

ALMEIDA THEATRE

PRESS RELEASE: Monday 16 October

The Almeida Theatre today releases the fifth instalment in the second series of digital film project *Figures of Speech*, with Russell Tovey performing American aviator Charles Lindbergh's 1941 'The War Agitators' speech.

Lindbergh's speech advocating US non-intervention in World War Two led to the coining of the term 'America First' and received condemnation for its allegedly anti-Semitic content.

The series concludes on Monday 23 October with a collection of films written and performed by group of Young Leaders, aged between 15-25, tackling a diverse range of subjects including masculinity, cuts to the prison system, the representation of Latin Americans in British society and Islamophobia.

All the films can be watched for free via a dedicated mini-site: speech.almeida.co.uk

Series two has previously featured Cush Jumbo delivering Malcolm X's 'The Language of Violence', Derek Jacobi reading Socrates' 'I Go To Die', Noma Dumezweni performing Margaret Sanger's 'The Morality of Birth Control' and John Heffernan with Harold Macmillan's 'The Winds of Change'. The films examine what leadership means and the power of the spoken word in the 21st century with a focus on rhetoric that initially received a hostile reaction and remains both divisive and provocative.

Alongside a growing anthology of films, the microsite features additional material exploring the speeches, the context within which they were first delivered and the choice to revive them in 2017. The site features guest-authored articles and filmed reactions from each performer alongside an audience of people from local community groups including Women Inspiring New Generations (WINGS), Finsbury Park Death Café, Freedom From Torture and Almeida Young Company.

The series two films have already received a combined total of over 40,000 views and have reached almost 300,000 people on social media. Series one has so far received 150,000 views and 110 million Twitter impressions, with Young Leader Jamie Flatters' video watched over 17,000 times and Ian McKellen's performance of Harvey Milk's 'The Hope Speech' viewed 68,000 times.

Figures of Speech is conceived by **Rupert Goold** and directed by **Anthony Almeida**. It is the Almeida's third major digital theatre event, following day-long durational readings of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in 2015, which inspired audiences of over 50,000 people across the UK and around the world.

ENDS

For all press enquiries and images, contact Alexander Milward, Press and Media Relations Manager, on 020 7288 4911 or amilward@almeida.co.uk

Notes to Editors

Anthony Almeida is currently the Link Artist of the Royal Opera House. In 2015 he was the Resident Director at the Almeida where his work as associate director included *The Odyssey*; *The Iliad*; *Oresteia* (also West End); and *Game*.

Rupert Goold is the Almeida's Artistic Director where he has previously directed *Ink* (now running in the West End), *Richard III* (which was broadcast live to cinemas around the world in July 2016), *Medea*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Charles III* (which transferred to West End and Broadway) and *American Psycho* (opened on Broadway in April 2016). His new production of Mike Bartlett's *Albion* opens in October. He was Artistic Director of Headlong from 2005 until 2013 where his work included *The Effect*, *ENRON*, *Earthquakes in London* and *Decade*. Other theatre credits include *Made in Dagenham* in the West End; *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* at the Almeida; *Macbeth* at Chichester Festival Theatre, in the West End and on Broadway; and *No Man's Land* at The Gate, Dublin and in the West End. He has twice been the recipient of the Laurence Olivier, Critics' Circle and Evening Standard Awards for Best Director. He was Associate Director at the Royal Shakespeare Company from 2009 to 2012 and was Artistic Director of Northampton Theatres from 2002 to 2005. On film he directed the BAFTA nominated *Richard II*, part of *The Hollow Crown*, and *Macbeth* for the BBC, feature *True Story* starring James Franco and Jonah Hill, and a television adaptation of his production of Mike Bartlett's *King Charles III* for BBC Two. Rupert was awarded a CBE for services to drama in the 2017 New Year's Honours.

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