



SOUTHBANK CENTRE

MULTITUDES

AN EVENING WITH AN IMMIGRANT

Sunday 26 April 2026, 7.30pm | Queen Elizabeth Hall

Welcome to *Multitudes*, our multi-arts festival powered by orchestral music. We're bringing together some of the world's finest classical music ensembles – including our six Resident Orchestras – for collaborations with an incredible range of artists from different art forms. Together, we're creating a new way for you to encounter the enduring power of classical music, with unique, adventurous, boundary-breaking concerts. It's a musical experience like no other!

Mark Ball, Artistic Director, Southbank Centre

Fuel presents *An Evening with an Immigrant*

Written and performed by Inua Ellams
Original music by Laura Mvula
Performed with Chineke! Orchestra
Directed by Josette Bushell-Mingo
BSL interpretation by Jacqui Beckford
Commissioned by Fuel
Produced by Fuel, Southbank Centre and Chineke!
Orchestra
Supported by Choose Love
Fuel is a PRS Foundation Talent Development
Network Partner supported by PPL

An Evening with an Immigrant is an acclaimed solo show written and performed by Inua Ellams; this new version features a breathtaking original score composed by Laura Mvula and performed live by Chineke! Orchestra.

Born to a Muslim father and a Christian mother in what is now considered by many to be Boko Haram territory, in 1996 award-winning poet and playwright Inua Ellams left Nigeria for England aged 12, moved to Ireland for three years, before returning to London and starting work as a writer and graphic designer.

In a show littered with poems, stories and anecdotes, Ellams tells his ridiculous, fantastic, poignant immigrant-story of escaping fundamentalist Islam, performing solo shows at the National Theatre, and drinking wine with the Queen of England, all the while without a country to belong to or place to call home. In this exciting new collaboration, Ellams' performance is interwoven with Mvula's rich, expansive score, transporting audiences on a journey around and out of this world.

MUSIC

Laura Mvula Original score (World premiere)

1. Beginning
2. Of All the Boys
3. Ghetto Van Gogh
4. Shame is the Cape
5. Johnny Basse
6. Private School
7. Dear Tina
8. Midnight Music Marauders
9. Twenty Five
10. Defiant/Definite
11. Ending

PERFORMERS

Chineke! Orchestra

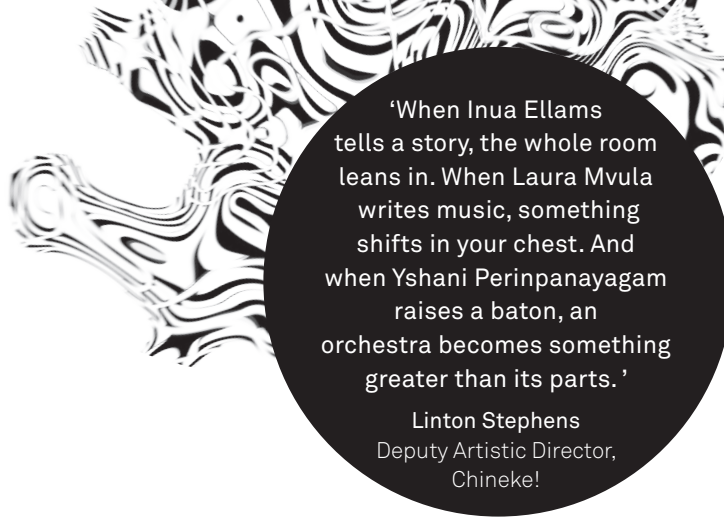
Yshani Perinpanayagam *conductor*

Inua Ellams *writer and performer*

Run time (approx.): 1 hour and 30 minutes, with no interval



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE ALL
THE EVENTS IN MULTITUDES



‘When Inua Ellams tells a story, the whole room leans in. When Laura Mvula writes music, something shifts in your chest. And when Yshani Perinpanayagam raises a baton, an orchestra becomes something greater than its parts.’

Linton Stephens
Deputy Artistic Director,
Chineke!

With the world premiere of the orchestral version of *An Evening with an Immigrant*, I’m trying to reach new audiences to effect change in immigration rhetoric and government policies. I’m thrilled to be working with Laura Mvula, whose songs have soundtracked the first decade of the show; collaborating with her to create a new iteration is exciting and new for both of us. She is phenomenal – a generational talent, and I am humbled by her range, heart, ambition and drive.

