

ALMEIDA THEATRE

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The Almeida Theatre today launches the third and final series of *Figures of Speech*, its major digital film project exploring the vitality of speech, the power of performance, and what visionary leadership sounds like.

The first instalment of series three is released today with **Andrew Scott** delivering American lawyer and judge **Edith Sampson's** 1965 speech '**Choose One of Five**' and continues over the next three weeks with films featuring **Amanda Abbington, Pearl Mackie, Tobias Menzies** and **Iwan Rheon**. They will perform significant speeches from pioneers, politicians and activists throughout history. The new films continue to examine what leadership means and the power of the spoken word in the 21st century.

A divided politics, a divided country, a divided people.

We've never needed leaders more.

Figures of Speech places history's greatest speeches centre stage through an anthology of films read by a range of actors released online, building a concert of dynamic voices and ideas from across the world as a dramatic response to social crisis.

The project launched in May 2017 and the first two series have featured speeches delivered by American politician Harvey Milk spoken by Ian McKellen; Virginia Woolf spoken by Fiona Shaw; Malcolm X spoken by Cush Jumbo; and American aviator Charles Lindbergh spoken by Russell Tovey.

Figures of Speech is available for free via a dedicated mini-site: speech.almeida.co.uk

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. The site features guest-authored articles and filmed reactions from performers and audiences of people from local communities with direct connections to the themes explored.

To complement the films, inspiring young leaders aged 15 – 25, from Bristol, Manchester, Cardiff and Liverpool, have been invited to respond with a speech of their own, crafted through an Almeida Participation programme, inviting previously unheard voices to share the platform. The Participation team will continue to work with young people in these regions offering leadership classes and workshops.

Figures of Speech series one and two have so far received a combined total of a quarter of a million views, both from clips on the Almeida's social media channels and the full-length films on YouTube. Ian McKellen's reading of Harvey Milk's 'Hope Speech' has had over 70,000 views through social media and YouTube. Overall *Figures of Speech* has reached over a million people through its social channels alone.

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.

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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 *Albion, Ink* (transferred to the West End in 2017/18), *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). 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. He is currently in production with new film *Judy*, starring Renée Zellweger. Rupert was awarded a CBE for services to drama in the 2017 New Year's Honours.

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