

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

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Images: [HERE](#)

Amelia Dimoldenberg, Ash Sarkar and Olly Alexander to lead 'Letters To The Future' weekend at Southbank Centre

Leading cultural figures tackle the biggest issues of our time in a programme which spotlights and celebrates youthful perspectives on the future.



L-R: Amelia Dimoldenberg (credit: Laura Scaeffler), Ash Sarkar (credit: Jonathan Ring), Olly Alexander (credit: Hugo Yangüela)

The Southbank Centre today announces a new youth-powered weekender '**Letters To The Future**' (18–20 September) spotlighting the cultural leaders of the next generation.

Internationally renowned creators, writers, activists, thinkers and multi-hyphenate stars **Amelia Dimoldenberg**, **Olly Alexander**, **Mya-Rose Craig** and **Rebecca F. Kuang** curate panel discussions tackling the biggest issues of the moment, whilst lecturer, broadcaster and bestselling author **Ash Sarkar** delivers the inaugural Southbank Centre Annual Lecture. Complementing these events is a rich interdisciplinary programme including talks, performances, free gigs, DJs sets, and spoken word.

Inspired by the embrace of culture and innovation as a “tonic for the nation” during the 1951 Festival of Britain – the catalyst for the building of the Royal Festival Hall and ultimately the birth of the Southbank Centre itself – 'Letters To The Future' champions the creativity and perspective of young people. The weekend foregrounds the voices of the generation who will inherit our society and steer it through its next 75 years; a generation disproportionately affected by the decisions of those who came before them. Across a series of creative, cross-arts events, emerging talents and cultural leaders will take to the stage to confront and construct their visions of the future.

The pinnacle of the weekend is the first in an annual series of Southbank Centre Lectures, in which a leading public figure will address the urgent issues of our time through the lens of art and culture. For its inaugural edition, journalist and activist Ash Sarkar will present '**The Future of**

Relationships' (20 Sep) exploring how our complex web of interpersonal connections will continue to shift and change as we move deeper into the digital age.

Ash Sarkar, journalist and activist said: *"What has happened since we allowed Silicon Valley to turn love into a commodity? The apps promised us endless possibilities for connection – and they delivered loneliness, ghosting, and disenchantment. We can't live without food, water, and shelter; but we have no future as a species without love. I'm delighted to join the Letters to the Future programme, and celebrate the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary. The Southbank Centre has been the beating heart of cultural life in London, integral in bringing the avant garde to the mainstream, and I'm honoured to be a part of it."*

Also taking place across the weekend will be four panel discussions put together by our guest curators and tackling some of the most significant issues of our time. Amelia Dimoldenberg explores **The Future of Digital Media** (18 Sep); Olly Alexander considers **The Future of Queer Storytelling** (19 Sep), Rebecca F. Kuang interrogates **The Future of Education** (19 Sep), and Mya-Rose Craig asks us to look **Beyond the Climate Crisis** (20 Sep). Each curator will convene and participate in a panel discussion with peers, experts and collaborators to unpick some of the knottiest questions facing society today in what promises to be an invigorating and uplifting series.

Amelia Dimoldenberg: The Future of Digital Media (18 Sep), said: *"I've spent my career navigating the world of digital media (and chicken shops) and I couldn't be more excited to bring this panel together! The digital space is constantly evolving, and there are so many incredible ways for young people to create something fantastic, on their own terms. I am excited to delve into how to create meaningful work, and how to stand out in a field that's getting louder every minute."*

Olly Alexander: The Future of Queer Storytelling (19 Sep), said: *"I'm really looking forward to being a part of Letters To The Future and exploring the journey queer storytelling has taken and where it might go next. I'm interested in what it means to tell queer stories and how our culture's shifting attitudes affect them. From the stories we tell ourselves, to the stories we grow up surrounded by, I believe story telling shapes all of us. I've been coming to the Southbank Centre since I was 15 years old so to be hosting a panel here feels very special."*

