

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press Release

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Contact: press@southbankcentre.co.uk

Press images: [HERE](#)

Event listings: [HERE](#)

Southbank Centre welcomes audiences back with *Summer Reunion* programme as Royal Festival Hall marks 70 years since its creation as part of the Festival of Britain

- Marking 70 years since the birth of the Royal Festival Hall, a newly commissioned poem by 2019/20 London's Young Poet Laureate **Theresa Lola** is to be filmed in the venue and shared worldwide on 3 May.
- The re-opening concerts in the Royal Festival Hall on 28 May include: **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** with **Chineke!**, family orchestral concerts with **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** and **Anoushka Shankar** with her 2019 EP *Love Letters*.
- Further highlights: **English National Ballet**'s return to the Royal Festival Hall stage with 'Solstice'; **Esa-Pekka Salonen**'s final two concerts as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Philharmonia Orchestra joined by **Mitsuko Uchida** and **Yefim Bronfman**.
- **15 consecutive summer weekends of free programming** outside on the Riverside Stage Terrace with 10 DJ collectives, providing a much-needed platform post-lockdown for emerging UK artists.
- Artists including **Samson Kambalu**, **Ilke Gers** and **Linton Kwesi Johnson** bring to life the outside spaces and buildings with free contemporary art and poetry.



English National Ballet's Erik Woolhouse (credit: Laurent Liotardo); Anoushka Shankar (credit: Laura Lewis); Sheku Kanneh-Mason (credit: Lars Borges)

The Southbank Centre today announces a four-month reopening programme, *Summer Reunion* – providing opportunities for people to reconnect, reunite and enjoy a colourful, joyful celebration of art, culture and entertainment.

The packed programme features ballet, classical music, contemporary music, literature, poetry and visual art. The reopening of the Southbank Centre and *Summer Reunion* programme is made possible thanks to the repayable loan from the government's Culture Recovery Fund.

On 30 April the popular weekly street food market returns, alongside riverside pop-ups. The Hayward Gallery welcomes visitors back on Wednesday 19 May with free weekend entertainment outside the Royal Festival Hall from Friday 21 – 23 May. The Royal Festival Hall will reopen on Friday 28 May with socially-distanced performances in line with government guidance. The National Poetry Library will also open on 28 May while the popular Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden is also set to open this summer.

Royal Festival Hall turns 70

Marking a pivotal moment for the Royal Festival Hall, the reopening of the venue in May coincides with its 70th anniversary when it was first opened in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain. The post-war cultural moment provided a 'tonic for the nation' for millions of people who attended events at the main Festival site on London's South Bank, and the events held across the UK. The reopening of the iconic Modernist hall this May as the nation navigates its way out of the coronavirus pandemic, draws powerful parallels with its post-war beginnings, and the presentation of the summer season marks an extraordinary moment for audiences reengaging with live culture post lockdown and reconnecting with one another.

To mark the 70th anniversary of the Royal Festival Hall, a specially-commissioned poem about the beloved venue by **Theresa Lola** is to be filmed and released worldwide on 3 May. Theresa Lola is a British-Nigerian poet based in London and was appointed the 2019/2020 Young People's Laureate for London.

Elaine Bedell, Chief Executive of the Southbank Centre, said: *"We're so pleased to be throwing open our doors again and we hope that our Summer Reunion programme will give people the space and opportunity to reconnect and reunite as the Southbank Centre has so often offered in the past. It's poignant that we're working towards reopening the Royal Festival Hall in May, 70 years after the building was first opened as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations in 1951 when it provided a much-needed 'tonic for the Nation'."*

An unmissable opening weekend

The Royal Festival Hall will come to life on 28 May, welcoming audiences for the first time since March 2020. **Chineke!** will formally launch *Summer Reunion*: their alumnus **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** returns for his first RFH appearance with the orchestra since his debut in 2016 to perform Dvořák's mighty Cello Concerto; and *Remnants*, the vital spoken word concert piece for our time by **James B. Wilson** and **Yomi Sode**, commissioned by the Southbank Centre to mark the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, is repeated for the first time with live audiences, following its world premiere behind closed doors in October. The following day, the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** brings families together for its popular format, 'Noisy Kids: Heroes & Villains' adventuring through some of music's most thrilling works. The opening weekend culminates in a headline performance from **Anoushka Shankar** who continues her role as the Southbank Centre's Associate Artist with her 2019 EP *Love Letters* – this event will be live-streamed globally.

