

Playwright DAVID HARE Receives The Guild's 2017 *GIELGUD AWARD*

On Sunday, October 15, at a memorable **UK THEATRE AWARDS** luncheon in London's historic **GUILDHALL**, one of today's most versatile dramatic artists received the 2017 *GIELGUD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DRAMATIC ARTS*.

Not only has **DAVID HARE** enriched our theatrical repertory with some of the most resonant and challenging stageplays of our era. He has also produced screenplays that have garnered



accolades, not only for their penetrating language but for the scintillating performances they've elicited from such luminaries as the illustrious figure who gave his name to this award. In many cases Sir David has himself directed these presentations. On occasion he has even played leading roles in them, and earned plaudits as an actor.

Under the leadership of **JULIAN BIRD**, who presides over both the nationwide **UK THEATRE** organization and the West End's **SOCIETY OF LONDON THEATRE**, an association most familiar to playgoers for each spring's *OLIVIER AWARDS*, this October's festivities were hosted by **SHARON D. CLARKE**, a popular actress and singer with numerous honors to her credit, among them an Olivier as Odessa in a National Theatre production of *The Amen Corner*.

In addition to the usual categories for ceremonies such as this (Best Director, Best New Play, Best Performance in a Play, Best Performance in a Musical, and Best Supporting Performance), trophies were also awarded for Best Touring Production, Best Show for Children and Young People, Promotion of Diversity, Theatre Employee of the Year, and Best Achievements in Dance and in Opera.

JOHN MCCREA won the prize for **Best Performance in a Musical** for the **SHEFFIELD THEATRES** production of *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, a show that was itself an award recipient, and an attraction that will soon commence a much-anticipated West End engagement at London's Apollo Theatre. Meanwhile for the second consecutive year, **THE MILL AT SONNING**, a dinner theatre that claims George Clooney and his wife Amal as devoted patrons and is overseen by **SALLY HUGHES**, was voted the **UK's Most Welcoming Theatre**.

But the culminating moments of a richly varied program were devoted to the *GIELGUD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DRAMATIC ARTS* and to the afternoon's final presentation, for *OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO BRITISH THEATRE*. That trophy went to **LYN GARDNER**, "a renowned theatre journalist, critic, author, and champion of the industry, whose invaluable insights can most often be found in *The Guardian* and *The Stage*, of which she is an associate editor."

Presenting this year's *GIELGUD AWARD* was **FREDDIE FOX**, an actor of impeccable pedigree who is admired for films such as *The Three Musketeers*, *Victor Frankenstein*, *The Riot Club*, *Pride*, and *Worried About the Boy*, as well as for such stage roles as Bosie in *The Judas Kiss*, a David Hare drama about the tragic fall of Oscar Wilde. Mr. Fox talked about how much he'd enjoyed working not only with Sir David but with artistic director Jonathan Kent while co-starring in this Hampstead Theatre production. As he bestowed the 2017 *GIELGUD* trophy, he shared two messages from admirers of Sir David who were unable to attend the Guildhall luncheon.

One tribute came from **SIR RICHARD EYRE**, who had directed such David Hare classics as *Murmuring Judges*, *Racing Demon*, *Skylight*, and *The Absence of War*. Addressing his longtime friend, Sir Richard said "You're an inspiration in many ways, not least because your appetite for writing for the theatre is undiminished after so many years. You have a great gift for moral debate, and for examining the questions of how we should live our lives and how we should achieve social justice. You write with passion, with the pen of a polemicist and the heart of a romantic. You've consistently written great parts for women, and shown a great understanding both of psychology and of politics. What's more, you've also written great jokes."

Another warm greeting came from **DAME JUDI DENCH**, for whom Sir David had written the role of Esmé in *Amy's View*, a drama that Sir Richard had directed in productions that won multiple awards both in London and in New York. Dame Judi, who had earned her own *GIELGUD* in 1999, with Sir David as one of the presenters, said "Oh how I wish I could be with all of you this afternoon to see David Hare receive this award. Having had the great joy of working with him, I know how unbelievably difficult his plays are to learn, but how glorious they are to perform. There cannot be a more deserving *GIELGUD* recipient, and I send David much love and many congratulations."



