

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

## Southbank Centre launches callout for memories of the Festival of Britain to celebrate its 75th anniversary



The Royal Festival Hall is the only surviving structure from the 1951 Festival of Britain site, pictured here.

Image courtesy Southbank Centre archive.

As it celebrates its 75th year, the Southbank Centre is seeking memories of the Festival of Britain from people who visited in 1951, either at the custom-built site on the South Bank – home to the Royal Festival Hall – or at one of the many regional events that took place across the nation. There is a portal for submissions on the website at [www.southbankcentre.co.uk/festivalofbritain](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/festivalofbritain), and the collected stories will be added to the Southbank Centre archive, woven into the living history of the Grade-II listed brutalist site and preserved for future generations.

The Festival of Britain was intended to be “a tonic for the nation,” lifting national spirits with creativity and innovation after the preceding decades of war and economic insecurity. The Festival is estimated to have been visited by half the national population across the UK. Leading cultural figures who have shared their memories include **Dame Jacqueline Wilson**, who recalls that “*my parents and I went to the South Bank because there was dancing after dark, which was one of the most exciting things ever,*” whilst poet **Roger McGough** has said, “*I remember when I was 14 being brought to London by my parents and being overawed by the Festival of Britain celebrations. Until then I thought only Liverpoolians knew how to enjoy themselves.*”

The Royal Festival Hall is the last surviving remnant of that Festival site and today is the jewel in the crown of the Southbank Centre, which this year is celebrating 75 years since the Festival, the building of the hall, and the catalyst for the creation of the Southbank Centre itself. Honouring the spirit of the Festival, the Southbank Centre’s anniversary programme is as uplifting as it is wide-reaching, with the scale and ambition to spread a message of creative innovation across the nation.

To submit a memory, head to the Southbank Centre website:  
[www.southbankcentre.co.uk/festivalofbritain](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/festivalofbritain).

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Images of the Festival of Britain are available [HERE](#).

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This press release is available in a range of accessible formats. To receive one please contact: [press@southbankcentre.co.uk](mailto:press@southbankcentre.co.uk)

For more information on the Southbank Centre's 75th anniversary programme, see the press release [HERE](#), with press images [HERE](#).

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### **About the Southbank Centre**

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying 11 acres along the river and its 4 venues anchor 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. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. 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 six Resident Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk>.