Rebecca F. Kuang: The Future of Education (19 Sep), said: *"As my dark academia novels might suggest, I've spent nearly half my life involved in higher education – and I've been hearing, throughout that time, that the university is under existential threat. I'm a graduate student transitioning to a role as professor at the same time that institutions are under pressure from Large Language Models, political censorship, funding cuts, and tuition costs. But I'm not interested in just writing dystopias! I want to reimagine what a university should look like, and bring together some thinkers already doing the work to reform higher education into something that truly serves those who need it the most."*

Mya-Rose Craig: Beyond the Climate Crisis (20 Sep), said: *"We're standing at a cultural crossroads where the focus must shift from merely surviving the climate crisis to consciously designing what comes next. I am honoured to curate this panel of peers, friends, and experts to explore the architecture of a post-crisis world, one built on equity and a radical realignment with nature. We will ask what work needs to be done to ensure we never return to the brink, and how to dismantle our existing behaviours and transform our core values. There are lots of reasons to be hopeful as we figure out how to build a better future for everyone."*

Other highlights of the 'Letters To The Future' weekend include:

- Responding to the themes of the four curated panels, up-and-coming artists and DJs will take to the stage in the Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer for special 'Letters To The Future' editions of **futuretense**, the Southbank Centre's bimonthly platform for the best and brightest talent in new music (18, 19 and 20 Sep).
- In the Queen Elizabeth Hall, **Inua Ellams** will host a special future-focused edition of his **Rhythm and Poetry Party (RAP Party)** in collaboration with **Out-Spoken**, asking how our concerns for the future might be cast in verse and easing existential anxiety with a dose of house-party chill (18 Sep).
- **Southbank Centre Presents** deliver two galvanising talks asking big questions about the future. Architects, community organisers and artists reimagine the home and explore alternative models of living in **Reimagining Shared Spaces: The Future of Housing** (Purcell Room, 19 Sep), while leading thinkers, artists and theorists dig deep into the power and politics of the visual image in **The Future of Images in a Post-Truth Era** (Purcell Room, 20 Sep).
- Celebrating its 70th birthday this year, the **National Youth Theatre** asks what you would say to your younger or future self in this powerful showcase from the future stars of stage and screen (Royal Festival Hall, 20 Feb).

Mark Ball, Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre, says: *"The Southbank Centre is committed to being an arts centre of the future, placing young people and their immense potential at the heart of all we do. As such, it feels fitting to dedicate this weekend to spotlighting their perspectives on some of the most pressing issues of our time. We can't wait to welcome four cultural trailblazers from the next generation, who have worked with us to shape the weekend and bring together a series of panels that put a youthful perspective firmly at the heart of our programme".*

Ted Hodgkinson, Head of Literature & Spoken Word at the Southbank Centre, says: *"At its heart, Letters To The Future is about giving space to the creators who are deeply attuned to the aspirations of young people today. We've invited these cultural leaders to look past the horizon and, through their fierce imaginative power, help us project a vision of what's next—from the digital landscape to our most intimate connections. With a host of DJs, live spoken word, and major collaborations from Out-Spoken x RAP Party to the National Youth Theatre, the weekend promises to be a hopeful, empowering, and insightful celebration of youth culture today and tomorrow."*

Letters To The Future and the Summer Literature programme follows hot on the heels of the announcement that Dua Lipa will curate the London Literature Festival this autumn (see [here](#)).

The unmissable Summer season will also feature the return of **Indie Night** (Wed 24 June), the new quarterly series celebrating the bold and vital work of independent presses and the authors they publish. Other standout events from the season include the **Booker Prize 2026 Shortlist Announcement** (22 Sep); influential thinker **Kimberlé Crenshaw** presents her memoirs (23 May); British icons **Frank Cottrell-Boyce** (11 Jun) and **Paul Smith** (10 Sep) offer insights into their new works, and an evening of spoken word and music will celebrate Laurie Lee with **Red Sky at Sunrise: Laurie Lee in Words and Music** (16 Jul).

