

# THIS IS CROYDON

## LONDON BOROUGH OF CULTURE

**PRESS RELEASE: For immediate release**

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### **Croydon reveals a big, bold and cross-cultural programme for its year as London Borough of Culture 2023, and everyone is welcome**

**Grassroots talent, unsung cultural heroes, young people and disability led productions take centre stage in Croydon's change-making year as The Mayor of London's London Borough of Culture. The schedule includes:**

- **Oratorio of Hope**, a brand-new commission led by **London Mozart Players** and Grammy nominated and Croydon educated **Tarik O'Regan** showcasing the very best of Croydon's young talent through music, spoken word, song, dance, film and visual art
- A range of exciting events including the **Music Heritage Trail** and exhibition which has been funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the first ever play about Croydon's pioneering Black British composer **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**, and - in the borough that spawned the likes of grime legend Stormzy and Mercury and BRIT nominated star Loyle Carner- Croydon will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Hip-Hop** with a range of events
- London's well-loved **Pollock's Toy Museum** popping up in the Whitgift Centre after being forced to close earlier this year
- **Ukraine National Symphony Orchestra**, returning to the UK for the first time in 20 years for a special concert

- **Liberty Festival** in September which kicks off a season of cutting-edge events and new work led by and with D/deaf and disabled people including **SoDaDa's** cabaret; ZooCo's **The Nightshift**; and Savvy Theatre's **Stepping Stones** performance

London Borough of Croydon has today, Tuesday 14 March, unveiled highlights of the striking and surprising projects that are going to showcase the very best of Croydon's diverse and dynamic home-grown talent in its year as The Mayor of London's London Borough of Culture.

**This is Croydon** marks a year of celebrations from April 2023 until March 2024 putting Croydon's unique identity, diverse communities, heritage, culture and creativity front and centre.

Created, directed and presented by the people of the borough through a grassroots up model, **This is Croydon**, hopes to enable positive change and inspire people from all communities to take part in a rich and inclusive programme of events. Reflecting Croydon's youthful vitality and creative spirit, as one of London's youngest boroughs, Croydon's young people will have the chance to take part and lead in new projects, while a rich heritage programme brings stories of Croydon's communities to the fore.

**This is Croydon** is being delivered through a unique collaboration between the cultural organisations and people of the borough in partnership with Croydon Council.

The London Borough of Culture programme is a flagship cultural policy from the Mayor of London, and is supported with further funds from Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**This is Croydon** will offer excellence through multiple art forms - from classical music to hip-hop, from dance to spoken word, from original stage productions to street festivals, to which everyone, and every Londoner, is invited.

## Opening event

**This is Croydon** opens on 1 April 2023 with **Oratorio of Hope** at **Fairfield Halls**, a brand-new commission led by world-acclaimed chamber orchestra **London Mozart Players**. Involving over 250 of the borough's young singers and instrumentalists, the composition is led by Grammy nominated and Croydon educated **Tarik O'Regan**, recently commissioned by His Majesty The King to compose new pieces of music for the Coronation.

Croydon's poet laureate **Shaniqua Benjamin** takes a lead on the poetry and spoken word to share stories of hope for the future, while the choreography is led by **Agudo Dance Company**, alongside **Subrang Arts** and local young people. (Fairfield Halls, 1-2 April 2023)

## Uncovering hidden histories

**This is Croydon** invites visitors to discover Croydon as the birthplace of originals and a hotbed of pioneers, revealing hidden histories. April sees the opening of **Caribbean Influencers**, a new exhibition developed by **Museum of Croydon** together with **National Portrait Gallery**, artist **Kyam (Camara Pinnock)**, Poet Laureate **Shaniqua Benjamin** and local volunteers **Citizen Researchers**. The free exhibition explores the stories and influence of Croydon residents who have shaped Croydon through their Caribbean roots but are often uncredited or underrepresented, including the Met's first female Black police officer **Sislin Fay Allen**, professional boxers and brothers **Clinton and Duke McKenzie** and composer **Ken Burton**.

