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THE LONDON
LAMDA
ACADEMY OF
MUSIC AND
DRAMATIC ART

March 2007

THE WORLD'S FIRST EVER EASTERN BLOCK JAZZ MUSICAL

A miserable composer who has lost the will to live. A young photographer who sacrifices art for sleaze to keep afloat. A publisher; a muse; and, naturally, the secret police. This is the world's first ever Eastern Block jazz musical and it premiered at LAMDA (the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) on Wednesday 28th March 2007.

Commissioned by the Academy, musical comedy *The Doomed Composer Otto Klump's Last Day Alive (as Witnessed by the Young Pornographer)* marks LAMDA's third collaboration with rising composer, Conor Mitchell. Last March, he challenged musical theatre enthusiasts with *Mathilde* – a chamber musical based on Guy de Maupassant's *The Necklace [La Parure]*. One coveted award from the New York Musical Theatre Festival and a stint at the National Theatre Studio later, Conor is pushing the genre to its limits once again.

Presented by LAMDA's final year acting students, *Otto* turns the spotlight firmly on artistic censorship. Yet, at heart, it is a story of survival – people learning to exist in impossible conditions. Their rebellion is what informs Mitchell's characteristically innovative score. He says, *All the music you hear is intended to sound like jazz filtered through the ears of a foreign people, in a world where such music is forbidden. It is jazz – but it's broken.*

LAMDA Principal, Peter James is a strong advocate for the role of theatrical experimentation in drama training, as *it encourages students to explore the additional responsibilities actors face when they are asked to create as well as rehearse.* He also champions new writing. Through the Academy's *Long Project* initiative, which has been introduced during his tenure, LAMDA students work with a playwright and director to create the first draft of a brand new work, which often leads to a full-scale production.

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According to Conor, the industry owes much to visionary educators like James. He says,
A huge debt of thanks must be paid to Peter James for showing his belief in the creation of new musical theatre. Without people like him, there would be none.