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May 2006

THEA SHARROCK INSPIRES A NEW GENERATION OF ACTORS & DIRECTORS

On 26th and 27th April, exciting young director **Thea Sharrock** shared her expertise and insight with acting and directing students from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), in a *Comedy with Coward* Master Class. Thea, who is currently Artistic Director at The Gate Theatre, recently directed Penelope Keith in *Blithe Spirit* in the West End to great acclaim. Through the two day Master Class, Thea brought a youthful, contemporary approach to Coward's work, making it accessible to a new generation of actors and directors.

Generously sponsored by the **Noël Coward Foundation**, the *Comedy with Coward* Master Class helped to give LAMDA students a confidence and familiarity with Noël Coward's work, which will serve them well in their future careers. The workshop provided an opportunity for the students to work intensively on approaches to Coward's text and musical work under Thea Sharrock's skilful direction. It also helped to put Coward into a historical context.

LAMDA Principal, Peter James said, "We constantly seek new, innovative working partnerships to inspire our students and ensure they are well-prepared for the rigorous demands of the industry. We were delighted to welcome Thea Sharrock to LAMDA and I am certain our students benefited greatly from the opportunity of working with a guest director of her calibre."

The Master Class took the format of closed workshops, culminating in a private showcase of Coward scenes.

Ends/

[photographs available on request]

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Notes to Editor:

Thea Sharrock

In 2004, Thea Sharrock took over as Artistic Director at the Gate Theatre, moving from the Southwark Playhouse where she had been Artistic Director for three years. Thea began her career working at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and the National Theatre Studio before going up to Oxford University where she was President of the Drama Society. Aged 23, Thea won the James Menzies-Kitchin Memorial Trust Young Director of the Year Award with the prize of staging a play at the Battersea Arts Centre, where she chose to direct *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill. She made her West End debut with this play and, soon after, started at the Southwark Playhouse. For the past three summers, Thea has directed plays in Peter Hall's seasons at the Theatre Royal Bath including Coward's *Blithe Spirit*, which transferred to the West End stage, and *Private Lives*. She is due to direct John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round My Father* at the Donmar Warehouse, starring Derek Jacobi and Joanna David, in June 2006.