Another historic Croydon resident and the first Black British recipient of an English Heritage Blue Plaque, composer **Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**, inspires Black British theatre company **Talawa's** new production **Recognition**, premiering in June. **Talawa** will also be highlighting unsung heroes of the area with a new initiative, **Our Croydon**. This collaboration with the Croydon **Museum of Croydon**, supported by The **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, will amplify stories of historical, recent and current figures of African Caribbean heritage who are either from or have lived in Croydon. **Our Croydon** will begin with a call out to participants, training on how to research, developing stories in collaboration with artists, and will culminate in local and online exhibitions.

London's most historic toy museum, **Pollock's Toy Museum Trust**, which was forced to close its central London home due to escalating costs this year, will be popping up in the **Whitgift Centre** in Croydon in 2023. Inspired by the London Borough of Culture, the museum will be bringing highlights from the historic London toy collection to local locations, exploring Croydon's toy making history, and hosting an exciting programme of events.

## Music

Music runs deep in the DNA of Croydon and **This is Croydon** celebrates the music legacy of the borough, which birthed the cutting-edge sounds of punk, dubstep, grime and drill. **This is Croydon** will be marking the **50th Anniversary of Hip Hop** as well as embracing its wider music heritage through a new trail app, plaques, gigs and exhibitions. Highlighting the importance of Croydon to music and music to Croydon, **Music Heritage Trail**, funded by the Heritage Fund, celebrates the rich history of music making in the borough, which spawned the likes of grime legend Stormzy, dubstep pioneers Skream and Benga, punk legends The Damned, and Mercury Prize Album of the Year nominee Loyle Carner.

**Ukraine National Symphony Orchestra** also returns to the UK for the first time in 20 years for a special concert as part of Fairfield's International Symphony Concert Series.

## Community events

Croydon's extraordinary diversity – of ages, races, cultures and religions – has given rise to a creative scene defined by its variety, from world-famous names to the grassroots. Bringing communities together will be a number of festivals – from large-scale events such as **Croydon Pride**, **Croydon Mela**, and the **London Road Carnival**, through to community and on street festivals, such as the **Surrey Street Festival** of music and food, **Croydon Food Festival**, and **Purley Community Festival**.

## **Dance**

Showcasing dance is for everyone, inclusivity champions **Stanley Arts** host **Commons: A Dance Festival**, spanning across two joyful weeks of workshops, parties and dance, all celebrating the glorious diversity of dance with performances by **BirdGang**, **Akademi**, **Thick and Tight** and **Juicy Couture**. **Stanley Arts** joins forces with **Bold Mellon Collective** to bring the community together around dance with **Queer Joy**, an exciting and accessible showcase of multidisciplinary art work and live performances by emerging and early career LGBTQIA+ artists and community members exploring stories of underrepresented queer voices and their personal journeys.

Hip Hop dance company **BirdGang** immerse viewers in **Multiverse**, a new metaverse inspired performance, mixing dance, film, music and digital design, created with local people and produced and presented by **Dance Umbrella**.

## **Empowering young people**

Croydon's young people will have the chance to take part and lead in new projects. A new **Climate Musical - Why on Earth?** – inspires young people in the fight for climate justice and is a newly devised piece by students from The BRIT School, which we will be touring to schools across the borough encouraging environmental responsibility and creative engagement.

The original musical is a new production by current students of Croydon's talent hothouse **The BRIT School**, whose alumni include **Adele**, **Amy Winehouse**, **Cush Jumbo**, **FKA twigs**, **Gemma Cairney**, **Jessie J**, **Kae Tempest** and **Tom Holland**.

Croydon's homegrown and entirely artist- run art space **Turf** presents **Desire Paths**, participatory projects working with artists and young people to design community-driven solutions to town planning and the visual identity of Croydon.

A new **Reuse Recycle Fashion Show** created by apprentice designers led by **Fashion Meets Music**, will see workshop and pop-ups across central Croydon, while over 30 decorated giraffe sculptures hit the streets in Croydon as part of the **Wild in Art Croydon Stands Tall** mass participation arts programme, culminating with sculptures auctioned to support the charity CRISIS.

## **Disabled artist-led work**

**Liberty Festival** comes to Croydon bringing a D/deaf and disabled artist-led programme of ground-breaking art and performance, interactive installations, workshops and debates for all, including **SoDaDa's** cabaret; ZooCo's **The Nightshift**; and Savvy Theatre's **Stepping Stones** performance.