It’s been ten years since I first performed the original show and it is no less relevant now than then. It started by accident; I had a deadline to perform something, anything, and hastily cobbled together old poems, placed them in chronological order and titled the performance *An Evening with an Immigrant* because I felt ‘An Evening with Inua Ellams’ was too grandiose. Between the poems, I share my story of leaving Nigeria aged 12, of living with an uncertain immigration status despite being a celebrated artist, of being invited to Buckingham Palace before the Home Office granted me settled status.

The week before the original show opened, the EU referendum happened, and migration issues made news headlines. In the following years the policies around migration and immigration changed, and I committed to not just change the show accordingly but localise it whenever and wherever it was performed – from Australia, to Italy, the USA, to here in England.

Ten years have passed since; what the world has taught me is that migration is natural and instinctual. We humans are the only animals that criminalise this instinct, which alienates us from the planet and our past, but makes us incompatible with the climate and our future; we need to move. We always have, and we always will. No one is illegal. In an age of anti-immigration rhetoric, I think this is important to say loudly, and proudly.

© Inua Ellams, 2026

Ten years on from the premiere of Inua Ellams’ powerful personal story of his experience of migration, its message and call for change is sadly no less urgent. Fuel is thrilled that Laura Mvula has accepted our commission to create an orchestral score for the extraordinary Chineke! Orchestra to perform with Inua, and to be presenting the world premiere of this new work with the Southbank Centre at *Multitudes* and in partnership once again with Choose Love. We look forward to welcoming audiences to this very special event.

© Kate McGrath, Artistic Director & CEO, Fuel

FUEL

Fuel is an award-winning producer of shows, installations, festivals, films, radio, podcasts and books. Current/recent projects include Khalid Abdalla’s *Nowhere*, Racheal Ofori’s *FLIP!*, and Russell Tovey and Neil Bartlett’s *BLUE NOW*.

CHINEKE! ORCHESTRA

Chineke! Orchestra is Resident Orchestra at the Southbank Centre, performing at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Royal Festival Hall throughout the year. Chineke! regularly undertakes tours across Europe and North America.

INUA ELLAMS – WRITER AND PERFORMER

Theatre includes: *The 14th Tale* (Fuel/Arcola/National Theatre/UK tour); *Black T-Shirt Collection* (UK/World tour); *Barber Shop Chronicles* (Fuel/National Theatre/Leeds Playhouse); *Three Sisters* (Fuel/National Theatre); *The Calm* (RSC); *The Half-God of Rainfall* (Kiln); *Once Upon a Time in Sokoto* (Fuel; winner of the Alfred Fagon Award). Ellams is founder of The Midnight Run and The Rhythm and Poetry Party (The R.A.P. Party), which celebrates poetry and hip-hop.

LAURA MVULA – COMPOSER

Laura Mvula is a critically acclaimed songwriter, composer and recording artist. Awards include: two Ivor Novello Awards, two MOBOs and BRIT nods, and three Mercury Prize nominations. Festival appearances include Glastonbury, Coachella, North Sea and New Orleans Festival. Other credits include: the BBC Proms, RSC’s 2017 production of *Anthony and Cleopatra* and 2023 Netflix series *Everything Now*.

JOSETTE BUSHELL-MINGO – DIRECTOR

Josette Bushell-Mingo OBE is Principal and CEO of The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Artistic Director for The National Black Theatre of Sweden. Bushell-Mingo is an award-winning actor and director whose credits include the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester.

JACQUI BECKFORD – BSL INTERPRETER

Credits include: Graeae Theatre Co., former Chair of the Learning and Participation committee at Brixton House, Interpreters of Colour Network, Rose Bruford College; pilot theatre and performance pathway for BSL interpreters. Beckford has interpreted for Michelle Obama, Angela Davis, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ketanji Brown Jackson and at the 2012 Olympics.

CHINEKE! ORCHESTRA

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VIOLIN I

Julian Azkoul
Elodie Chousmer-Howelles
Blaize Henry

VIOLIN II

Steven Crichlow
Kourosh Ahmadi
Raye Harvey

VIOLA

Nikki Hicks
Manuel Camara

CELLO

James Douglas
Zara Hudson-Kozdoj

DOUBLE BASS

Telmo Martins

FLUTE

Deronne White

CLARINET / SAXOPHONE

Mebrakh Haughton-Johnson

TRUMPET

Ucheena Cohen-Shah

TROMBONE

Chris Augustine

PERCUSSION

Jason Chowdhury

KIT

Sacha Johnson

KEYS

Judah Daniels

ELECTRIC GUITAR

Shirley Tetteh

UPRIGHT BASS

Karl Onibuje

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- ▶ [Yshani Perinpanayagam](#)
 - ▶ [Inua Ellams](#)
- ▶ southbankcentre.co.uk