



Press Release

THE IMMORTAL SISTERHOOD LIVE



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- Multi award-winning broadcaster, writer and activist Gemma Cairney honours the legacies of remarkable women in an ensemble-led performance combining music, movement and poetry
- Women celebrated in the work span centuries and continents, including Grace Jones, Wang Zhenyi, Pamela Colman Smith, Audre Lorde, Betty Davis, Marsha P Johnson, Nanny of The Maroons and Pharaoh Hatshepsut
- *The Immortal Sisterhood LIVE* is developed from Cairney's book *The Immortal Sisterhood* (released by Canongate on 13 August)

Gemma Cairney's book *The Immortal Sisterhood* comes to life in an extraordinary music theatre performance offering a reverence to the great women we stand on the shoulders of. Following its World Premiere at Lincoln Center, New York in January 2025, the work makes its UK Premiere this autumn at British Library (18-19 September) and Aviva Studios, home of Factory International (8 October).

Gemma Cairney is a broadcaster, writer, documentary maker, cultural producer and activist, Chair of the Edinburgh Arts Festival and host of Factory International's acclaimed podcast Dream Space. Her

book, *The Immortal Sisterhood* (released by Canongate on 13 August) explores the collective power and wisdom to be found in the lives of 12 remarkable women throughout history.

The Immortal Sisterhood LIVE is a groundbreaking ensemble-led collaboration developed from *The Immortal Sisterhood*. Witness an unforgettable journey of remarkable women, celebrated through a fusion of artforms that transcend time and genre, blending sound, opera, movement, live cello, violin and poetry. From Grace Jones to Pharaoh Hatshepsut and Wang Zhenyi, *The Immortal Sisterhood* and their stories – even in the face of racism, sexism, illness or war – all offer something different to guide us through life.

The Immortal Sisterhood LIVE ensemble features: artist, movement director and choreographer **Mele Broomes**, **Gemma Cairney**, musician and performer **Fay Guiffo**, sound artist **A Jones**, cellist and performance artist **Simone Seales** and voice artist, composer and writer **Roxanne Tataei**.

The performance is followed by **DJSippin' T** playing a set for us all to take part in the ceremony that takes place on the dance floor.

Gemma Cairney said: *"I see representation in the arts as a galvanising and beautiful force for us all. Working on the different parts of The Immortal Sisterhood has been no exception from this feeling... Writing the book, collaborating on the show, returning to live performance, seeking catharsis in ritual... all of it is proving totally life changing and I want the world to experience it."*

John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Factory International said: *"As the host of our podcast, Dream Space, Gemma thoughtfully guides some of the world's most exciting artists on a journey to a space where art has no limits, asking what their ideal world would look like, and what art has the potential to do. In The Immortal Sisterhood LIVE, she invites us into her own space; introducing us to the inspirational women throughout history whose remarkable stories have guided her, and an ensemble of brilliant creatives who bring their stories to life through music, movement and spoken word, offering us a collective experience beyond the page."*

ENDS

Listings information:

The Immortal Sisterhood LIVE

British Library, London
Friday 18 – Saturday 19 September, 7.30pm

Aviva Studios, home of Factory International, Manchester
Thursday 8 October, 8.30pm

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Aviva Studios
Water Street, Manchester M3 4JQ
factoryinternational.org

*Please note press ticket requests are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The Immortal Sisterhood Ensemble:

Mele Broomes
Gemma Cairney
Fay Guiffo
A Jones
Simone Seales
Roxanne Tataei

Creative team:

Art Director: Rebecca Palmer
Costume: Carla Danielle
Cinematographer: Alice Millar
DJ: Sippin 'T
Sound Designer: NikNak
Sound Tech: Isa Ferri
Creative Producer: Nassy Konan
Dramaturgy: Elaine Mitchener

About Gemma Cairney

Gemma Cairney is a multi-award winning broadcaster, published author, production company founder, magpie, and life enthusiast.

Gemma is a writer, broadcaster, documentary maker, journalist, and cultural producer. A former Brit School pupil and fashion stylist, she has presented across the breadth of the BBC, having been the regular presenter of the 1Xtra Breakfast Show, 1Xtra's 1-4 afternoon's slot, the Radio 1 Weekend Breakfast Show, Radio 1's Early Breakfast Show, The Surgery and is host of series The Leisure Society (BBC6 Music) and The Sound Odyssey (BBC Radio 4 & BBC World Service).

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She has written for, edited, and contributed to The Guardian, Company Magazine, Red, Glamour, and Cosmopolitan. She has won Sony awards for her documentaries on subjects such as domestic abuse and produced podcasts and theatre productions.

She was the previous Southbank Artist in Residence and on the Women Of The World (WOW) committee. In 2017, Macmillan published her first book, *Open: A Toolkit for How Magic and Messed-Up Life Can Be*, giving advice and personal insight on subjects ranging from grief, depression, body image, sex and relationships, and everything in between. With the hope of starting a movement to get young people to open up and communicate better, *Open* came out in paperback in 2018, in two books, published as *Open Your Heart* and *Open Your Mind*. Gemma is also the co-author of *Hometown Tales: South Coast*.

She is currently Chair of the Edinburgh Art Festival and host of Factory International's acclaimed Dream Space podcast where she guides artists through their dreams.

Her new book, *The Immortal Sisterhood* is being published by Canongate and will be out on 13 August 2026. Her directorial debut took place with an ensemble-led, show adaptation of the upcoming book - *The Immortal Sisterhood LIVE* - premiering at The Lincoln Center in New York City in January 2025.

About Factory International

Factory International is the organisation behind Manchester International Festival and the city's landmark cultural space, Aviva Studios.

Factory International commissions, produces and presents a year-round programme of original creative work and special events at Aviva Studios, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It also stages the city-wide Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year.

Factory International builds on the legacy of Manchester International Festival, one of the world's leading arts festivals, and the first to be entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Staged every two years in Manchester since 2007, world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work in venues and spaces across Greater Manchester.

Aviva Studios was designed by the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), with Ellen van Loon as lead architect – their first major public building in the UK. Its development was led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and National Lottery funding from Arts Council England.

Ultra-flexible in design, the building is based around large, open, adaptable spaces that can be constantly reconfigured, enabling artists to develop and create large-scale work of invention and

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ambition of a kind not seen anywhere else in the world. A unique canvas to make, explore and experiment, audiences can enjoy the broadest range of art forms - from major exhibitions and concerts to intimate performances and immersive experiences.

Factory International plays an important role in the lives of Greater Manchester residents, bringing jobs, skills, training and creative opportunities. Through the Factory Academy, Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future, while its pioneering creative engagement and artist development programmes create year-round opportunities for local people to get involved, from participating in flagship commissions to shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums.

Factory International is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

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About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our vision, set out in our strategy *Let's Create*, is 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 every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2023 and 2026 we will have invested over £467 million of public money from Government, alongside an estimated £250 million each year from The National Lottery, to help ensure that people in every part of the country have access to culture and creativity in the places where they live. Until Autumn 2025, the National Lottery is celebrating its 30th anniversary of supporting good causes in the United Kingdom: since the first draw was held in 1994, it has raised £49 billion and awarded more than 690,000 individual grants. Visit our website to learn more about our work.

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