Hoxton Hall relaunches as a home of Contemporary



The interior of the newly restored Hoxton Hall

Hoxton Hall's newly appointed Artistic Director and CEO Karena Johnson today announces her debut season, setting out a vision to turn Hoxton Hall into a destination for contemporary variety performance, in keeping with the building's history as a home for popular entertainment.

Speaking about her vision for the venue, Karena Johnson said: "My role is to build a new vision for the best kept secret in Hackney. Creating a home for contemporary variety performance, celebrating its music hall roots while developing a 21st century space for entertainment with a real connection to the ever changing communities of Hoxton. The new artistic programme will present high quality performance across the genres of theatre, music, comedy, spoken word, cabaret and circus; alongside nurturing the creation of new works that respond to place and space exploiting the unique viewing experience of this magical music hall. The vision seeks to develop and interchangeable link between artists, audiences and participants surprising and delighting audiences with contemporary performance in the heart of London's most innovative creative industry hubs."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "Music halls have played an important role in our social history. Hoxton Hall, an enduring symbol of the East End's community spirit, is no exception to this tradition. With nearly £2m of HLF money invested, now is the perfect time to thank National Lottery players for helping make this refurbishment project a reality. The building's future is secure for another century's worth of use and will once more be

welcoming visitors of all ages and backgrounds through its doors."

Key highlights from the Autumn 2015 season include:

Hoxton Hall is working in partnership with Secret Cinema on a series of events. In keeping with Secret Cinema's Tell No One experiences, details are under wraps for now but will be revealed in due course.

Rockston Stories, a new performance exploring the area's connection with substance abuse. Using live performed testimonies, stories of people researched locally and Hoxton's news archives, Outside Edge will devise a theatre performance that reflects the splintered, chaotic and at times absurdly comic world of people who have been affected by addiction, chemical or otherwise. The company is made up of people who have personal experiences of addiction, and is directed by artist and theatre-maker Susie Miller with creative support from theatre-giant Mark Rylance.

A programme of live comedy and entertainment including Alex Horne (BBC Radio 4), and Paul Daniels, who will present an evening of intimate magic and showbiz anecdotes.

Back to Live, a live 'magazine show' curated by Oneness Sankara, with poetry, music, discussion and guest interviews.

An interactive installation designed by artist Hannah Bruce activated by a groundbreaking App, which takes users on a tour around the building. Commissioned by Hoxton Hall *A Collection of Small Choices*, draws inspiration from characters, objects and music from the Hoxton Hall archive, offering a unique way to discover the building's history.

A Collection of Small Choices has also provided the inspiration for *A Fitting Space*, a site specific piece from Sophie Arstall, choreographer with SOH! Dance Company, which takes users on a journey with their own personal soundtrack. As pantomime is the variety art form that has remained the most unchanged since Hoxton Hall first opened over 150 years ago, it's appropriate that the season will close with *Snow White,* directed by Karena Johnson.

Notes to editors

About Hoxton Hall

Hoxton Hall has been pioneering East London creative activity since 1863 and is one of the last surviving saloon style Victorian Music Halls. In the Music Hall era, Shoreditch boasted more than ten music halls and although only two remain in East London, the area is once again a hot bed of creativity and young talent. The venue closed for refurbishment in 2013 after its 150th anniversary season and reopens this summer ahead of the autumn 2015 season. Find out more on the Hoxton Hall website.

About Karena Johnson

Karena Johnson is Artistic Director and CEO of Hoxton Hall. She has worked for 17 years as a theatre director, producer and advocate of emerging artists; her pioneering career includes being the first Black woman to run a London venue when she became Artistic Director of The Broadway in Barking. She has also been Director of Loud Talkin', Acting Artistic Director of Contact Theatre in Manchester, Artistic Director of touring theatre company Kushite and spent five years as Head of Theatre Programming at Oval House theatre. She has also been an Associate at Theatre Royal Stratford East, Nottingham Playhouse and NOW festival.

Karena’s work has been recognised by with a TMA special award nomination for 'theatre with cojones' for her Spin season at The Broadway an artistic response to the election (both the national context and local race between Labour and the official opposition the BNP) in 2010. Her recent credits include *Whose Blood* by Alex Burger, a site-specific production at The Old Operating Theatre *“... excellent performances... elevated beyond the ordinary”* Londonist, *The Royal Duchess Superstore* “*Directed by Karena Johnson, The Royal Duchess Superstore is one to watch”* Emily Jones – Bargain Theatre Land and *Sweet Yam Kisses* by Courttia Newland and Pat Cumper at the *Lyric Hammersmith “…production supplies honest emotion well packaged uplift …a serenade for people reaching out to each other” Metro “Must See in London” Washington Post.* Since taking up the post at Hoxton Hall, she is once again the only Black woman running a London venue.

Further information

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Hoxton Hall 1906

Hoxton Hall receives green light for full Heritage Lottery Fund grant