

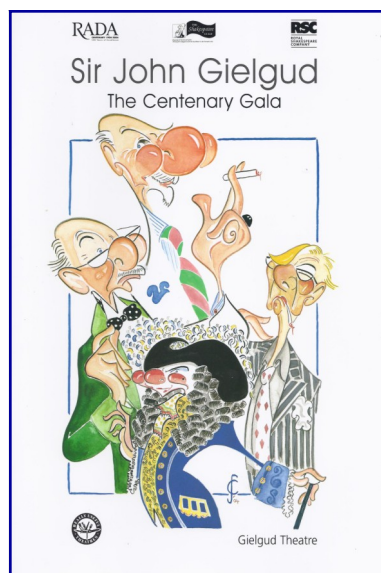
Producer Cameron Mackintosh Receives the 2019 *GIELGUD AWARD*

ON Monday, October 28, during a gathering that took place at the **GIELGUD THEATRE** in association with a **UK THEATRE AWARDS** luncheon the previous afternoon in London's



venerable **GUILDHALL**, the **SHAKESPEARE GUILD** presented its 2019 *GIELGUD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DRAMATIC ARTS* to **SIR CAMERON MACKINTOSH**.

This was not the **GUILD**'s first event in what has long been revered as one of the most prestigious settings in the West End. On **April 19, 2004**, we co-sponsored a scintillating *GIELGUD CENTENARY GALA* in this resonant space, an evening that



was co-produced by **Thelma Holt** and **Bill Kenright** and co-hosted by the **ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY** as a benefit for the **ROYAL ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ART**. Devised by **John Miller**, directed by **Joe Harnston**, and hosted by BBC broadcaster **Ned Sherrin**, it featured reminiscences and vignettes by **Alan Bennett**, **Dame Judi Dench**, **Clive Francis**, **Sir Peter Hall**, **Sir David Hare**, **Rosemary Harris**, **Barbara Jefford**, **Barbara Leigh-Hunt**, **Sir Ian**

McKellen, **Michael Pennington**, **Ronald Pickup**, **Ian Richardson**, **Paul Scofield**, and **Sir Donald Sinden**. It also included presentations by a troupe of **RADA** students, among them **Tom Hiddleston**, who'd soon become a star himself.

To mark the **15th anniversary** of that illustrious occasion, a small invited audience assembled in the **GIELGUD**'s storied **Circle Bar** for a catered reception. **GUILD** president **John F. Andrews** opened the proceedings by presenting the theatre with **Clive Francis**' original illustration for the 2004 *GALA*'s

printed program. He then recalled the **25th anniversaries** of two milestones that date from **1994**: the announcement of a new *AWARD* in Sir John's name, which took place at a ceremony in Washington's **FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY** on **April 24** of that year, and the rechristening of a **THEATRE** that had been known as the **GLOBE** prior to **November 2**, when it became the **GIELGUD** during a **Circle Bar** reception that was attended by **Sir John**.

MR. Andrews then introduced **Sir Richard Eyre**, a renowned director, producer, filmmaker, and author who'd received the 2018 *GIELGUD AWARD* from **Sir Ian McKellen** during a **UK THEATRE AWARDS** ceremony at the **GUIDHALL**.

By a happy coincidence, **Sir Richard** was directing a **Mackintosh** revival of *Mary Poppins* at London's **PRINCE EDWARD THEATRE**. So it was deeply gratifying that he was available to present the **GUILD**'s 2019 trophy to **Sir Cameron** and pay homage to a friend who has been singled out by the *New York Times* as "the most successful, influential, and powerful theatrical producer in the world."

Sir Richard began by observing that "hits" (among them long-running musicals such as *Cats*, *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Oliver!*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*) don't just happen by chance. They require imaginative vision, research, immense creative effort, and a huge amount of discipline. These, he said, are qualities **Sir Cameron** has demonstrated time after time, occasionally at the cost of surprised reactions



from theatre professionals who are not accustomed to the exacting standards of a hands-on producer and theatre entrepreneur who can sometimes be difficult to satisfy.

Sir Richard noted that the same criteria that result in globally-renowned stage and screen productions can also be credited for the comfortable, welcoming venues that are owned and operated by **DELFONT MACINTOSH THEATRES**, all eight of which have been tastefully refurbished as elegant shrines to London's unique heritage in the performing arts.

