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## Sean Holmes announces his departure from the Lyric Hammersmith

The Lyric Hammersmith today announces that Sean Holmes will step down in October 2018, after almost a decade as Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive. Sean joined the Lyric in January 2009.

During Holmes' tenure at the Lyric, he has directed 22 shows including the Olivier Award Winning *Blasted*, which received the 2011 Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre award. His ground-breaking *Secret Theatre* project reinvented the traditional approaches to making theatre as well as the theatre-going experience. One of the most prominent achievements during his joint tenure with the then Executive Director Jessica Hepburn, was the planning, fundraising and completion of a major capital development project, completed in 2015. Holmes' production of *Bugsy Malone* – the first stage version in over a decade – reopened the theatre to great critical and audience acclaim. Diversity and access for young people has remained a priority – both the audience demographic and through the Lyric's outreach work – which has increased dramatically under his and current Executive Director, Sian Alexander's joint leadership. Sean Holmes' final directing projects at the Lyric were *The Plough and The Stars* – a revival of his 2016 production to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising and a remount of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* currently on a major national tour.

Holmes' productions for the Lyric include: *The Plough and The Stars* (also at Abbey Theatre Dublin and a Irish/US Tour), *The Seagull*, *Terror*, *Shopping and F\*\*king*, *Bugsy Malone*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (UK Tour/Manchester Royal Exchange/Brisbane Festival/Dublin International Festival), *Hérons*, *Secret Theatre Shows 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7*, *Cinderella*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Morning*, *Have I None*, *Saved*, *Blasted* (winner Olivier Award 2011, Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre), *A Thousand Stars Explode in the Sky*, *Ghost Stories* (also Duke of York's/Liverpool Playhouse/Panasonic Theatre, Toronto/Arts Theatre), *Three Sisters* and *Comedians*.

Holmes' distinctive programming choices have presented an extraordinary scope of work – both experimental and accessible. Having introduced Pantomime to the Lyric, it is now firmly established as a local tradition and celebrating 10 years in 2018, bringing a fresh inventive approach to the traditional form. Alongside *Bugsy Malone*, *The Seagull* and *Saved*, Holmes has placed such shows as Philip Venables' operatic setting of Sarah Kane's final play *4.48 Psychosis*, *Things I Know to be True* from Frantic Assembly and State Theatre Company Australia, and the massively influential international co-production *Three Kingdoms*.



Ticket prices have remained accessible, and the longstanding programme of Free First Nights has now welcomed more than 50,000 people who live and work in Hammersmith and Fulham to the Lyric for free, and often for their first theatre experience.

The Lyric's capital development project began in 2012, and the theatre fully reopened in 2015 revealing a contemporary and inviting front of house makeover, as well as impressive state of the art facilities in the new Reuben Foundation Wing. In the three years since opening, these new facilities (including a dance studio, music practice rooms, a recording studio, film & TV studio, editing suite, 50 seat cinema, a digital playspace and a sensory space for disabled children) have enhanced the scale of the Lyric's theatre productions, whilst also dramatically increasing the range and volume of work with young people from all backgrounds. Notably, the *Evolution Festival*, established in 2016, which showcases the talent and creativity of Londoners aged 18-25 and has led to ongoing development of some of these productions. During his tenure at the Lyric, Sean Holmes has invested considerably in the careers of young directors, writers and actors from a wide range of backgrounds, through mentoring and proactive support.

The end of Holmes' tenure at the Lyric will see a 3-month refurbishment of the theatre's 550 seat Victorian Matcham auditorium and the modernisation of the Studio theatre, beginning in June 2018.

Sean Holmes says: "I've been incredibly lucky over the last nine years to have been the Artistic Director of the Lyric Hammersmith. During that time, it has been a home to the weird, the wonderful and the unexpected. The youthful exuberance of *Bugsy Malone*, the game changing attack of *Three Kingdoms*, the populist magic of *Ghost Stories*, Filter's deranged *Dream*, the fierce blast of *Blasted*, our beloved Panto and the unique experiment of Secret Theatre are just some of what we've produced. There have been successes and failures - some glorious - but the Lyric has always remained defiantly itself. A local, London, national, international theatre, proud of its Hammersmith roots and open to all. It has been my privilege in that time to work with a host of committed, passionate and creative collaborators and I want to thank them all - staff and artists, board members and associates, theatres and companies, supporters and funders and most especially the young people whose energy and sense of ownership makes the Lyric what it is - warm, inclusive, welcoming, provocative and messy. I'm going to miss it very much, but I feel it's time for a new generation to take over the helm and look forward with great anticipation and excitement to seeing a new artistic vision illuminating the theatre I love."

Sian Alexander, Executive Director says: "It's been a joy and a privilege to co-lead the Lyric with Sean in the final three years of his tenure. We will truly miss him and his unique spirit and energy. He leaves the Lyric in rude health and I look forward to continuing to build on all we have achieved."



Lisa Burger, Chair of the Board says: “From the Olivier Award Winning *Blasted* to *Bugsy Malone* and from *The Plough and the Stars* to Secret Theatre, Sean has directed an extraordinary range of work for the Lyric. Diversity and work with and for children and young people has been a focus during his tenure and this has increased in impact and reach following the completion of the Reuben Foundation Wing in 2015. On behalf of the Board I want to express huge gratitude for an incredible nine and a half years and wish him the very best as he returns to a freelance directing career.”

The search for Holmes’ successor will begin at the end of May.

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**For further information, please contact:**

Jo Allan, Kitty Greenleaf or John Potter at Jo Allan PR

[jo@joallanpr.com](mailto:jo@joallanpr.com) | [kitty@joallanpr.com](mailto:kitty@joallanpr.com) | [john@joallanpr.com](mailto:john@joallanpr.com) | 020 7520 9392

Images of Sean Holmes, and a selection of Lyric Hammersmith productions are available for download via this link: [click here](#).