

19 July 2012

AFRICA UTOPIA TALKS!

This Friday sees the start of a fascinating and free, three-day programme of talks and debates which aim to shed an illuminating light on contemporary Africa.

Africa Utopia is a month-long festival of music, theatre, film, literature, dance, fashion, talks and debates - part of **Southbank Centre's Festival of the World with MasterCard** which started on July 1. This Friday (20), sees the start of the **free talks and debates programme** curated by **Hannah Pool**. The acclaimed Eritrean-born journalist and author has invited a stellar range of writers, thinkers and experts in their fields to shed an illuminating light on the African continent through 15 fascinating topics.

Highlights on Friday 20 July include ***Africa and the Technology Revolution***, will explore technology's role in driving entrepreneurship and citizen engagement. ***China Loves Africa*** an exploration of China's growing interest in and influence on, the continent and ***Africa Is Not a Country***, which challenges reductive media perceptions of the continent. Highlights on 21 July include ***Quick, Hide – Madonna's Coming*** a critical look at the controversial issue of adoption in Africa; a discussion about Nigeria's booming film industry with ***Nollywood or Bust*** and ***Art Connect***, a look at contemporary African art and its place in the global art market. On Sunday 22 July, ***More Than Zebra Print*** examines the ghettoisation African fashion by the mainstream; award-winning Beninese singer-songwriter and activist **Angelique Kidjo** joins a panel to discuss ***Women, Inspiration and Leadership*** and ***Future Africa*** explores the challenges caused by the ever accelerating pace of urbanisation. All talks and debates take place in the **Queen Elizabeth Hall Front Room** throughout the day on Friday 20, Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 July.

On the last day of the festival (July 28), **Senior Advisor to UNAIDS Executive Director, Dr Djibril Diallo** will be in conversation with **Baaba Maal**. Together they will be looking at the role of sports and youth empowerment in AIDS advocacy and empowering young people in the response to the disease that has had such a huge impact on the continent.

A variety of luminaries helping us to think about Africa differently throughout the festival, include world-class writers **Noo Saro-Wiwa** and **Nii Ayikwei Parkes**; Guardian journalist **Gary Younge** and author and journalist **Hannah Pool** (Guardian, Grazia, Arise Magazine); CNN's **Stephanie Busari**; blogger extraordinaire **Ms Afropolitan**; Grammy award-winning, Beninese singer; **Angelique Kidjo**, RIBA Fellow, **Elsie Owusu** and revered musician and Oxfam Global Ambassador **Baaba Maal**, to name but a few.

Hannah Pool, curator of the talks programme said: *"All too often the conversations that happen about Africa are about how the West can 'help'. The Africa Utopia talks and debates salon is about flipping that around and challenging preconceptions. This weekend of free talks and debates looks*

at everything from Africa and the technology revolution, to Africa on the catwalk. There's music, film, visual arts and a few surprises too."

Baaba Maal, singer and human rights campaigner, said: *"Africa is all too often written off as an intractable 'problem' for the world to solve, I hope this festival will reveal just some of what Africa has to offer the rest of the world: The energy of our youth and their desire to engage with the world; The transformative potential of culture and, perhaps most potently, the power of community to bind people together."*

After a day of hard thinking and talking on Saturday 21, **The Ultimate Afrobeats Utopia** club night offers the chance to party in the Royal Festival Hall's Clore Ballroom. Celebrating the burgeoning Afrobeats scene headline act **Ice Prince** (named 2012 African Artist of the Year) will perform his top hits alongside BBC Radio 1/1 Xtra's **DJ Edu**, award-winning **DJ Neptizzle** and Afro House specialist **Sef Kombo**.

Full details of the Africa Utopia events can be found at www.southbankcentre.co.uk/africautopia.

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Southbank Centre Ticket Office – www.southbankcentre.co.uk / 0844 847 9910

Notes to Editors

Hannah Pool

Hannah Pool is a journalist, author and commentator who writes regularly in the national media on gender, race and identity. A Guardian journalist for over 14 years with stints as the Guardian Weekend's Beauty editor for five years; during which time she wrote the hugely successful '[New Black](#)' column which was the first beauty column for women of colour in a mainstream newspaper. Hannah penned her debut book; '[My Fathers' Daughter: A story of family and belonging](#)'; a memoir of her journey back to Eritrea to find her birth family.

Southbank Centre's Festival of the World 1 June to 9 September 2012

Southbank Centre's summer 2012 site-wide Festival of the World with MasterCard opens on 1 June 2012 for the Diamond Jubilee Weekend, and closes on 9 September 2012. As London welcomes the world this summer, Southbank Centre's Festival of the World will include inspirational projects from the UK and around the world, which showcase the power of the arts to change the lives of individuals, communities and whole societies. The site will be transformed with art installations including a giant 'robot' sculpture; a colossal baobab tree made from fabric; 'Rainbow Park', a multi-coloured beach; and an exhibition in the Royal Festival Hall of the thinkers, artists and communities who have inspired and contributed to the Festival. The reopening of the Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden, weekly food markets, and a pop-up cafe complete the Festival landscape. www.southbankcentre.co.uk/world

Southbank Centre

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-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 the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery as well as The Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

About MasterCard

MasterCard cardholders can enjoy exclusive experiences and privileged access to the very best the Festival of the World has to offer by visiting southbankcentre.co.uk/MasterCard.

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Arts Council England

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2011 and 2015, we will invest £1.4 billion of public money from government and an estimated £1 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

About the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Spread over four years, it is designed to give everyone in the UK a chance to be part of London 2012 and inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially among young people. The culmination of the Cultural Olympiad will be the London 2012 Festival, a spectacular 12-week nationwide celebration bringing together leading artists from across the world with the very best from the UK, from Midsummer's Day on 21 June and running until the final day of the Paralympic Games on 9 September 2012. The London 2012 Festival will celebrate the huge range, quality and accessibility of the UK's world-class culture including dance, music, theatre, the visual arts, fashion, film and digital innovation, giving the opportunity for people across the UK to celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Principal funders of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival are Arts Council England, Legacy Trust UK and the Olympic Lottery Distributor. BP and BT are Premier Partners of the Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival. For more details on the programme, to download the London 2012 Festival official guide, and to sign up for information visit www.london2012.com/festival.

Bresi-Ando consults

A global, boutique PR consultancy specialising in growing awareness, positioning and connecting brands with talent for a variety of clients in the luxury, arts, consumer tech, entertainment and music industries. One arm of Bresí-Ando consults' is to promote brands that have their roots in Africa or have an African focus. Past clients such as [Helen Jennings](#) (editor of Arise and author of New African Fashion), [Mo Saïque](#) Shoes, [Joansu](#) jewellery, [Christie Brown](#), [Villa Monticello](#), Ghana, have all benefitted from the insight, expertise and connections of the consultancy. <http://www.bresi-ando.com>.