FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

J. Productions, Milan in association with Cinema la Compagnia, Teatro della Pergola, the British Institute of Florence & The Florentine presents

Speaking Dante

24 hours. 100 cantos. Live in Florence. Streamed across the world.

A once-in-a-lifetime live reading of ***The Divine Comedy*** marking the Dante 700 anniversary

13th-14th September 2021, Cinema la Compagnia, Florence, Italy and online

Ralph Fiennes, Helen Mirren, Adjoa Andoh, Jessie Buckley, Dominic West, Stephen Dillane, Rupert Everett, Ian McDiarmid, Tim McInnerny and **John Nettles** contribute exclusive filmed readings interspersed with a diverse international live cast to read *The Divine Comedy*, to mark the 700th anniversary of Dante's death and raise funds for Italian refugee charity **Community of Sant'Egidio**.

For the first time ever, in celebration of Dante's astonishing legacy and his poem's enduring power and fascination, Milan theatre producer **Julia Holden**, in collaboration with award-winning UK playwright **Justin Butcher**, is curating a 24-hour marathon live reading in Florence of the whole of the *Divine Comedy*, in the acclaimed English translation by Robert & Jean Hollander, with a live audience & live-streamed across the world.

Speaking Dante is created by a team of top UK and international theatre professionals. Video designs by acclaimed artist **Damian Hale** drawing on the illustrations of **William Blake, Gustave Doré** and **Gabriele dell'Otto**, combine with music and sound by award-winning designer **Sebastian Frost** to conjure a richly textured, haunting immersive experience on stage and on screen.

Live on stage in Florence will be **Janice Acquah, Eleanor Butcher, Justin Butcher, Mary Chater, Clara Francesca, Andrew Harrison, Rupert Mason, Jan Noble, Amaka Okafor** and **Kenneth Omole.**

Filmed contributions from **Adjoa Andoh, Jessie Buckley, Janie Dee, Stephen Dillane, Rupert Everett, Ralph Fiennes, Kate Fleetwood, Janet Henfrey, Ian McDiarmid, Guy Masterson-Mastroianni, Tim McInnery, Helen Mirren, John Nettles, Dominic West** and **Brigid Zengeni**.

Speaking Dante will be hosted and live-streamed by the **Cinema la Compagnia** in Florence, in partnership with the **Teatro della Pergola**, the **British Institute of Florence** and ***The Florentine*** magazine, from 19:00 on Monday 13th September - 19:00 on Tuesday 14th September. Tickets are available from the Cinema la Compagnia box office, or online: https://www.cinemalacompagnia.it/evento/speaking-dante-24-ore-di-letture-della-divina-commedia/

Download promotional images here.

Speaking Dante's charity partner is the **Community of Sant'Egidio**, whose pioneering work supporting refugees and migrants in Italy includes the Schools of Language & Culture, the Humanitarian Corridors Project, the *Genti di Pace* (People of Peace) project and their work with the Roma People. *Speaking Dante* will raise funds for the **Schools of Language & Culture, Community of Sant'Egidio, Florence** - a vital, creative and empowering project enabling refugees and migrants to learn the Italian language and engage with Italian culture, an inspiring and transformational environment described as a 'workshop of the culture of co-existence'.

About Dante and *The Divine Comedy*

700 years ago, Dante fled his home city of Florence, a refugee from civil war and political persecution.

'I have travelled like a stranger, almost like a beggar, through virtually all the regions to which this tongue of ours extends, displaying against my will the wound of fortune … Truly I have been a ship without sail or rudder, blown … by the dry wind that painful poverty blows.'

Dante Alighieri, Convivio, circa 1304-1307

In these years of exile, Dante's *Divine Comedy* was conceived.

700 years on, his epic narrative poem continues to grip the imagination of countless artists, composers, film-makers, writers and academics across the world. Translated into more than one hundred languages, *The Divine Comedy* stands alongside the Bible and the works of Homer and Shakespeare as one of the ultimate pillars of literary creation in human history. A dream-journey through Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*) and Heaven (*Paradiso*) undertaken by the poet Dante himself, guided by the ancient Roman poet Virgil, in 100 *cantos* of some of the most sublime poetry ever written.

Echoing the theme of exile in Dante's life and work, the producing partners have decided that *Speaking Dante* will be a charity fundraising event, with all proceeds going to support projects working with refugees and migrants in Italy, specifically in Florence.

About the refugee situation in Florence

In response to the new flood of refugees unleashed by events in Afghanistan, the mayor of Florence, Dario Nardella, has described his city as 'open and ready to do its part,' writing on Twitter: 'We will welcome the women and refugees who manage to escape from Kabul and the violence of the Taliban.'

The founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio is the internationally renowned academic, politician and human rights activist, Professor Andrea Riccardi, who is also the current President of the Dante Society, *Società Dante Alighieri*. Read more about the Community's work with migrants and refugees here:
https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30100/langID/en/Migrants.html

Tu lascerai ogne cosa diletta più caramente; e questo è quello strale che l'arco de lo

essilio pria saetta.
You shall leave everything you love most dearly: this is the arrow that the bow of exile shoots first.
Dante Alighieri, Paradiso, Canto 17, 55-57

J. Productions, Milan and our producing partners acknowledge most gratefully the generous support of award-winning IP law firm Trevisan & Cuonzo, Milan, Parma, Rome & Bari. We are delighted also to acknowledge gratefully the support of the Karma Group international chain of boutique luxury hotels, who recently added to their magnificent array of 5-star destinations across the globe the exquisite Karma Borgo di Colleoli in the heart of Tuscany.

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