

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press Release

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Jude Kelly CBE to leave Southbank Centre in order to lead global development of *Women of the World* festival

Jude Kelly CBE has announced that, after 12 years at the artistic helm of the UK's largest arts centre, she will leave Southbank Centre in May following the reopening of the Hayward Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room. Jude will be moving on to focus on the worldwide development of the influential festival she founded in 2010, *WOW – Women of the World*.



Jude joined Southbank Centre in 2006 shortly before the unveiling of the newly refurbished Royal Festival Hall and since then her bold programming has been driven by a belief that great art should be available to all, regardless of background. Through her artistic vision, Jude sought to bring people and communities together and as a result Southbank Centre has been transformed into a place that is open and welcoming for young and old alike and from diverse cultural backgrounds. Southbank Centre now attracts over 26 million people annually to its site and presents over 5000 events each year of which over 50% are free. It is the UK's 5th most popular visitor destination.

Having formed a core artistic team of some of the most respected programmers and curators in the UK, Jude oversaw an eclectic and diverse programme, including a range of regular annual festivals such as *Alchemy* (celebrating the art and culture of South Asia), *Africa Utopia* (celebrating the art of the African continent), *Imagine Children's Festival*, *BAM – Being A Man*, London Literature Festival, *Chorus* and *Urban*. Jude's use of festivals as a means by which sometimes difficult or controversial themes could be explored has enabled people to find their voices and artists to creatively respond to key issues affecting us all – a programming model which has generated interest from many international venues.

Significant past festivals include the classical and contemporary music festival *The Rest is Noise* which won a Sky Arts Award and a Royal Philharmonic Society Award for outstanding achievement in classical music.

Jude was awarded a CBE in 2015 for services to the arts and has received 17 honorary doctorates in recognition of her work around cultural access. She was also bestowed the title of Knighthood of the Order of Dannebrog by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark for promoting Danish culture via the recent *Nordic Matters* festival.

One of Jude's most significant achievements has been the founding, in 2010, of the *WOW – Women of the World* festivals, which have now become a global movement. To date, there have been over 42 *WOW* festivals in 23 countries across 6 continents. *WOW* celebrates the history and potential of girls and women in all fields of life and highlights the obstacles that prevent gender equality from being achieved. Jude will present *WOW* worldwide via a new organisation she is launching. The *WOW* festival in London will continue to be presented in partnership with Southbank Centre.

Jude Kelly CBE, Artistic Director, Southbank Centre, said:

*“It is difficult to imagine a more stimulating and enjoyable time than the twelve years I’ve spent at Southbank Centre – and I shall miss it terribly. With the Centre in excellent hands, now is the perfect time for me to move on. In seven years *WOW – Women of the World* has grown from a single Southbank Centre festival to a significant presence on six continents and is now both intensely challenging and rewarding, with a terrific future ahead. As well as turning *WOW* into a global movement I shall be developing new artistic projects that arise from the core *WOW* idea. It is a very exciting time!”*

Susan Gilchrist, Chair of Southbank Centre’s Board of Governors, said:

*“Under Jude’s artistic leadership, Southbank Centre has flourished as an open and welcoming centre of arts and culture for everyone. I and the Board would like to thank Jude for her hard work, dedication and energy and wish her every success in the future. We are delighted that with the ongoing presentation of *WOW* at Southbank Centre, we retain a close link with Jude and her work in developing this important festival.”*

Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, said:

*“Jude Kelly has overseen a wealth of programmes during her twelve years at Southbank Centre, transforming the way in which the Centre has welcomed, inspired, educated and entertained its audiences. Jude conceived, created and delivered one of the biggest global festivals celebrating women – *WOW – Women of the World* – with Southbank Centre and we are delighted that she will remain at the helm of this important cultural programme. Jude’s direction has made Southbank Centre the natural home for some of the world’s most celebrated artists and organisations, whilst bringing more visitors than ever through the doors. The Arts Council wishes Jude all the best for the future. We look forward to continuing our work with Southbank Centre, supporting their world-class dynamic programming and inclusive ethos.”*

Elaine Bedell, Chief Executive, Southbank Centre, said:

“Jude leaves a strong legacy for us to celebrate and build upon and I thank her for the artistic drive and passion she has brought to Southbank Centre. Under her creative leadership we now attract some of the most diverse audiences and staff of any UK arts venue and we will continue to ensure that Southbank Centre remains open and accessible to all.”

Plans for Jude's succession will be announced in due course. In the meantime Southbank Centre's artistic programme will continue to be developed by the senior team, including Chief Executive Elaine Bedell, Director of Music Gillian Moore, and Director of the Hayward Gallery Ralph Rugoff.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 17 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as The National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

About Jude Kelly CBE

In theatre, Jude has directed over a hundred productions in the UK and internationally, and her work in both theatre and opera has been recognised in a number of ways, including two Laurence Olivier awards. She has been founder Artistic Director of a series of institutions, including Solent People's Theatre, Battersea Arts Centre, West Yorkshire Playhouse and her own charity Metal - a laboratory for artistic practice in community settings. She led the cultural bid for the UK's Olympic and Paralympic celebrations, based on the concept of ensuring the widest possible involvement of people across all nations and regions to celebrate their identity through cultural activity and shape the stories that are told. She's the recipient of 17 honorary doctorates for her work in the field of cultural access and received an OBE and a CBE for services to the Arts. She has been the Artistic Director of Southbank Centre, one of the largest cultural centres in Europe, since 2006.

In 2010 she founded the *WOW – Women of the World* festivals, which have now become a global movement. To date, there have been over 42 *WOW* festivals in 23 countries across 6 continents. *WOW* celebrates the history and potential of girls and women in all fields of life and highlights the obstacles that prevent gender equality from being achieved. In 2014, she also founded *BAM - Being A Man* to support men and boys explore issues arising from narrow definitions of masculine identity.

Jude is currently establishing a new charity, Drivers for Change, to support young creative entrepreneurs from a wide range of social backgrounds to be given skills and networks to affect change in marginalised communities.

About WOW – Women of the World

Southbank Centre's *WOW – Women of the World* festival is a global festival movement launched by Jude Kelly CBE in London in 2010, followed by the first festival in March 2011, that celebrates women and girls and looks at the obstacles that stop them from achieving their potential. Each festival across the world – made up of talks, debates, music, activism, mentoring, pop ups and performance – celebrates women and girls, takes a frank look at what prevents them from achieving their potential, and raises awareness globally of the issues they face and possible solutions.

It reaches girls and women, boys and men from a broad range of social backgrounds and supplies a completely different sense of action and energy than a conventional conference approach. Speakers have included Malala Yousafzai, Christine Lagarde, Salma Hayek, Annie Lennox, Gordon Brown, Julie Walters, Patrick Stewart and many more including hundreds of women and men who don't have public profiles but are working everyday to achieve gender equality.

Over 480,000 visited Southbank Centre during *WOW London 2017* and thousands more have come to *WOWs* across the world including *WOW Karachi*, *WOW Apollo* in New York, *WOW Kathmandu*, *WOW Ake* in Nigeria, *WOW Baltimore*, *WOW Bradford*, *WOW Brisbane*, *WOW Derry-Londonderry*, *WOW Katherine* and more. Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall has been President of *WOW* since 2015. www.southbankcentre.co.uk