

## **Noma Dumezweni, Michael Grandage, Sonia Friedman, Preeya Kalidas and David Grindrod announced as five key ambassadors for The Stage Supports**

The Stage is delighted to announce five ambassadors for [The Stage Supports](#) - our campaign to celebrate and nurture on- and offstage talent in theatre and the performing arts.

With a total of **67 Olivier Awards** between them and ranging from actors to producers, the ambassadors will offer experience and insight from all areas of the performing arts and raise awareness of The Stage Supports. The five ambassadors are actor **Noma Dumezweni**, director **Michael Grandage**, producer **Sonia Friedman**, actor **Preeya Kalidas** and casting director **David Grindrod**.

**Noma Dumezweni, currently playing Hermione in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, said:** *“I’m very honoured to be a The Stage Supports ambassador. Having not got into drama school, I am fully aware of the importance of taking advantage of as many opportunities for support as you can when you’re starting out as an actor. I am very much looking forward to celebrating the next generation of actors at The Stage Debut Awards later this year.”*

**Olivier and Tony-winning director Michael Grandage said:** *“I have been committed for some time to supporting the next generation of theatre-makers through our charity, MGCfutures. We are able to give talented, aspiring young creatives an opportunity to develop their work and careers. The Stage Supports shares many of the same ideals which is why I am excited to join them, so we can work together to support even more young people to thrive in our industry.”*

**Producer Sonia Friedman, most influential person in theatre 2017<sup>[1]</sup>, said:** *“I am delighted to champion The Stage Supports. My company is constantly on the lookout for fresh, dynamic, curious and smart creative people within the theatre industry. So a scheme like this which supports the development of those people gets my full support. It is vital that we all shout about the creative opportunities and training available to safeguard a vital, strong industry for future generations.”*

**School of Rock actor Preeya Kalidas said:** *“I’m really excited to be a The Stage Supports Ambassador. It isn’t easy finding your place as an actress in the performing arts and The Stage Supports has initiatives that support and grow you as an actress and can really make a difference to your career.”*

**Casting director David Grindrod said:** *“The Debut 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.”*

The flagship event of The Stage Supports is **The Stage Debut Awards** which recognises professional debuts from actors, designers, directors, writers and composers. The inaugural awards ceremony will take place in September this year. Our ambassadors will help us celebrate new talent by **presenting awards** at the ceremony.

**The Stage Supports** is a collection of activities that help people at all phases of their careers in the performing arts. The initiatives include The Stage Scholarships providing **£500,000** worth of performing arts training. Other schemes in The Stage Supports include mental health support and a range of other awards recognising outstanding achievement on and off-stage.

**Editor of The Stage, Alistair Smith** said: “We were thrilled that these five ambassadors have become champions of the work The Stage Supports is doing. Their breadth of experience reflects the ambition of The Stage Supports and the impact the campaign we are undertaking can have for our industry.

“The Stage is the resource for everyone in the performing arts and in the current climate of funding cuts and uncertainty, it is more important than ever that we pull together to ensure that careers continue to be accessible and sustainable. The support of these high profile, industry powerhouses raises awareness of the work we do and the impact we can make. We are really looking forward to working with them.”

## **Notes for editors**

### **Ambassador bios**

**Noma Dumezweni** is a two-time Olivier Award winning English actress. Dumezweni **won Olivier awards** for best supporting actress in *A Raisin in the Sun* at the Lyric Hammersmith (2006) and for her current role as **Hermione Granger in Harry Potter** and *the Cursed Child* (2017). Other theatre credits include *The Bogus Woman* for The Red Room/Bush Theatre, *Carmen Disruption* for The Almeida Theatre and *Breakfast with Mugabe*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Winters Tale* for the RSC. She also starred in **Linda** at London's Royal Court Theatre, November 2015.

**Michael Grandage** is a multi-award winning director and producer, and the Artistic Director of the Michael Grandage Company. Previously he was Artistic Director of the Donmar Warehouse (2002-2012) and Sheffield Theatres (2000-2005). He is the recipient of **Tony, Drama Desk, Olivier, Evening Standard, Critics' Circle and South Bank Awards**. His work for MGC includes *Photograph*

51 with Nicole Kidman, Henry V with Jude Law and Peter and Alice with Judi Dench and Ben Whishaw and the feature film Genius with Colin Firth. He is also directed Red with Alfred Molina and Eddie Redmayne which won six Tony Awards including Best Director. Future work includes Disney's **Frozen on Broadway**. He launched MGCfutures (a registered charity) in 2013 to support and develop theatre-makers and theatre-goers of the future.

**Sonia Friedman** is a multi-Olivier Award winning producer and was this year named Producer of the Year for the third year running at The Stage Awards. Since 1990 she has developed, initiated and produced over 160 new productions. Friedman's recent productions include **Dreamgirls** at the Savoy Theatre, **The Ferryman** at the Royal Court and Gielgud Theatre, Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour at the Duke of York's Theatre and **Harry Potter and the Cursed Child** at the Palace Theatre. This year Friedman also topped The Stage 100, the list of the 100 most influential people in the UK performing arts becoming the first number one in the history of the compilation not to own or operate West End theatres and the first solo woman for almost 20 years.

**Preeya Kalidas** was cast after a worldwide search in the leading role of Priya in AR Rahmans Bombay Dreams produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Kalidas has been in hit film **Bend it Like Beckham** and starred in Empire Award winning film Four Lions. On Television Bafta Award winning Britz, Bafta nominated BBC series Bodies, regular in **Eastenders**, BBC Mistresses, BBC drama England Expects and played Carmen in BBC Bollywood Carmen Live. Theatre credits include at The Royal Court leading in plays Oxford Street and Khandan, in the West End The Narrator in the revival of **Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat** and nominated for an Olivier Award for her role as **Pinky in Bend it Like Beckham** the Musical . She is currently starring as one of the leads in Andrew Lloyd Webber's School of Rock.

**David Grindrod** is a musical theatre specialist casting director. Film and TV projects include Disney's **Beauty & the Beast**, Mamma Mia!, The Sound of Music LIVE and five Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical casting shows. Grindrod's musical theatre projects include **Mamma Mia!**, Matilda, Groundhog Day, The Commitments, Once, A Chorus Line, **School of Rock** and Sunset Boulevard. David Grindrod Associates are members of The Casting Directors Guild of Great Britain and David has been appointed as associate artist of the Old Vic Theatre under Matthew Warchus' artistic direction

[1] Sonia Friedman was The Stage 100 number 1 2017. The Stage 100 ranks the top 100 most influential people in the UK performing arts.

**About The Stage Supports**

- [The Stage Supports](#) is a series of groundbreaking initiatives launched with a range of industry partners, all with one aim: to nurture, celebrate and sustain on and off stage talent in theatre and the performing arts.
- The Stage Supports is made up of 12 initiatives. Initiatives include scholarships, internships, mental health advice and awards to recognise talent on and off-stage. [Find full information here](#).
- The flagship event of The Stage Supports is The Stage Debut Awards taking place in September 2017. 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](http://thestage.co.uk/debuts).

### **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.