**Arts 2006**

**Tamsin Greig**
Actor

I chose to go back to theatre after 10 years of being away, and having had three children. I'd fallen out of love with the stage, I suppose. But suddenly I was onstage in Stratford, thinking, "Who made me do this?"

We spent four and a half months rehearsing, and I thought that would have given me time to grow. But we talk about female comics, but I don't put myself in that box.

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**Dance**
Judith Mackrell

A rash of mixed marriages produced erotic results in 2006. Two could predict what Sylvie Guillem and Akram Khan would look like in their collaboration Sacred Monsters. Physically, Sacred Monsters is all rearranged vertebrae, Khan solid gravity, her tremors and the sheen of studio European classicism, she south Asian.

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**Middletown deal sealed**
Quintain signs to develop 'iconic' Aslop scheme

Plans for the largest carbon neutral development in the UK on Middletown's waterfront are set to go ahead after a contract was signed this week. Developer Berrington Quintain has agreed terms to build the Middletown project, which includes 750 homes, offices, shops, bars, cafés and restaurants. Based largely on a masterplan by architect Will Alsop for urban regeneration company Thames Valley Regeneration, the scheme will be built on land owned by national regeneration agency English Partnerships. It already has planning permission.

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**Chief's inquiry**
City-region project

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Several council leaders involved in a cross-borough economic development partnership on the Leeds region's offer have talked this week about various degrees of concern about the project. The Leeds City Regional Development Programme, which brings together 10 councils, has been under threat of being ended under new regional rules. But a leader of one of the councils branded it "a fake bus service".

The 11 councils have worked in formal collaboration throughout the past two years on a package of transport and skills schemes. Following its formal launch, the LCRDP will elect a chair and head of local leaders and put in joint bids to go forward with ideas for funding. But the city council leader of Bradford, Chris Hopkinson, said: "We have just had the chance to be a credible vehicle that is fit for purpose." He said that without effective leadership, the LCRDP is incapable of making realistic bids for funding. The Government this week announced a £250m fund for Transport Innovation Fund cash.

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**Will Alsop**
Architect

It's very sad that the British press are beginning to do the Olympics what they did to the Millennium Dome. For me, the sad thing about the Olympics is that it is the perfecting of the genuine talent we have - the new capital, due to a severe dose of risk aversion. Next year, I hope we might see some of the old guard of London moving overseas. I'm talking about the water, the site. Londoners are talking about the water. It's turning on its side, and the new ones are talking about the water. They have been a fantastic job - but it's time for change.

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**City chief's mayor's skills deputy**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

By Holly Sutton

London mayor Ken Livingstone has appointed Harvey McGrath as his vice-chair on the capital's new skills and employment board.

McGrath, chair of business organisation London First, will be deputy to the mayor, who chairs the board. He will be charged with ensuring that the new board meets in statutory duty to improve adult skills.

In July, the London Assembly's economy committee chair Ruth Kelly decided to transfer some responsibilities for skills development from the London Learning and Skills Council to the mayor's via the new board (R,E, 4 August, p4).

McGrath is the first known appointment to the board. He will help direct the creation of an adult skills strategy for London. Negotiation and business network East London Business Alliance and a Growing to power a Tower Hamlets College. Livingstone described him as a "highly respected leader of the London business community".

Following his appointment as vice-chair of the new board, McGrath has called for the current skills training in London as "not fit for purpose".

He said: "London has the highest unemployment in the country and we need more measures to reconnect people to jobs. I'm looking forward to working with the mayor to tackle this challenge and get business re-engaged." The Institution of Economic Development spokesman Ian MacKinnon said: "Mr McGrath would be invaluable in understanding what was needed to improve Londoners' skills due to his extensive business experience." He added: "He has been a lot of potential and it's important to have employers at this high level (on the board) so they know what skills are there and can make the board work for them."