The return of English National Ballet

English National Ballet (ENB) return to the Royal Festival Hall for the first time since 2017 with a two week programme of repertoire highlights in 'Solstice' (16 – 26 June).

'Solstice' features highlights from classics like *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Le Corsaire* as well as a passionate duet from *Broken Wings* (Annabelle Lopez Ochoa's ballet on the life of Frida Kahlo) and joyous steps from *Coppélia*. There are moments of reflection and tenderness in extracts from Akram Khan's *Dust* and Ben Stevenson's *Three Preludes*, set to Rachmaninov's music. The programme concludes with William Forsythe's *Playlist (Track 1, 2)*, a high-energy work set to neo-soul and house music.

Tamara Rojo CBE, English National Ballet's Artistic Director, said: "I'm so pleased we will be performing at the Royal Festival Hall this summer. After so long without performing in theatres it's wonderful to have the opportunity to have so many of the Company back on stage showcasing highlights from English National Ballet's much loved and diverse repertoire."

More indoors

After 13 years as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, **Esa-Pekka Salonen** bows out with two unmissable concerts with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** after a disrupted final season; he is joined by **Yefim Bronfman** (4 June) and **Mitsuko Uchida** (10 June), two of his long-time collaborators.

The **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** return on 2 June, this time with conductor **Vasily Petrenko** who makes his first major appearance in his new role as Music Director Designate as **Kian Soltani**, the orchestra's former Artist-in-Residence performs Haydn's Cello Concerto in C major. On 3 June, violinist **Alina Ibragimova** and friends come together to perform a work born out of extraordinary circumstances: Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, a visionary work written within the freezing walls of a German Prisoner of war camp.

Author events with **Caitlin Moran** (8 July) and **Candice Brathwaite** (29 July) also take centre stage at the Royal Festival Hall. Caitlin Moran celebrates getting older with her new book, *More Than a Woman*, a hymn to the women in their 30s and 40s and their supernatural ability to deal with the stuff they never thought would happen to them including grey hair; lasting hangovers, ageing parents and repetitive sex.

Candice Brathwaite, author of the bestselling *I Am Not Your Baby Mother*, introduces her new book of essays, *Sista Sister*. Examining family, money, Black hair, fashion, sex and friendships, *Sista Sister* is a compilation of essays about all the things Brathwaite wishes someone had talked to her about when she needed guidance as a young Black girl growing up in London. Her first book *I Am Not Your Baby Mother*, was a landmark publication in 2020 and an inspirational guide to life as a Black British mum.

Artist-development organisation and Southbank Centre Associate Artists, **Tomorrow's Warriors** join Gary Crosby OBE, Brinsley Forde and Noel McKoy and rising-vocal stars Dem Three for 'Jazz

Jamaica All-Stars: The Trojan Story' (18 July), a celebration of the legendary Trojan Records, established in London 1968 as the first label to distribute the music of Jamaica on a grand scale, becoming for many in the UK the first point of contact with Jamaican music and culture – the event will be streamed globally to keep that mission alive.

Tomorrow's Warriors and **Kinetika Bloco** will be back on site from the summer delivering their youth music programme including the annual Summer School.

Tickets for the indoor programme go on sale to Members on 27 April and on general sale on 28 April with the exception of English National Ballet's 'Solstice' which goes on sale to Members on 28 April and on general sale on 29 April.

What's on outside

The free Riverside Terrace Stage programme will run for 15 consecutive weekends from 21 May – 30 August. The Southbank Centre will dedicate the first five weekends to providing a much-needed platform post-lockdown for emerging UK artists who have been hit the hardest over the last year. Ten DJs and collectives, predominantly from under-represented backgrounds in the arts, take over the outdoor space. Artists are: **Scene + Heard** (21 – 22 May), **Creole Cuts** (22 – 23 May), **Raze Collective** (28 – 29 May), **Total Refreshment Centre** (29 – 30 May), **The Bitten Peach** (4 – 5 June), **London Disco Society** (5 – 6 June), **AZEEMA** (11 – 12 June), **SISU** (12 – 13 June), **Counterpoints Arts** (18 – 19 June) and **Lemon Lounge** (19 – 20 June). The rest of the line-up for this eclectic, free programme will be announced soon.

