

Oration for Rose De Wend Fenton and Lucy Neal
To be held at 11am on Tuesday 23 July 2019
by Professor Andy Lavender

Vice-Chancellor

Our two honorary graduands this morning are Warwick graduates whose pioneering work has made a lasting difference to English theatre. I am delighted to introduce ROSE DE WEND FENTON and LUCY NEAL.

Rose and Lucy are co-founders and, until 2005, co-directors of LIFT – the London International Festival of Theatre. They embarked on this ambitious project in 1980, fresh from Warwick, where Rose studied English and Drama and Lucy English and Italian, inspired by an international student festival in Portugal: they aimed to create a London-based festival welcoming artists and theatre-makers from all over the world, at a time when British theatre was largely insular in outlook. Armed with a high degree of youthful optimism and a budget of £100,000, they successfully launched LIFT in 1981, and turned it into a biennial event. This was ground-breaking work, producing, promoting and commissioning contemporary artists from abroad, using spaces in the city not normally connected with theatrical productions, producing site-specific shows. LIFT introduced British audiences to theatre from around the world; unearthed new companies and artists previously unknown in Britain; programmed work by

artists censored or denied opportunities in their own countries; created a different type of arts festival, and developed ways of linking communities and artists. Their legacy has been LIFT's continuing success – last year, it reached audiences of around 160,000 – and its lasting effect on British theatre: LIFT, says Sir Mark Rylance, 'has done more to influence the growth and adventure of English theatre than any other organisation we have.' In 2005, Rose and Lucy were both awarded the OBE for services to drama and have written about their experiences in *The Turning World*.

Following LIFT, both Rose and Lucy have continued to work with the arts. Rose has been an international arts producer and adviser on projects worldwide. She has worked with Tipping Point, an organisation connecting artists and scientists to energise the creative response to climate change, and has been Chair of Without Walls, a consortium of leading British festivals, commissioning and producing work in the public realm. She has been involved in the training of arts practitioners: she was a founding member of the European Festivals Association's International Atelier for Young Festival Managers, and is a mentor for the Clore Leadership programme. She has served on the boards of a number of arts organisations and was co-author of an Arts, Culture and Creativity Strategy for London's Olympic Park following the 2012 Games. Lucy has worked as a theatre maker, writer and community activist, exploring how participatory and collaborative events can act as a catalyst for change, and

how the arts can nurture and provoke the changes needed to transition to a more ecological age. She is particularly interested in grassroots movements, such as the Transition movement, and in 2008 founded Transition Town Tooting. She is Associate on the Happy Museums Project which examines how museums can respond to the challenge of creating a more sustainable future. Her co-authored handbook, *Playing for Time*, is a resource for artists and community activists, exploring the pivotal role artists play in re-thinking the future.

At Warwick, we have followed the careers of Rose and Lucy with great interest and are proud to have played a part in their artistic development. We look forward to providing even greater opportunities for our students with the imminent establishment of our new School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures. Meanwhile, we welcome back ‘those two extraordinary cultural lightning conductors’, Rose Fenton and Lucy Neal.

Vice-Chancellor, in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, ROSE DE WEND FENTON AND LUCY NEAL.

610 words