

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE'S LITERATURE & SPOKEN WORD WINTER '26/27 PROGRAMME

Forward planner: Tuesday 8 September 2026, 9am GMT

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Press images: [HERE](#)



Sarah Wynn-Williams. Photo by Tom Trevatt.

The **Literature & Spoken Word Winter Season** follows hot on the heels of the latest edition of London Literature Festival, curated by Dua Lipa, and spotlights inspiring figures, household names and emerging talent from across the literary landscape. Rounding off its 75th anniversary year and stepping into 2027, the Southbank Centre presents a bold and wide-reaching programme designed to reach new audiences and inspire a love for reading in all ages.

Highlights include:

- Meta whistleblower **Sarah Wynn-Williams** delivers the 2026 Orwell lecture on 26 November 2026.
- **Indie Night** returns on 4 December 2026 and 26 February 2027, platforming the best of independent publishing.

- Readings from the shortlists of the **Booker Prize**, hosted by Sara Collins (8 November 2026) and the **TS Eliot Prize**, hosted by Ian McMillian (17 January 2027).
- Writers Mary Beard, Paul Muldoon, Gwendoline Riley and Ben Markovits discuss the state of literature to celebrate **The TLS at 125** on 30 January 2027.
- Regular favourites including **Out-Spoken** and **Rug Rhymes** return (various dates from 13 November 2026).

Ted Hodgkinson, Head of Literature & Spoken Word, says: *"I'm proud to be wrapping up both the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary year and my own tenure as Head of Literature & Spoken word on such a high, as our winter season moves between tackling urgent issues and spotlighting underrepresented writers and indie presses. We'll be building on the success of another London Literature Festival and looking ahead to a bold and brilliant 2027."*

Mark Ball, Artistic Director at the Southbank Centre, says: *"The final act of our 75th year promises to be truly extraordinary, with a programme of events ranging from poetry to politics, from babes in arms to 125th birthdays. Carrying forward the democratic spirit of the 1951 Festival of Britain, this Literature & Spoken Word winter season encapsulates our work to provide a space for open discussion and debate, and to inspire a lifelong love of reading across all generations."*

Press Images: [HERE](#)

FULL LISTINGS:

Special Edition: Little Betty Live

Wed 4 Nov, 8pm, National Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall

A meet-up bringing together innovative poets from all three years of the Little Betty imprint - listen to readings, meet authors and discover their work

Out-Spoken Masterclass: November

Sun 8 Nov, 1pm, Sunley Pavilion, Royal Festival Hall

Get your creative juices flowing as you work with a leading poet to develop your craft in this three-hour weekend poetry workshop

The Booker Prize 2026 Shortlist Readings

Sun 8 Nov, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Meet the six authors up for this year's Booker Prize, as they read from and discuss their shortlisted books with novelist Sara Collins

Playback Poetics: London Review of Books

Tue 10 Nov, 7.30pm, National Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall

Come together for a vinyl listening session and be transfixed by new recordings of poems originally published in the *London Review of Books*

Rug Rhymes: Winter

Various dates, 11am, National Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall

Share your favourite nursery rhymes and learn new ones in a playful session for under-5s

Mona Chalabi: How What We Have Shapes Who We Are

Wed 18 Nov, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

The award-winning writer talks about her first book, a real account of the ways in which wealth - or the lack of it - shapes our lives[

Thought Leadership Lecture: Jeremy Deller

Wed 18 Nov, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

The Turner Prize-winning artist gives the Cultural Philanthropy Foundation Lecture, exploring culture as something shared, contested and inescapably political

Kate Atkinson: Our Noble Selves

Sat 21 Nov, 2pm, Purcell Room

One of the greatest chroniclers of our times introduces her latest novel, a clever and compelling tale of a war-scarred journalist in post-World War Two London

The Orwell Lecture 2026: Sarah Wynn-Williams

Thu 26 Nov, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

The lawyer and former director of global public policy at Facebook delivers this year's Orwell Lecture, which was set up to shine a light on brave writing

Special Edition: A Razmik Davoyan Celebration

Wed 2 Dec, 8pm, National Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall

Mark the 85th anniversary of the renowned Armenian poet with an evening of readings and music honouring his powerful poetic voice and enduring artistic legacy

Indie Night: December

Fri 4 Dec, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Uncover books from independent publishers that defy the ordinary at our regular night of readings and discussion with hosts Eliza Clark and Okechukwu Nzelu

TS Eliot Prize Shortlist Readings

Sun 17 Jan, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall

Hear the best new poetry coming out of the UK and Ireland, read by the ten shortlisted poets for this year's prize and hosted by poet Ian McMillan

TS Eliot Prize Shortlist Readings: Live Stream

Sun 17 Jan, 7.30pm, Online

Tune in to the live stream of the UK's biggest live poetry event, to hear readings by the shortlisted authors, hosted by poet and broadcaster Ian McMillan

Stadio Live

Sat 23 Jan, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Take a fresh look at football with co-hosts Musa Okwonga and Ryan Hunn, as a live show of the podcast brings laughs and cultural references to the table

Out-Spoken Masterclass: January

Sun 24 Jan, 1pm, Sunley Pavilion, Royal Festival Hall

Learn the art of poetry from an expert in the field at a three-hour weekend workshop

Out-Spoken: January

Thu 28 Jan, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Poet and author Joelle Taylor hosts our regular night of London's most irresistible poetry and music, featuring up-and-coming artists and established names

For the Love of Great Writing: The TLS at 125

Sat 30 Jan, 8pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Authors Mary Beard, Paul Muldoon, Gwendoline Riley and Ben Markovits discuss: how do we define great literature today, and why is criticism still essential?

Indie Night: February

Fri 26 Feb, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Books that defy the ordinary: host Okechukwu Nzelu introduces four writers published by independent presses in this edition of our monthly series

Out-Spoken Masterclass: February

Sun 28 Feb, 1pm, Sunley Pavilion, Royal Festival Hall

Sharpen your poetry skills at this month's edition of our three-hour weekend workshops led by international poets

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra). The Southbank Centre's 75th Anniversary Season is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. www.southbankcentre.co.uk.