Outdoor art adds a splash of colour and fun for visitors to explore for free. During lockdown Malawi-born artist, academic and author **Samson Kambalu** has been creating flags that explore the iconography and visual patterns of flags from around the world, playing with ideas of national and individual sovereignty and links to emancipatory movements such as Pan-Africanism and Black Lives Matter. In **Black Jack** (17 May – 5 September) the artist remixes colours and designs of flags improvising in the same way a DJ or Producer remixes music. This link between music and visual language is underpinned by Kambalu's history as an ethnomusicologist. **Black Jack** aims to bring a colourful and subtly thought provoking element to the Southbank Centre's unique architectural setting.

First opened for public participation in 1968, **David Medalla's A Stitch in Time** (21 June – 16 July) in the Royal Festival Hall invites visitors to sew and stitch memories, words, and small objects onto what becomes a shared installation. Beginning with a blank piece of fabric each time, this work has toured worldwide for the last five decades, temporarily capturing thoughts and moods in every place it has appeared. Known and respected for his communitarian approach, Medalla was a key figure in the British avant-garde scene after arriving in London from Manila in 1960. Medalla particularly liked that visitors taking part in stitching were doing so in their "...own private space, even though the act of stitching might occur in a public place." **A Stitch in Time** is on loan from the Southbank Centre's Arts Council Collection.

Ilike Gers, a former tennis player and visual artist from Aotearoa, New Zealand, makes art that can be physically experienced by the public. **Street Games** (21 June – 29 August) is a composition of re-imagined games that the public can play. Drawn around the Southbank Centre site with chalk the

games and markings continuously fade and reappear throughout the summer.

Fans of the spoken word can hear **Linton Kwesi Johnson's** poem **New Craas Massahkah** (21 June – 29 August) written 40 years ago in 1981 to commemorate 13 young people who died in a house fire in a neighbouring community in New Cross, South London. Their deaths resulted in the historic 'Black People's Day of Action, where 15,000 people from all over the country joined a demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament and Fleet Street declaring that their humanity mattered. Visitors can hear the poignant poem every hour on the Queen's Walk.

Further *Summer Reunion* programme announcements will be made soon.

Keeping audiences safe on site

As we welcome visitors back, our number one priority is the safety, health and wellbeing of visitors and staff, so we have introduced a number of measures to help everyone feel confident. These include QR codes at entrances which link to NHS Test and Trace, reduced visitor numbers, social distancing, wearing face coverings, physically distanced seating, fresh air circulation measures and regular and thorough cleaning. We will continue to review and manage any risks and respond to any changes in government guidance. Full details of our Covid-secure measures can be found on the Southbank Centre website [here](#).

Elsewhere at the Southbank Centre and online

As previously announced, the Hayward Gallery reopens with *Matthew Barney: Redoubt* and *Igshaan Adams: Kicking Dust* from 19 May – 25 July 2021. Exhibition details for Matthew Barney can be found [here](#) and Igshaan Adams [here](#).

The Southbank Centre's one-off series, *In the Green Room* continues as the final five names are added: Anoushka Shankar (17 May), Mitsuko Uchida (24 May), Michael Rosen (31 May), Nicola Benedetti (7 June) and Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason (14 June). The 10-week series of in-depth conversations between Southbank Centre's curators and the globally-known artists and collaborators they have welcomed to the Southbank Centre over the years, is free with a priority offer for Members. The events are streamed publicly every Monday evening on YouTube Premieres from 12 April – 14 June.

ENDS

For further press information please contact:
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Join the Conversation:
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#SummerReunionSC

FURTHER EVENT INFORMATION

Southbank Centre Re-opening

Hayward Gallery: 19 May 2021

Royal Festival Hall: 28 May 2021

National Poetry Library: 28 May 2021

Queen Elizabeth Hall: August 2021

Purcell Room: September 2021

The Hayward Gallery new opening times:

11am – 7pm, Wednesday – Saturday

10am – 6pm, Sunday

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Inside Out: September 2020 – 9 June 2021 (streamed events)

In the Green Room: 12 April – 14 June 2021 (streamed events)

Summer Reunion: 28 May – end of August 2021 (socially-distanced audiences with some hybrid activity)

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day.

The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to four Resident Orchestras (London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment) and four Associate Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra and National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain)



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