarth Road premises from the Royal Ballet School. Having successfully purchased the remainder of the land at the western end in 2006, the Academy now owns the full footprint of the site. It plans to redevelop the campus to include a fully accessible, 250-seat theatre and purpose-built teaching block.
- Since moving to the Borough, the Academy has enjoyed collaborating with the local community on a range of cultural and educational initiatives. Through a year-round programme of free theatre performances, the Academy also regularly invites residents and theatre enthusiasts to enjoy its work.