To the accompaniment of clicking cameras and fervent applause, **SIR DAVID** ascended the stage. He embraced Freddie Fox. He enthusiastically greeted Sharon D. Clarke. He then delivered the eloquent remarks that follow.

“John Gielgud is usually celebrated as Britain’s supreme classical actor. In fact between 1968 and 1978 he played the lead in *Forty Years On* by Alan Bennett, *The Battle of the Shrivings* by Peter Shaffer, *Home* by David Storey, *Veterans* by Charles Wood, *Bingo* by Edward Bond, *No Man’s Land* by Harold Pinter, and *Half-Life* by Julian Mitchell. That’s seven world premieres in ten years. Has there ever been any actor of his immense fame and popularity who gave so much to the cause of the new play as John Gielgud?”



“I became a dramatist in 1970. From the start I was intensely suspicious of manifestoes and worthy statements of intent. I wanted to affect theatre and film only by the



roles that I wrote. My first play had an all-female cast; and not long after, I was working with Anna Massey, with Helen Mirren, with Kate Nelligan, with Julie Covington, with Judi Dench, with Maggie Smith, with Vanessa Redgrave, with one of John Gielgud’s favourite leading ladies, Irene Worth, with Penelope Wilton, with Emma



Thompson, with Charlotte Rampling, but also with Meryl Streep, with Cate Blanchett, with Nicole Kidman, with Julianne Moore, with Juliette Binoche, and with Kate Winslet. More recently with firecracker actors like Tamsin Grieg, Lesley Sharp, Miranda

Richardson, Toni Collette, Julia Ormond, Anna Chancellor, Juliet Stevenson, Lia Williams, Zoe Wanamaker, Saskia Reeves, Clare Higgins, Winona Ryder, Judy Davis, Helena Bonham Carter, Felicity Jones, Hayley Squires, Rachel Weisz, Thusitha Jayasundera, Uma Thurman, Carey Mulligan, Olivia Williams, Billie Piper, Meera Syal, and Nicola Walker.

“For me, it was not enough simply to represent women’s experience; I also had a lonely aim to put women’s actions at the centre of my stories. The genius of these actresses has given my work its currency, and I owe everything to them.

“These last few years, I’ve felt myself at last swimming with the tide, not against it. I have lived long enough to see smoking banned and drunk driving discredited. Perhaps I will live long enough to see half the people on the stage be women. It will remain dauntingly difficult to write a good play, but if the people who are given the opportunity to write are more diverse, and if the characters they present are also more diverse, then the future of British theatre may be even more glorious than its past. Thank you.”

Sir David’s words were greeted with a resounding ovation. And after the final award presentation, to Lyn Gardner in recognition of all she’d done for British theatre, the festivities drew to a close. All of the trophy winners were invited to the stage for a group portrait. Then those who hadn’t already spoken with media representatives were encouraged to do so.



In an interview with Giverny Masso of *The Stage*, Sir David observed that “When I entered the industry the playwright was regarded as the most important person in the process.” But in recent years “things have moved over to director’s theatre,” where “the directors not only run the theatres and choose the plays, but they also want to be auteurs in the rehearsal room.” He went on to add that a number of “playwrights are being forced to write like film writers,” a development that is “unhealthy for theatre.”

Before he departed, Sir David graciously posed for several UK THEATRE photographs, among them one in which he and his charming spouse, designer NICOLE FARHY, are shown with JOHN ANDREWS of the SHAKESPEARE GUILD. Here Sir David displays the trophy that dramatic and visual artist CLIVE FRANCIS has kindly donated for these occasions since 2006. It’s a limited-edition print, dating from a decade earlier, and each copy bears a unique Gielgud signature, generously provided by Sir John shortly after he was inducted into the Order of Merit.



For all they’ve done to support this ceremony, the GUILD is exceedingly grateful not only to CLIVE FRANCIS, whose caricatures of Sir John also adorn London’s GIELGUD THEATRE, but to STEPHEN BROWNING, SUE JENNINGS, JOHN MILLER, and a superb UK THEATRE team that includes Executive Producer JULIAN BIRD, General Manager KATIE KERRY, photographer PAMELA RAITH, and Press and Media liaison DANIEL AUSTIN.