



Press Release

Wednesday 17 November 2021

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#ForTheCultureLyric

FOR THE CULTURE – CELEBRATIONS OF BLACKNESS FESTIVAL HEADLINE ACTS ANNOUNCED

- LEMN SISSAY, LE GATEAU CHOCOLAT, 90S BABY SHOW PODCAST AND SHINGAI TO HEADLINE THE FIRST *FOR THE CULTURE – CELEBRATIONS OF BLACKNESS FESTIVAL* AT THE LYRIC HAMMERSMITH THEATRE, FROM FRIDAY 28 TO SUNDAY 30 JANUARY 2022
- CHILDREN'S SHOW *JOSEPHINE* ALSO JOINS THE FESTIVAL LINE-UP WITH FURTHER EVENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED
- TICKETS GO ON SALE TODAY AT WWW.LYRIC.CO.UK

The **Lyric Hammersmith Theatre** is excited to announce international prize-winning writer **Lemn Sissay**, drag diva **Le Gateau Chocolat**, the **90s Baby Show podcast** and platinum-selling artist **Shingai** as the headline acts of the inaugural *For the Culture – Celebrations of Blackness Festival* from **Friday 28 January to Sunday 30 January 2022**. The line-up also includes children's show **Josephine** about the life of performer, spy and activist Josephine Baker with further events to be announced. Over three days, the Lyric will host theatre performances, music, readings, discussions, talks, films, food, art, hair and beauty, and more, all celebrating Black joy, talent, culture and creativity. Tickets are on sale today at www.lyric.co.uk

For the Culture – Celebrations of Blackness Festival is led and curated by **Dr Peggy Brunache**, Lecturer in the History of Atlantic Slavery and Director of the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies at University of Glasgow, **Tinuke Craig**, Lyric Artistic Associate and **Nicholai La Barrie**, Lyric Associate Director.

Dr Peggy Brunache, Tinuke Craig and Nicholai La Barrie said: *"The resurgence of Black Lives Matter is rocket fuel for a global reckoning. For the Culture does not ask sweetly, quietly to please see our humanity. We must be loud, we must be rebellious, we must be grateful, and we must be joyful. And we will take up as much damn space as we can. So this is a call to action from us at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre: Black joy is resistance! This inaugural festival is an inspiring programme of love and inclusivity, through art, music, intellect, literature, and self-care. Every artist who shares their gift and every person who joins us at the Lyric to share in this joy will help make this festival a beautiful celebration of our culture and of our resilience."*

For the Culture – Celebrations of Blackness Festival is kindly supported by **Garfield Weston Foundation**.

LE GATEAU CHOCOLAT

Friday 28 January, 8pm | Main House

Le Gateau Chocolat, the black-bearded drag and cabaret diva, will open *For The Culture - Celebrations of Blackness Festival* and mark his debut performance at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre on Friday 28 January with his brand new show **Raw Cacao**.

Lurching from pop to opera via folk song, musical theatre, disco and more, *Raw Cacao* is a veritable mixtape of the songs that have shaped him as a man and as an artist. An exploration of intimacy that makes us wonder: who are we when no one is watching?

The one-man, larger-than-life musical phenomenon bears all to deliver his most personal work so far, in what promises to be a dazzling evening.

90S BABY SHOW

Saturday 29 January, 5pm | Main House

Following sold-out shows across London the wildly popular 90s Baby Show podcast is hitting 'record' live on stage at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre on Saturday 29 January.

Join Fred, Temi and VP, three friends who grew up in inner city London for a candid conversation about life as a 90s baby in this ever-changing world. From pop culture to relationships and the Black experience in the UK; no topic is taboo for the '1.9.9.2' Boys.

Grab your seat to one of the hottest listening parties in West London for a special evening of good vibes and scintillating conversation.

SHINGAI

Saturday 29 January, 8pm | Main House

Saturday's headliner is **Shingai**, the legendary frontwoman and bassist of the platinum-selling band Noisettes, who will perform a solo set including songs from her album *Too Bold*.

Too Bold is an effervescent soundscape inspired by the sounds of her London, Bantu and Zimbabwean heritage.

Renowned for her spellbinding performances, and described by Rolling Stone as "*the new afrofuturist pop goddess*," Shingai will take audiences on a sonic odyssey.

