The Stage launches new major theatre awards

Thursday 16 March, 2017

Major new theatre awards launches to discover the next Tom Hiddleston, Idris Elba or Phoebe Waller-Bridge

The Stage Debut Awards will find the stars of tomorrow on and off stage.

The Stage, the world's oldest and best theatre publication, has today announced a new awards to recognise the best breakthrough actors and creatives in theatre. Anyone over the age of 16, making their professional theatre debut in the UK, is eligible.

The Stage has a long history of discovering and supporting breakthrough talent, having been the first to review **Tom Hiddleston** in his theatrical debut in 2005 for Yorgjin Oxo - The Man at Theatre 503, London. The Stage also gave **Phoebe Waller-Bridge** The Stage Edinburgh Award for her fringe show Fleabag in 2013. Meanwhile, **Idris Elba** secured his first acting role through The Stage newspaper.

Alistair Smith, print editor of The Stage, said:

“It’s increasingly hard to break into a career in theatre – especially if you’re not from a privileged or well-connected background. So, with The Stage Debut Awards we wanted to launch an awards that recognise the best performers, directors, writers, composers and designers from across the UK at the very start of their careers. The awards will serve as a launchpad for our winners and nominees and will help theatre retain the best and most diverse talent at a time when it can be a real struggle for emerging talent to make a name for themselves."

David Grindrod, casting director for **Disney's Beauty and the Beast** and West End productions of **School of Rock** and **Sunset Boulevard**, said:

"Theatre is in need of a platform to celebrate the stars of tomorrow and help encourage a wider pool of talent. These awards have the power to change everything for the recipients and accelerate their careers. I am proud to be an ambassador for an initiative that actively champions diverse talent from across the UK and am excited to see the effect it will have on our industry."

David Grindrod will also be involved in the judging process for The Stage Debut Awards.

As well as acting talent, up-and-coming theatre directors, writers, designers and composers will be celebrated. The Stage Debut Awards will also include a Best West End Debut, the winner of which will be voted for by the public from a shortlist decided by The Stage's judging panel.

Shortlisted nominees will be announced in August, and invited to a star-studded awards ceremony at 8 Northumberland Avenue, London on September 17, 2017, when the winners will be revealed.

Breakthrough talent can be nominated for consideration by the judging panel at thestage.co.uk/debuts. The deadline for nominations is July 30, 2017.

Categories open for nominations include:

Best Actor in a Play

Best Actress in a Play

Best Actor in a Musical

Best Actress in a Musical

Best Director

Best Designer

Best Composer

Media:



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Best Writer

Best West End Debut

The Stage Debut Awards ceremony will also include a presentation for the Alan Bates Award for best drama school graduate.

The Stage Debut Awards is the flagship event of The Stage Supports. The Stage Supports is a series of groundbreaking interventions launched by The Stage, all with one aim: to nurture on and off-stage talent in theatre and the performing arts. The Stage Supports includes The Stage Scholarships which gives away more than £500,000 worth of drama training every year.

To find out more about The Stage Supports visit thestage.co.uk/supports.

Notes to editors

- The Stage reviewed Tom Hiddleston in his theatrical debut in Yorgjin Oxo - The Man at Theatre 503, London in December 2005. Alistair Smith, now print editor for The Stage, stated he gave an "outstanding central performance". The full review can be read here.
- Phoebe Waller-Bridge was awarded one of The Stage Awards for Acting Excellence at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2013 for her solo performance in Fleabag. The original news story announcing the winners can be found here.
- Idris Elba has stated in an interview that he got his first acting job after replying to an ad he found in The Stage newspaper. This was for a production at the Old Red Lion pub theatre. The full interview can be found here.
- The Stage Debut Awards website (thestage.co.uk/debuts) will be live from 00:01AM March 16, 2017.

About The Stage Debut Awards

- The Stage Debut Awards highlight breakthrough actors, writers, director, designers and composers to cement their position in the industry.
- Performers, writers, directors, designers and composers making their stage debut (and their agents) are encouraged to nominate themselves for consideration. Entries can be made at thestage.co.uk/debuts.
- An expert judging panel will meet in August 2017 to decide the shortlist and winners in all categories except Best West End Debut, which will be shortlisted by the judging panel and the winner decided by a public vote.
- Winners will be revealed at an awards ceremony held on September 17, 2017 at 8 Northumberland, London.

About The Stage

- Established in 1880, The Stage is a must read for those with an involvement or interest in the performing arts industry in the UK and beyond.
- The Stage offers nationwide theatre news, jobs, castings, reviews, and advice.
- The Stage is also responsible for the annual list of the 100 most influential people in theatre and the performing arts - The Stage 100, The Stage Awards, and The Stage Supports.

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Photo of Tom Hiddleston: jpg.

The Stage Debut Awards logo: jpg.

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