The Summer programme is included in the listings below. Tickets for the Summer season go on sale on Thursday 2 April.

The Southbank Centre's literature and spoken word programme is generously supported by Bukhman Philanthropies.

#ENDS#

EVENT LISTINGS

Kimberlé Crenshaw: Backtalker

Sat 23 May, 2pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

One of today's most influential thinkers, Kimberlé Crenshaw delivers a deeply engaging story of justice and power in the US through her memoir *Backtalker*.

Molly Crabapple: Here Where We Live Is Our Country

Wed 27 May, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Join us for the London book launch of Molly Crabapple's highly anticipated new history of the Bund – once the most influential Jewish political force in Europe.

Édouard Louis: Collapse

Fri 5 Jun, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Once-in-a-generation writer Édouard Louis unwraps his two groundbreaking new works in conversation with Tash Aw.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce: A British Childhood

Thu 11 Jun, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Real homes, real streets, real lives – writer Frank Cottrell-Boyce tells the moving and often deeply damning story of 21st-century childhoods in Britain.

Dave Eggers: Contrapposto

Wed 1 Jul, 8pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Art, life and the complicated beauty of both – Dave Eggers celebrates the launch of his novel, joined in conversation by author Nick Hornby.

European Poetry Festival: Latvia

Wed 1 July, 7pm, National Poetry Library

Hear new work by contemporary European poets and their Britain-based counterparts in the UK's biggest celebration of continental poetry, hosted by SJ Fowler.

Out-Spoken Masterclass: July

Sun 5 Jul, 1pm, Sunley Pavillion

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

Anish Kapoor in conversation with Darian Leader

Wed 8 Jul, 8pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Enter the remarkable world of Anish Kapoor: the internationally celebrated artist shares rare insight into his work with author and psychoanalyst Darian Leader.

Benjamin Zephaniah: A Celebration

Fri 10 Jul, 8pm, Royal Festival Hall

An evening of poetry, music and memories to celebrate the life and legacy of the *'people's poet'*, Benjamin Zephaniah. Co-hosted by Lemn Sissay and Pauline Black, who will be joined by a line-up of Zephaniah's admirers and collaborators reflecting on his enduring influence through readings and personal tributes.

Red Sky at Sunrise: Laurie Lee in Words and Music

Thu 16 Jul, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

This captivating adaptation of Laurie Lee's celebrated autobiographical trilogy weaves together music and words to celebrate Lee's engaging humour, as well as his darker side.

Actors Anton Lesser and Charlie Hamblett and the Orchestra of the Swan trace Lee's journey from *Cider with Rosie* to fighting with the International Brigades against Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War.

Colson Whitehead: Cool Machine

Wed 22 Jul, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author takes a look at his exuberantly entertaining novel that brings 1980s New York to vivid, unforgettable life.

Colin Grant: What We Leave We Carry

Sun 26 Jul, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

An evening of candid, profoundly human, sometimes funny and always moving stories of migration in celebration of Colin Grant's book.

Neoprene Genie: Dream Jump

Thu 30 Jul, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

A captivating mix of speech, music, poetry and visuals untangles what it means to wish for the lives we desire in a world where dreaming feels so hard.

Mieko Kawakami: Sisters in Yellow

Fri 28 Aug, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

The International Booker Prize-shortlisted author presents her bold noir thriller following three women through Tokyo's underbelly.

Paul Smith: Threads

Fri 10 Sep, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

From a tiny shop in a Nottingham alley to dressing rockstars – fashion icon Paul Smith brings his story, and his wit, warmth and eccentric flair, to our stage.

Letters To The Future | futuretense x Letters To The Future

Fri 18 Sep, 6pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

A special edition of futuretense and a special chance to discover artists on the up

Letters To The Future | Future Sounds: RAP Party x Out-Spoken

Fri 18 Sep, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Inua Ellams hosts a future-focused edition of his *Rhythm and Poetry Party*, a nostalgic, no-clutter, no-fuss night of live literature and moving music.

