

September 2006

## Esther Richardson to leave Theatre Writing Partnership

**Esther Richardson today announced her resignation as Artistic Director of Theatre Writing Partnership after five and a half years' passionate commitment.**

Esther founded TWP as a new writing company to discover and develop the work of writers from the East Midlands. Under Esther's artistic leadership, the company has developed from a regional script-reading scheme into an Arts Council regularly-funded organisation. Writers who have been produced by the company include Stephen Lowe, Sue Townsend, Simon Bent, Amanda Whittington, Andy Barrett, Julius Ayodeji, Declan Keen, Laura Lomas, Jake Brunger and Leah Chillery.

Theatre Writing Partnership has enjoyed a growing reputation as one of the most important regional companies dedicated to new writing. Most recently, Esther produced the company's second sell-out Momentum Young Writers' Festival at Lakeside Arts Centre. The festival programme featured a successful run of Leah Chillery's first full-length play, *Earl of Mo'Bay*, which Esther directed. The company's previous theatre credits include the world premiere and tour of *Natural Breaks & Rhythms* by Julius Ayodeji; the world premiere of *Satin 'n' Steel* by Amanda Whittington (in association with Nottingham Playhouse and Bolton Octagon); the Peggy Ramsay Award-winning first Momentum Festival (which featured first productions of work by Declan Keen, Jake Brunger, Laura Lomas and Leah Chillery); *Get Shortie* (in association with

Nottingham Playhouse and Royal and Derngate Theatres, Northampton) which showcased short plays by Amanda Whittington, Andy Barrett, Sue Townsend and Jonathan Hall; *Season of Courage*, by writers including Stephen Lowe, Jonzi D and Dipo Agboluaje; and the *Eclipse Writers' Lab* which served as a launch pad into the industry for ten black playwrights, including Sonia Hughes, Linda Brogan and Dipo Agboluaje.

Esther Richardson said: *"Taking this decision has been difficult, but having taken TWP on this extraordinary journey – from its beginning as a regional script-reading scheme to its incorporation as an independent company – I have decided that it's now time for me to seek a new creative challenge. Following last week's sell-out Momentum Festival, this is exactly the right time to pass the baton on. I plan now to forge a career as a director and dramaturg, and hope to continue to develop many of the rewarding and inspirational relationships that I have made in the last five years."*

Rick Hall, TWP's Chairman, added: *"This is a fantastic opportunity for Esther to pursue a new direction, and the status and profile of the company is a brilliant testament to her drive, energy, enthusiasm and imagination. She leaves Theatre Writing Partnership as a vibrant, robust and creative force – a real gem in the landscape of regional arts in the East Midlands."*

For more information, please contact Theatre Writing Partnership on 0115 947 4361.