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THE LONDON
LAMDA
ACADEMY OF
MUSIC AND
DRAMATIC ART

May 2005

DRAMA ACADEMY UNITES WITH NEW MUSICAL THEATRE TALENT

Students from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) are currently performing an original piece of musical theatre by one of the freshest voices in the genre, 26 year old writer and composer, Conor Mitchell. Playing at the Academy's own MacOwan Theatre, LAMDA's production of *Have a Nice Life* is complete reworking of Mitchell's witty musical about group therapy. With brand new songs and dialogue, this production is a tour de force, possibly because, according to Mitchell, it has been given new life at LAMDA.

Despite a string of successful performances in Belfast, Edinburgh, Berlin and the London Fringe, Mitchell has wanted to take a fresh look at *Have a Nice Life* for some time. Over the past five weeks, LAMDA has provided him with the perfect opportunity to do so. Offering outstanding technical support and a willingness to experiment, the Academy and its highly talented students have played a key part in shaping the finished production. 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.

***Have a Nice Life* will show at LAMDA's MacOwan Theatre from 24th May to 1st June 2005.**

Ends/

[Photographs available on request]

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Notes to Editors:

Conor Mitchell, Composer

Originally from Ulster, Conor trained at York University with David Blake and Tomas Szemechu. Recent scores have included the chamber opera *Goblin Market* (YM:UK) and the musical *Have A Nice Life* (Pleasance Theatre, London). He is the only British composer to have his work performed in the University of Arts, Berlin Musical Theatre programme. Conor has lectured at Queens University, Belfast and the FEST in Naples on the role of theatre music. He is a guest pianist for the Royal Ballet and acted as the musical director on the UK premiere of *The Wild Party*. Original scores include *No Place Like Home* (Tinderbox), *Anabelle s Star* (The Ark, Dublin), *Marat/Sade* (Lyric Theatre Studio) and *Expanding Universes, Sole* (Maiden Voyage Dance Company).

In 2004, Conor was awarded the 2004 Arts Foundation Composition for Musicals Fellowship.