**Savvy Theatre** brings together eleven local community groups in a shared celebration of journey and transformation through a new show **Stepping Stones**, whose cast includes people who are disabled or have experienced homelessness, substance abuse and mental health issues.

### **Architecture and urban environment**

Croydon's history of innovation and modernity will be brought to life by **The Festival of Invention** in South Norwood and through opening up heritage sites and iconic buildings, like **Croydon Airport and Old Palace**, as part of **Open House** and **Heritage Open Days**.

#### **The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said:**

*"Croydon has a rich history of creativity, diversity and talent, and I'm delighted that this will be reflected through a huge range of inspiring art and performances in their year-long programme as my London Borough of Culture. This is Croydon will be a spectacular celebration of the borough's unique identity, heritage and character, bringing together communities and giving grassroots creativity the chance to shine. It will be a fantastic example of how culture can inspire and unleash the potential of the next generation as we build a better London for everyone."*

#### **Jason Perry, Executive Mayor of Croydon, said:**

*"Croydon is home to so many fantastic communities and our year as London Borough of Culture is a chance to celebrate and showcase what makes our borough so special - our people. This is Croydon is unique in that it is truly community-led, developed by our amazing local cultural organisations working in partnership with the council, creating opportunities for residents of all ages, from our borough and beyond. We look forward to welcoming you to Croydon."*

#### **Caterina Loriggio, Creative Consultant, Croydon London Borough of Culture, said:**

*"This is Croydon is going to be a year we can all be proud of. We hope the year of culture will not just inspire, excite, and engage, but also enable change. Croydon has always had our eye on the future and the London Borough of Culture is just the start of the next leg of that journey. Come with us. You are welcome."*

#### **Stuart McLeod, Director England - London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said:**

*"We are thrilled to support this year's London Borough of Culture. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have funded three projects in the programme, bringing to life the incredible heritage on offer in Croydon and giving people a chance to learn more about what's on their doorstep. Heritage is a great way of bringing people together, creating a sense of pride in the community, that in turn can deliver wider economic benefits for Croydon."*

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

In a collaboration between Transport for London and the Mayor's Culture team, a special This is Croydon roundel has been created and will be featured in stations from April, to engage residents and welcome visitors to the borough.

### **London Borough of Culture**

London Borough of Culture is a Mayor of London initiative, launched in June 2017. The award puts culture at the heart of local communities, where it belongs. It shines a light on the character and diversity of London's boroughs and brings culture to everyone, so that all Londoners have the chance to be part of something extraordinary.

### **This is Croydon**

Croydon is proud to be London Borough of Culture 2023, hosting a big, bold and cross-cultural year-long programme of events across the borough from April 2023 until March 2024.

The programme for London Borough of Culture 2023, This is Croydon, will be a celebration of everything Croydon has to offer – created, directed and presented by the people of the borough. From major events with internationally renowned artists performing alongside home-grown talent, to dozens of cultural activities from Croydon's diverse creative communities, the programme will showcase the very best of Croydon to London and the world.

**This is Croydon... and you're welcome.**

**Culturecroydon.com @culturecroydon #ThisisCroydon #CultureCroydon**

**This is Croydon** is being delivered through a unique collaboration between the cultural organisations and people of the borough in partnership with Croydon Council. It is made possible with funds from the Greater London Authority, Arts Council England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**This is Croydon** will leave a tangible legacy in the borough of improved access to and increased engagement in excellent arts and heritage programmes of developed cultural leadership, a more representative and inclusive cultural offer and more opportunities for young people to develop their creative abilities and increased civic pride.

## About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future.  
[www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk)

Follow [@HeritageFundUK](https://twitter.com/HeritageFundUK) on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use [#NationalLotteryHeritageFund](https://twitter.com/NationalLotteryHeritageFund)

Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £46 billion for projects and more than 670,000 grants have been awarded across the UK - the equivalent of more than 240 lottery grants in every UK postcode district. More than £30 million raised each week goes to good causes across the UK.

## About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £440 million of public money from Government and an estimated £93 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk).

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19)

London Borough of Culture is  
a Mayor of London initiative.

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