Sir Richard went on to observe, moreover, that under the auspices of the **MACKINTOSH FOUNDATION**, **Sir Cameron** and his fellow Trustees also provide generous support for a broad range of educational activities and institutions, artistic endeavors, environmental initiatives, health-care programs, and other worthy causes.

In response, **Sir Cameron** thanked **Sir Richard** for his kind words, and acknowledged with a smile that his perfectionism can be annoying to those who opt to work with him. He noted by way of explanation, however, that his primary aim is



to make sure that those who purchase tickets to the shows he produces, and attend performances in the venues he oversees, enjoy the most enriching experiences possible.

He applauded the **SHAKESPEARE GUILD** for its commitment to perpetuating the legacy of **Sir John**. And he said he was pleased by the **GUILD**'s recognition of, and strong support for, the **GIELGUD THEATRE**'s own adherence to the traditions we associate not only with **Sir John**'s superb acting and directing, but with every other aspect of an exemplary career that continues to inspire everyone who cherishes the dramatic arts.

AFTER joining **Clive Francis**, **Sir Richard**, and **Mr. Andrews** for a group portrait, **Sir Cameron** invited everyone to walk upstairs for a look at his latest renovations to a floor that has long been associated with the foremost producers of the



West End. He guided attendees to an office that had been made famous by **Hugh "Binkie" Beaumont**, co-founder and later chief executive of **H. M. Tennent**, the leading theatrical management firm in the London of **Gielgud**'s heyday. **Sir John** excelled in many of **Beaumont**'s productions, he noted, among them resonant classics at the theatre that now bears his name,

co-starring, for example, with **Dame Peggy Ashcroft** in *Hamlet*, and with **Dame Edith Evans** in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Sir Cameron displayed special pleasure as he escorted his guests to **Binkie's Bar**, a recently completed addition to the **GIELGUD**'s Upper Circle: a feature whose primary purpose will be to ensure that the same amenities to be savored in ornate surroundings like the **Circle Bar** are fully available to attendees in "the gods," the theatre's least expensive seats.

For those who were on hand for what turned out to be an edifying occasion, this moment offered an indelible reminder of why **Sir Cameron** is so fervently admired, not only by those who enjoy his beautiful London theatres, but by those around the world who flock to presentations of his engaging musicals.



THE **GUILD** is grateful to everyone who contributed to the warmth of a special gathering, not least among them the cultural leaders who joined us for a delightful reception: **Gielgud** biographer **Jonathan Croall**, *Gielgud's Letters* editor **Richard Mangan**, BBC producer **Peter Griffiths** and his wife **Eva**, theatre producer **Thelma Holt**, arts promoter **Joyce Hytner**, filmmakers **Sue Birtwistle**, **David Parfitt**, and **Marc Sinden**, executives **Sir Stanley Wells** and **Paul Edmondson** of the **Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** in Stratford-upon-Avon, and Shakespeare scholar **James Shapiro** of **Columbia University**.

We lamented the absence of a number of would-be guests, among them biographer and event producer **John Miller** and his wife **Aileen**, actor and director **Keith Baxter**, and such previous **GIELGUD** laureates as **Sir Kenneth Branagh**, **Dame Judi Dench**, **Sir David Hare**, **Sir Derek Jacobi**, **Sir Ian McKellen**, and **Sir Patrick Stewart**. We were sorry that **Julian Bird** and **Katie Kerry**, who oversee both **UK THEATRE** and the **SOCIETY OF LONDON THEATRE**, were unable to join us. But it was a treat to welcome their colleague **Russell Morton**.

We were delighted to be with such **GUILD** stalwarts as **Stephen Browning** and his wife **Julia**. And we were grateful for the opportunity to express our warm admiration for actor, writer, and visual artist **Clive Francis** and his wife **Natalie**: **Clive**'s exquisite caricatures have graced **GIELGUD** ceremonies since 2006.

For all they did to facilitate arrangements for this stellar event, we're deeply indebted to **William Differ**, Operations Director of **DELFONT MACKINTOSH THEATRES LTD.**, and **Rosy Runciman**, Archivist for **Cameron MACKINTOSH LTD.** And for supplying us with visual mementos of the festivities, we extend thanks to **Robert Page** and his wife **Rebecca** for the photograph at left, and to **GUILD** board member **Jan Denton** for the other photos that accompany this brief account of a memorable afternoon.