Good evening and welcome to the House of Fraser British Academy Television Awards.

For those of you who have come over from America, the British weather is always like this – honestly.

When I look down the list of nominations here tonight, I must say I feel very proud of the television industry we have in this country. The strength in depth across all the genres is remarkable. As we go through this evening’s ceremony we will be reminded of some truly brilliant moments, the dramas, the comedies, the documentaries, the live events and the performances that engaged and enthralled us over the last year.

And talking about brilliance, today is the 90th birthday of Sir David Attenborough – many happy returns to him.

It’s the extraordinary talent base we have in Britain which underpins this success of our industry – by which I mean all of you! Just a fortnight ago BAFTA celebrated behind-the-scenes talent at the Television Craft Awards, the list of winners you’ll find in your brochure. Tonight we focus on the performance categories and the programmes themselves. Together they add up to a television industry which is the envy of the world. We must never take it for granted. The future of our industry is continually at stake and the particular broadcasting ecology we have evolved here is serving us well. Whatever changes lie ahead, and change is inevitable in such fast paced world, we have to find a way of ensuring that the range and quality we see here tonight is preserved.

Our nominations got the nation talking not least because this is the most diverse list of nominations any of us can remember. That’s a cause for celebration too. The concerted efforts of broadcasters, independent producers and organisations like ourselves seem to be paying dividends, though the history of progress in diversity is often a case of two steps forward, one step back so we can’t relax or feel our work here is done.

So BAFTA continues its work to encourage and support talented people of all backgrounds and help them overcome the barriers to entering our industry, through initiatives such as Breakthrough Brits, scholarships and mentoring opportunities. Last weekend our Guru Live festival took place in London, bringing talented newcomers together with experts who shared their advice, experiences and skills. If you were there, many, many thanks for being part of it and giving something back. Our keynote lectures are now available on the BAFTA Guru website.

One man who’s done more than most to promote diversity in this industry, on top of a stellar creative career, is the brilliant Lenny Henry, who receives our special award tonight. And as we look to the future, it is important we recognise where we’ve come from and acknowledge those who defined and pioneered television as we know it today. Galton and Simpson are icons of television comedy and we look forward to honouring their contribution with the fellowship later on tonight.

Thanks to all our sponsors and partners, who make all that we do at BAFTA possible, particularly our title sponsors, House of Fraser and our audience award sponsors, Radio Times. Thank you to Whizz Kid Entertainment, Freuds and the BBC. My thanks also to the brilliant BAFTA team – Amanda Berry, Kevin Price, Emma Baehr, Kelly Smith, Clare Brown - and the Television Committee, led by Chair Krishnendu Majumdar and Deputy Chair Emma Morgan.

All that's left to say is relax and enjoy your evening, and Mr Hiddleston, where are you? Oh there you are. Thanks to Peter Kay, we're operating a car share scheme tonight so I'll be giving you a lift home afterwards. Don't look worried, I know a good short cut.