The exquisite songstress returns to London from Zimbabwe for this one-off special event.

JOSEPHINE

Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 January, 11am & 1pm | Lyric Studio

The extraordinary story of performer, spy and civil rights activist Josephine Baker is brought to the Lyric Studio on Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 January in *Josephine*, by Leona Allen and Jesse Briton in a co-production from The Egg, Wales Millennium Centre and Oxford Playhouse.

Josephine Baker. The little girl from Missouri who became an original 20th Century icon. Dancer, actor, activist, campaigner, spy and mother to the multicultural Rainbow Tribe, Josephine broke the mould and high-kicked the pieces to the kerb.

But, almost 50 years after her death, Café Josephine, a down-at-heel New York diner dedicated to her memory, faces closure. Nobody remembers Josephine, who she was, what she did, what she stood for. And she just can't allow that.

Born in St Louis in 1906, Baker was the first Black woman to star in a major motion picture. She became a French national where she raised her 12 internationally adopted children, dubbed the Rainbow Tribe. She aided the French Resistance during WWII, which earned her the Croix de Guerre and spoke at the renowned March on Washington in 1963 alongside Martin Luther King.

With a sultry, Harlem Renaissance-inspired score, spring-heeled Charleston dancing and a hatful of historical figures, Josephine blurs the real with the imagined as we follow one woman's incredible journey from the slums of St Louis via the bright lights of Paris and into the hearts of the world.

Recommended for ages 7+

LEMN SISSAY

Sunday 30 January, 2.30pm | Main House

Lemn Sissay will give a reading and talk on the story behind how he created *Gold from the Stone* in this Sunday headline event with one of Britain's most popular and celebrated poets.

Lemn Sissay is renowned for his strong, lyrical work on social and family themes. He was seventeen when he wrote his first poetry book, which he hand-sold to the miners and millworkers of Wigan. Since then, his poems have become landmarks, sculpted in granite and built from concrete, recorded on era-defining albums and declaimed in over thirty countries.

Experience Lemn Sissay's seminal body of work with a selection of readings by Lemn himself as well as stories about his life.

Further *For The Culture – Celebrations of Blackness Festival* events will be announced in December.

- ENDS -

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Notes to Editors

IMAGES available to download [here](#)

Listings

Lyric Hammersmith Theatre
Lyric Square, King Street, London, W6 0QL
Box office: 020 8741 6850

www.lyric.co.uk

Tickets: from £10 for Main House events, from £8 for Studio events, £5 tickets for Young Lyric Members

Twitter: [@LyricHammer](https://twitter.com/LyricHammer)

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Biographies

Curators

Dr Peggy Brunache is a lecturer in the history of Atlantic slavery at the University of Glasgow and the first Director of the newly established Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies. Born in Miami to Haitian parents, she trained and worked as a historical archaeologist with a focus on plantation studies, the African diaspora and the transatlantic slave trade, working on archaeological projects in Benin, West Africa, Guadeloupe, and various sites in the United States. She developed a free four-week ongoing online course on British Slavery in the Caribbean with Futurelearn.com, of October 2020. Other projects include working with food, music and science festivals. Food is also central to Peggy's life and work. She acts as culinary consultant for Perth's Southern Fried music festival. Her media appearances include the US's Food Network, BBC TV's Black and British documentary series and she is a regular contributor to BBC Radio Scotland's programmes.

Tinuke Craig trained as a director at LAMDA. She was the Gate's Associate Director 2015-2016 and in 2014 received the Genesis Future Director Award. She is an Artistic Associate at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, and an Associate of the National Youth Theatre. Upcoming productions include: *Jitney* (Leeds Playhouse). Previous directing credits include: *Cinderella* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre), *Last Easter* (Orange Tree Theatre), *Crave*, *Random/Generations* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Vassa* (Almeida Theatre), *The Color Purple* (Leicester Curve and Birmingham Hippodrome), *I Call My Brothers* (Gate Theatre) *Dirty Butterfly* (Young Vic).

