



Press Release

Tuesday 11 January 2022

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#ForTheCultureLyric

FOR THE CULTURE - CELEBRATIONS OF BLACKNESS FESTIVAL FULL LINE-UP ANNOUNCED

- New free events announced for first ever *For The Culture – Celebrations Of Blackness Festival* at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre from Friday 28 to Sunday 30 January 2022:
 - o The Prologue: Opening Ceremony with the **Endurance Steel Orchestra**, **One Drum Foundation**, Mbira player **Millicent Chapanda**, poetry by **Ronke Adekoluejo** and a festival welcome from co-curators **Dr Peggy Brunache**, **Tinuke Craig** and **Nicholai La Barrie**
 - o The Epilogue: Closing Ceremony with award-winning West End performer **Shan Ako** (*Les Misérables*) and a specially curated **For The Culture Choir** with gospel singers from across London
 - o For The Actors: Monologue Showcase of young Black talent, plus Q&A with film producer **Mathieu Ajan** and leading actors **Alfred Enoch**, **Lydia West**, **Susan Wokoma** and **Ronke Adekolujo**
 - o For The Conversation: *The Political Is Always Personal* by festival co-curator **Dr Peggy Brunache** and panellists **Lady Phyll**, co-founder and CEO of UK Black Pride, and comedian **Dane Baptiste**
 - o *The High Table*, rehearsed reading of **Temi Wilkey**'s debut play directed by festival co-curator **Tinuke Craig**
 - o *Harriet* film screening with a For The Culture video introduction from **Clarke Peters**
 - o Radiance art exhibition of painting, sculptural installation and film from the **Black Blossoms School of Art and Culture**
 - o For The Babies, pre-and-post natal care workshop with life coach and doula **Mars Lord**
 - o For The Mind wellbeing workshop with **Black Minds Matter**

- The festival is headlined by **Lemn Sissay, Le Gateau Chocolat, 90s Baby Show Podcast** and **Shingai**, as previously announced
- All tickets are available at www.lyric.co.uk

The full line-up of the inaugural **For The Culture – Celebrations of Blackness Festival** is released today with a series of free events added to a packed festival programme. New free events are **the grand opening and closing ceremonies, panel discussions, art exhibition, wellbeing and parent and baby sessions, rehearsed reading, monologue showcase** and **film screening**. The programme also includes the previously announced family show *Josephine* and headline acts **Le Gateau Chocolat, Lemn Sissay, 90s Baby Podcast** and **Shingai**.

The festival is a celebration of Black joy, talent, culture and creativity and will run from **28 to 30 January** to launch the **Lyric Hammersmith Theatre's 2022 Season**. Tickets for free events must be booked in advance at www.lyric.co.uk

For The Culture is curated by **Dr Peggy Brunache**, Lecturer in the History of Atlantic Slavery & Director of the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies at University of Glasgow, **Tinuke Craig**, Lyric Artistic Associate and **Nicholai La Barrie**, Lyric's Associate Director.

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

FOR THE CULTURE - CELEBRATIONS OF BLACKNESS FESTIVAL

(Line-up in date order)

THE PROLOGUE: OPENING CEREMONY

Friday 28 January, 6.30pm | Main House

For The Culture - Celebrations of Blackness Festival kicks off with **The Prologue: Opening Ceremony** featuring musicians and acrobatics including the **Endurance Steel Orchestra, One Drum Foundation**, traditional Mbira player **Millicent Chapanda**, poetry by **Ronke Adekoluejo**, and a special welcome from festival curators **Dr Peggy Brunache, Tinuke Craig, and Nicholai La Barrie**. Free event.

RADIANCE: AN ART EXHIBITION

Friday 28 – Sunday 30 January | Reuben Foundation Wing and Lyric Cinema

Running for the entirety of the festival, **Radiance** is an art exhibition of painting, sculptural installation and film curated by **Bolanle Tajudeen** and **Pacheanne Anderson** from the **Black Blossoms School of Art and Culture**. *Radiance* exhibits the manifestation of the artists' thoughts and feelings towards diasporic African and Caribbean radiance. Free event.

Black Blossoms School of Art and Culture is an e-learning platform which delivers short courses and masterclasses that decolonise, deconstruct and democratise art history and creative learning. Classes are taught by leading artists, scholars and art professionals.

LE GATEAU CHOCOLAT

Friday 28 January, 8pm | Main House

Le Gateau Chocolat, the black-bearded drag and cabaret diva, headlines the first night of the festival and will mark his debut performance at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre 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 his most personal work to date.

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.