Letters To The Future | Amelia Dimoldenberg: The Future of Digital Media

Fri 18 Sep, 7.30pm, Royal Festival Hall

The trailblazing host and producer curates a panel of friends and collaborators to decode the digital in the era of content creation's explosive growth.

Letters To The Future | Rebecca F. Kuang: The Future of Education

Sat 19 Sep, 2pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Bestselling author Rebecca F Kuang curates a panel of thinkers to unpack the challenges and transformative ideas redefining learning in the 21st century.

Letters To The Future | [Reimagining Shared Spaces: The Future of Housing](#)

Sat 19 Sep, 4.30pm, Purcell Room

Come together with architects, community organisers and artists to resist the isolation epidemic and reimagine the house as a home and true site of belonging.

Letters To The Future | [Olly Alexander: The Future of Queer Storytelling](#)

Sat 19 Sep, 7pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Join singer, actor and LGBTQIA+ advocate Olly Alexander to uncover the bold, creative pioneers paving the way forward and telling the queer stories that matter.

Letters To The Future | [Future Rhythms](#)

Sat 19 Sep, 8.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

You bring the vibe, we bring the sounds at a free *Letters to the Future* after-party and celebration of the DJs pushing the boundaries of sound.

[Out-Spoken Masterclass: September](#)

Sun 20 Sep, 1pm, Sunley Pavillion

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

Letters To The Future | [Mya-Rose Craig: Beyond the Climate Crisis](#)

Sun 20 Sep, 2pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

It's time to change the stories we tell about nature and our place within it. Ornithologist Mya-Rose Craig and a panel of experts argue for an urgent shift.

Letters To The Future | [Future Rhythms](#)

Sun 20 Sep, 3.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer

This free celebration platforms DJs pushing the boundaries of sound, expect deep rhythms and future-facing sounds designed to get you moving.

Letters To The Future | [The Future of Images in a Post-Truth Era](#)

Sun 20 Sep, 4.30pm, Purcell Room

Uncover the politics, power and perspectives behind the images that saturate our everyday lives at an eye-opening talk. Nothing will ever look the same again...

Letters To The Future | [Letters to My Younger/Future Self](#)

Sun 20 Sep, 6pm, Royal Festival Hall

Hilarious stories, dark secrets and sage advice – some of Britain's biggest stars join bright new talent for a candid evening of spoken word, movement and song.

Letters To The Future | [Ash Sarkar: The Future of Relationships](#)

Sun 20 Sep, 6.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Sarkar takes up the mantle as the inaugural speaker for the Southbank Centre Lecture – a new annual event bringing in leading public figures to unpack the pressing topics of today.

[The Booker Prize 2026 Shortlist Announcement](#)

Tue 22 Sep, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

Get a glimpse behind the judging room doors of the world's most significant award for a single work of fiction, with the panel of esteemed judges.

[Omar El Akkad: In Conversation](#)

Thu 24 Sep, 7.30pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall

'One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against' is an urgent reckoning with life in the West. Join Omar El Akkad and Misan Harriman to dig deeper into the book's timely themes.

[Emily St John Mandel: Exit Party](#)

Sat 3 Oct, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Join bestselling author Emily St John Mandel for the launch of her new novel, a story of the broken boundaries between parallel worlds and a single party on a fateful night in 2031 that links two very different versions of reality.

Iconic Women of the Hayward Gallery

Thu 15 Oct, 7.45pm, Purcell Room

Artist Bharti Kher joins Rachel Thomas, Chief Curator at the Hayward Gallery, for a conversation with key figures from the gallery's long and storied history.

Rug Rhymes: Autumn

Fri 4 Sep, Fri 11 Sep, Fri 9 Oct, Fri 16 Oct, 11am, National Poetry Library

Bring the littles and get snug as a bug while the National Poetry Library puppets, Federico and Firebird, share their favourite poems and nursery rhymes.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Press images [HERE](#).

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), two resident organisations (Kinetika Bloco and Tomorrow's Warriors) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

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