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BRAND NEW MUSICAL CREATED FOR LAMDA

As the West End looks to Broadway for original musicals this season, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) is busy creating a brand new work just a few miles away.

Fresh from acclaimed writer and composer Conor Mitchell, *Mathilde* takes its inspiration from Guy de Maupassant's charming fable, *La Parure* [The Necklace]. Yet, as those who know Mitchell's work would expect, whilst this tale of the disenchanted young wife is a familiar one, his portrayal of it is anything but traditional. Through *Mathilde*, Mitchell invites audiences at LAMDA's MacOwan Theatre to share in an adventurous exploration of the genre, as he showcases chamber musical theatre as an exciting alternative. Directed by LAMDA alumnus, Matt Peover and presented by the Academy's highly talented final year students, *Mathilde* is a tour de force. And in Mitchell's eyes, it could only have been created at a place like LAMDA.

At the Academy, practitioners have the freedom to explore new work, knowing that there will always be an incredible educational value to the process for the actors and technicians alike. In Mitchell's own words:

Drama schools have a vital role to play in the regeneration of the musical theatre genre. At LAMDA, I have been able to present the cast with something that is not quite finished and be confident that the students will be happy to work on it. I have had the chance to experiment freely with new ideas and the students have acquired a real sense of ownership over the final product.

LAMDA's final year students are by no means unfamiliar with the concept of theatrical experimentation. As part of the Academy's annual *Long Project* initiative, they all work with a playwright and director to create the first draft of a new work; through a series of workshops focusing on improvisation. The project may then be developed into a full public show during the following year. To date, two such projects have grown to be National Theatre productions: Di Trevis *Remembrance of Things Past* and Mark Ravenhill's *Mother Claps Molly House*; both of which included a number of LAMDA graduates who had worked on the plays' development.

***Mathilde* will show at LAMDA's MacOwan Theatre from 23rd March to 30th March 2006.**

Ends/

[Photographs available on request]

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Notes to Editors:

Conor Mitchell, Composer

Originally from Ulster, Conor trained with the composers David Blake and Tomas Szemechu. Recent scores have included the chamber opera *Goblin Market* (YMT:UK), which was revived at Edinburgh last year, the chamber musical *Todd!* (Kabosh), and the film opera *Pretty Face* (Borderline Productions). He is the only British/Irish composer to have been performed at the University of the Arts, Berlin and has taught at Queens University, Belfast and the FEST in Naples on the role of music in theatre. He was a guest pianist for the Royal Ballet, conductor for the Welsh National Opera, musical director of the UK premiere of *The Wild Party* and has worked with the National Theatre Studio on new musical theatre concepts. He was awarded the 2004 Arts Foundation Fellowship for musical theatre composition and is developing a trilogy of new chamber musicals, *The Good Friday Trilogy*. Other current projects include a new piece for the Ulster Youth Orchestra and a musical for YMT: UK, *Missing Melanie*. The Lyric Theatre, Belfast premiered two new musicals by Conor, *Merry Christmas Betty Ford* and *The Snow Queen* last Christmas.

Praise for Conor's work: Conor Mitchell's score evokes an interplay of familiarity and dischord. It is perfectly poised between the particular and the general (*Irish News*, 2001)

Matt Peover, Director

Matt Peover graduated from LAMDA's One Year Director's Course in 2001, where he has continued to work. His company Liquid Theatre were the first company to revive Sarah Kane's *Crave* at the Battersea Arts Centre, where they also staged successful productions of *Endgame*, Sam Shepard's *Cowboy Mouth* and, most recently, the new play, *Feeding Time*. He directed Conor Mitchell's group therapy musical *Have A Nice Life* for LAMDA in 2005.