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. For ages 7+

FOR THE CONVERSATION: THE POLITICAL IS ALWAYS PERSONAL

Saturday 29 January, 12pm | Lyric Cinema

Festival co-curator **Dr Peggy Brunache** hosts a panel discussion on the topic *The Political is Always Personal* with panellists **Lady Phyll**, co-founder and CEO of UK Black Pride, and acclaimed stand-up comedian **Dane Baptiste**. In an unflinching and personal in-conversation, the panel will share ways of finding Black joy, love, resistance, and self-care through their own personal and professional lives while navigating intense emotion and one's proximity to racialised trauma, marginalisation, and violence. Free event.

FOR THE ACTORS: MONOLOGUE SHOWCASE

Saturday 29 January, 2pm | Main House

For The Actors is a monologue showcase featuring exceptional young Black talent, followed by a panel discussion and Q&A chaired by film producer **Mathieu Ajan** with leading actors **Alfred Enoch**, recently on stage as Romeo at Shakespeare's Globe, **Lydia West** who played Jill Baxter in Channel 4's *It's a Sin*; **Susan Wokoma** as seen in *Chewing Gum* and *Crazyhead*; and **Ronke Adekoluejo** known for playing Jack Starbright in the *Alex Rider* series. For The Actors will share invaluable insight, expertise and practical advice from leading professional actors. Eight actors, aged 18-25, will each perform a monologue to an audience of industry professionals including casting agents, friends and family. Free event.

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 in this headline event. Join **Fred, Temi** and **VP** 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.

SHINGAI

Saturday 29 January, 8pm | Main House

Shingai, the legendary frontwoman and bassist of the platinum-selling band Noisettes, will headline on Saturday night with a solo set including songs from her album *Too Bold*, inspired by the sounds of her London, Bantu and Zimbabwean heritage.

Renowned for her spellbinding performances, and described by Rolling Stone magazine 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.

FOR THE BABIES

Sunday 30 January, 11am | Rehearsal Room 1

Mother of five, birth activist, doula educator and life coach, **Mars Lord** facilitates an intimate and life-affirming post-natal care workshop specifically for babies and their parents. Dispelling myths associated with Black birth, Mars Lord will explain the role of the doula and how the birth experience can contribute positively to your life and that of your child plus practical tips on how to navigate the maternity system safely. Free event.

HARRIET

Sunday 30 January, 12pm | Lyric Cinema

The Lyric Cinema will host an intimate screening of the 2019 feature film *Harriet*, starring Cynthia Erivo, which tells the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's escape from slavery and transformation into one of America's greatest heroes, whose courage, ingenuity, and tenacity changed the course of history.

This screening will include a specially recorded introduction from **Clarke Peters** who stars in the film and whose voice was instrumental in the creation of *For The Culture - Celebrations of Blackness Festival*. Free event.

FOR THE MIND

Sunday 30 January, 1pm | Rehearsal Room 1

Facilitated by **Black Minds Matter**, For The Mind is a free workshop which explores and supports mental health specifically within the Black community providing tools for improving and maintaining wellbeing. Free event.

Black Minds Matter is led by experienced therapists and aims to make mental health topics more relevant and accessible for all Black people in the U.K., removing the stigma and remodelling the services to be relevant for the Black community.

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.

THE HIGH TABLE

Sunday 30 January, 3.30pm | Lyric Studio

Festival curator **Tinuke Craig** directs a rehearsed reading of **Temi Wilkey's** debut play *The High Table*, an epic family drama played out between the heavens and earth.

The dresses are chosen, the venue's been booked and the RSVPs are flooding in. But with her wedding to Leah drawing nearer, Tara's future is thrown into jeopardy when her Nigerian parents refuse to attend. This kind of love is unheard of, they say. It's not African.

High above London, suspended between the stars, three of Tara's ancestors are jolted from their eternal rest. Stubborn and opinionated, they keep watch as family secrets are spilled and the rift widens between Tara and her parents. Can these representatives of generations past keep the family together? And will Tara's decision ever get their blessing?

The High Table was first produced at the Bush Theatre and saw Temi Wilkey win the Stage Debut Award for Best Writer in 2020. Free event.

THE EPILOGUE: CLOSING CEREMONY WITH SHAN AKO AND FOR THE CULTURE CHOIR **Sunday 30 January, 5.30pm | Main House**

The festival culminates with The Epilogue: Closing Ceremony with award-winning performer and singer/songwriter **Shan Ako** (*Les Misérables*, X Factor finalist 2018) and the festival's very own **For The Culture Choir** – bringing together Black professional choralists from all over London who will come together for this one-off performance. Expect to hear soul, gospel, pop, R&B, jazz, folk and reggae. Free event.

Shan Ako appeared in the X Factor finals in 2018 and has since played Eponine in *Les Misérables* in the West End for which she won Best Performer in a Musical at The Stage Debut Awards.

- 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).

Headline 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 Psappha.

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*.