Nicholai La Barrie is a theatre and film director and has been a MOBO Fellow. His work in theatre includes: Resident Director (*Tina - The Tina Turner Musical*), *Statements After An Arrest Under The Immorality Act* (Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), *Grey* (Oval House), *Liar Heretic Thief* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre), *White* (Edinburgh Festival), *Gob* (London

International Festival of Theatre), *The Book of Disquiet* (Blue Elephant Theatre), *I'll Take You There* (Gate), *There is Nothing There* (Oval House), *Chet Baker: Speedball* (606 Jazz Club) *Portrait For Posterity* (Arcola Theatre). Film Credits Include: *Hamlet Sort Of* (2017), *North East South West* (Short Film 2016), *Aingeal* (2012), *Dark Stranger* (2009 Official selection Caribbean film festival). Dramaturge credits include: *Heart of Hammersmith*, *Feels*, *The mob reformers* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre).

Artists

Le Gateau Chocolat's work spans drag, cabaret, opera, musical theatre, children's theatre and live art. His bewitching baritone has been heard in previous works *Le Gateau Chocolat*, *I Chocolat*, *In Drag* (Royal Festival Hall commission) and *BLACK* (Homotopia commission), which toured with music ensemble Psappa.

His children's show *Duckie* which introduces young people to the ideas of otherness, tolerance and self-acceptance, premiered at the Southbank Centre and has been presented across the UK.

His recent production *ICONS* toured worldwide. *ICONS* has also been presented with accompaniment from the Little Coco Orchestra, a Le Gateau Chocolat initiative to support diverse musicians through the creation of an ensemble formed entirely of women of colour.

Le Gateau Chocolat has been invited to perform at prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Barbican Centre, Sydney Opera House, and as part of the Olivier-Award winning La Clique/La Soiree. He has worked with composers Julian Philips, Jonathan Dove, Jocelyn Pook and Orlando Gough. He performed as Feste in *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe and in the Gate Theatre and English National Opera co-production *Effigies of Wickedness*. He also appeared as part of Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music: The First Act* at the Barbican, and in the Donmar Warehouse's *Sweet Charity*.

Le Gateau Chocolat recently appeared in Wagner's *Tannhauser* which opened the 108th Bayreuth Festival in 2019 and attracted headlines around the world for the reaction to his participation as a drag artist of colour.

Shingai, the legendary front woman and bassist from the platinum selling band The Noisettes is a Zimbabwean-British musician born and raised in South London.

Shingai, welcomes a new chapter of her journey with her debut solo album "[Too Bold](#)". "The new afrofuturist pop goddess" according to Rolling Stone, distinguished for her mesmerising and dramatic performances, prepares you for a sonic odyssey.

A sound inspired by her London, Bantu and Zimbabwean heritage, gives Too Bold an effervescent soundscape, fearlessly infused with a soulful yet spontaneous spirit, which is both electrifying and compelling.

Shingai is leading from the heart, transporting you to a higher vision of the future while acknowledging what it will take for us to get there. Too Bold treads many paths and themes about rising above perplexing times, being resilient, standing your ground and confronting the struggle. Inviting you to keep the optimist alive within us and be better in every way.

Shingai spent most of 2020 and 2021 in Southern Africa to record fresh collaborations due to be released from October 2021 to the end of 2022. She will complete her African tour with collaborations in West and Central Africa.

Lemn Sissay OBE is a poet, playwright, memoirist performer and broadcaster.

Lemn Sissay was the official poet of the 2012 London Olympics and the 2015 FA Cup and is currently Chancellor of the University of Manchester. His award-winning one-man play *Something Dark* has been performed throughout the world. A BBC TV documentary *Internal Flight* and a radio documentary *Child of the State* were broadcast about his life and his TEDTalk has had close to a million views. Sissay's television appearances include *The South Bank Show* and the BBC series *Grumpy Old Men*, and he is a regular contributor on BBC Radio 4's *Saturday Live*.

His life story is nothing short of incredible. Google "Lemn Sissay" and all the returning hits will be about him. There is only one Lemn Sissay in the world.

Lemn has read on stage throughout the world, from The Library of Congress in The United States to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, from the Opera House of Dubai to London Palladium and finally to the heady heights of Wigan library in... Wigan. Lemn was awarded The Pen Pinter Prize in 2019 when his memoir 'My name Is Why' reached number one in The Sunday Times bestseller list. In 2021 it won Indie Book Awards non-fiction prize.

His many publications include *My Name is Why: A Memoir*, *Gold From The Stone*, *Something Dark*, *Refugee Boy*, *Listener*.