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**PRESS RELEASE**16 June 2017 **EMBARGOED UNTIL 17 JUNE 2017**

**DIRECTOR OF HALF MOON AWARDED BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL FOR SERVICES TO THEATRE AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE QUEEN’S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST**

**Chris Elwell**, the **Director and CEO of Half Moon**,has been recognised with a **British Empire Medal** in the **Queen’s Birthday Honours List 2017**,for **services to theatre and young people**.

Chris is a director, writer, trainer and theatre producer specialising in professional theatre for young audiences. He has a strong track record in the development of work with an emphasis upon social and disability inclusion.

Chris joined Half Moon in 1997 and it is now the UK’s leading small-scale young people’s venue and touring company, committed to supporting artists and young people at every stage of their creative development. He has directed over 30 pieces of work for family, teenage and community audiences and is also the curator of Exchange for Change, a development programme that challenges perceptions of theatre for young audiences.

Reintroduced in 2012 to coincide with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the British Empire Medal is awarded to people who have made a significant difference for their ‘hands-on’ service to the local community.

Chris explained what it means to him to receive the medal: “It is humbling and totally unexpected to have been nominated, and subsequently awarded, this magnificent honour in the Queen’s Birthday List. It is an award for the entire Half Moon community, past and present, and it is a privilege to have worked with so many talented people over the years. By accepting this award I honour the young people, parents, carers, core and freelance staff, artists, theatre makers, trustees and other members of the wider community who make Half Moon such an inclusive and progressive organisation. Thank you.”

**Julian Sutton**, the **Chair of Half Moon**, said: “Chris is a tireless champion of young people's arts. He is a representative voice for an audience which has no voice on a national platform. Few theatre directors work so hard on behalf of their audience to ensure that they are recognised and heard. We all want to make an impact with the art we produce, but Chris has done this not only on an artistic level but also on a social level. He has benefitted countless individuals, but more than that, quietly, diligently and steadfastly he has impacted the entire children’s theatre sector.”

**Jenny Sealey MBE, CEO and Artistic Director of Graeae Theatre Company**, said: “Chris is always pushing the boundaries of perception about what theatre for young people is. His tenacity has allowed Half Moon to go from strength to strength, securing a future for theatre for young audiences.”

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

For further information or to arrange interviews and photographs please contact Stephen Beeny on 020 7709 8907 or stephen@halfmoon.org.uk

A selection of images can be downloaded from Dropbox at the link below: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/o284kdayjoiufq9/AABe2mNxCE0PBZ8fEBbJjH3ua?dl=0>

**ABOUT HALF MOON**
Half Moon is the UK’s leading small-scale young people’s venue and touring company. It is a local organisation with a national remit, committed to supporting artists and young people at every stage of their creative development. Working from their base in East London, Half Moon specialises in new writing and artform development, acting as a gateway organisation that provides pathways for progression and experimentation. Half Moon’s wide-ranging programme reaches 50,000 people annually and engages those who are often excluded from arts activity. Half Moon’s activity includes a season of professional plays for young audiences, national touring productions and an extensive creative learning programme, including seven youth theatres.

Half Moon is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and receives regular funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Half Moon’s digital archive is available at [www.stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk](http://www.stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk)

Website: [www.halfmoon.org.uk](http://www.halfmoon.org.uk)
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/halfmoontheatre](http://www.facebook.com/halfmoontheatre)
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