

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**23 May 2019**

**“Cosmology, Masculinity and Mental Health take centre stage at Africa Writes 2019”**

Africa Writes, the UK’s biggest celebration of contemporary African writing brought to you by the Royal African Society, returns to The British Library from Friday 5 July to Sunday 7 July 2019 featuring three headline events and a packed festival weekend. Bringing together over 60 of the most influential African writers and thought leaders, this 8th festival edition covers over 20 countries and explores a cross-section of themes and critical ideas about African literature today.

Following on from the likes of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, previous festival headliners, Man Booker shortlisted author **Chigozie Obioma** will headline this year’s Africa Writes. Closing the festival on Sunday, 7 July, Obioma will talk about his writing, Igbo cosmology and the blurred lines between myth and reality in his latest novel *An Orchestra of Minorities*. The event will open with an evocative staged reading of Obioma’s critically acclaimed debut novel, *The Fishermen*, followed by an in-conversation led by award-winning author and curator **Irenosen Okojie**.

Chigozie Obioma says: *“I’m really excited to be a part of this celebration of the written word and to be in company of a cohort of writers from Africa. I’m certain those three days will be like being at a concert in Lagos while in London.”*

Africa Writes 2019 will open on Friday, 5 July, with ***Our Bodies Speak Poetry***, an evening of intergenerational poetry, story-telling and performance exploring the body as a site of power, possibilities and resistance. The event will feature a slate of award-winning poets, writers and activists including **Raymond Antrobus, Adesola Akinleye, Caleb Femi, Jessica Horn, Miss Jacqui, Fatimah Kelleher, Nick Makoha, Sitawa Namwalie, Koleka Putuma** and **Belinda Zhawi**. This event will be BSL interpreted.

On Saturday, 6 July, the evening headline event, delivered in partnership with the Royal Society of Literature, will celebrate **Margaret Busby’s** landmark anthology, ***New Daughters of Africa***. The anthology, which brings together the work of over 200 African women writers, will be brought to life by a panel of award-winning contributing authors including **Bernardine Evaristo, Nadifa Mohamed, Ayòbámi Adébáyò** and **Namwali Serpell**.

Key topics emerging in this year’s festival programme include cosmology, masculinity and fatherhood, mental health and Africans in Europe. Against the dominant backdrop of Brexit, the festival will shine a light on the diverse experiences of the African diaspora communities in the UK, Europe and beyond through a series of book launches and discussions, including **Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi’s *Manchester Happened***, a dazzling collection of stories that re-imagine the journey of Ugandans who chose to make England their home; a double book launch of authors **Johny Pitts’s *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe*** and **Emmanuel Iduma’s *A Stranger’s Pose***; and **Sylvia Ofili’s *German Calendar No December***, a humorous and moving graphic novel on Nigerian-German identity.

Through **Africa in London**, a session in partnership with the Mayor of London's Office, audiences will join in a collective listening exercise and discussion of African Londoners' lived experiences.

Africa Writes will spotlight the national politics of Rwanda and Somalia. Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, award-winning author **Yolande Mukagasana** launches the English translation of *La mort ne veut pas de moi (Not My Time To Die)*. With intimate access into Al Shabaab in Somalia, BBC Africa Editor **Mary Harper** paints the complex picture of life for ordinary people in the group's shadow — stories of tremendous loss, unbearable compromise, and unexpected profit with the launch of *Everything You Have Told Me Is True*.

Africa Writes will once again offer a platform for inspiration and discovery of new writing. Audiences at this year's festival will learn about the latest literary innovations in East Africa, hear from emerging and established queer writers, and be introduced to Angolan literature with **Kalaf Epalanga**. They will also meet the **2019 Caine Prize shortlisted writers**, as well as other writers through **The Reading Salon**. Emerging writers and illustrators focusing on the Young Adult genre will also have the opportunity to pitch to publishing industry experts at the **Meet the Publishers** session. The festival's flagship event, **African Books to Inspire**, will return with a special focus on masculinity.

Africa Writes will continue its programme of workshops, including workshops on Arabic comic strip translation, professional book reviewing with **Kinna Likimani** and storytelling for children and their families. There will also be a carefully curated workshop and event aimed at audiences from 16+. Young people will be inspired to create poetry out of mathematical data in a workshop with **Keisha Thompson** and have a safe space to discuss what it means to be a young Black man in the UK today at **SAFE: Black British Men**, a session titled after **Derek Owusu's** seminal anthology, with **Alex Wheatle** and others. As part of the **Africa Writes: Young Voices** education programme, secondary school students will be able to present their creative writing to a live audience at a showcase event on the afternoon of the Friday, 5 July.

– ENDS –

Festival Press Accreditation is now open [via this link](#).

For Images, Logos and Artist Bios, [Download the Press Pack](#) on Dropbox.

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) @AfricaWritesUK #AfricaWrites2019

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#### Notes to Editors:

1. **Africa Writes** is an annual celebration of contemporary literature from Africa and the diaspora brought to you by The Royal African Society. Launched in 2012, every year Africa Writes showcases established and emerging talent from the African continent and its diaspora in what is now the UK's biggest celebration of contemporary African writing. [www.africawrites.org](http://www.africawrites.org)
2. The **Royal African Society** is a membership organisation that provides opportunities for people to connect, celebrate and engage critically with a wide range of topics and ideas about Africa today. Through our events, publications and digital channels we facilitate mutual understanding between the UK and Africa across academia, business, politics, culture and education. We amplify African voices and interests, reaching a network of more than one million people globally. [www.royalafricansociety.org.uk](http://www.royalafricansociety.org.uk)

- 3. The British Library** is the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world's greatest research libraries. It provides world class information services to the academic, business, research and scientific communities and offers unparalleled access to the world's largest and most comprehensive research collection. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)
- 4. Africa Writes 2019** has been made possible through the financial support of Arts Council England, British Council and the Miles Morland Foundation and the partnership of the British Library and the following organisations: AFREADA, Africa Book Centre, Africa in Words, Afrikult., Book Love, Books & Rhymes, bookshy books, BORN::FREE, Canongate, Cassava Republic, Embassy of Angola, Hurst, Huza Press, Igbo Conference, Kinna Reads, Little, Brown and Company, Mayor of London, Myriad, New Beacon Books, New Perspectives, October Gallery, One Dance UK, One World Publications, Royal Society of Literature, Shubbak Festival, Storymoja, Penguin Random House, Taste Black History, The Caine Prize for African Writing, The Literary Consultancy, Trapeze, Writivism and 4<sup>th</sup> Estate.
- 5. Confirmed Line up:** Adesola Akinleye, Afrikult., Aimée Felone, Alex Wheatle MBE, Amina Jama, Anna Kitson, Ayòbámi Adébáyò, Belinda Zhawi, Bernardine Evaristo, Caitlin Pearson, Caleb Femi, Chibundu Onuzo, Chigozie Obioma, Derek Owusu, Emmanuel Iduma, Fatimah Kelleher, Idil Osman, Inua Ellams FRSL, Irenosen Okojie FRSL, Jasmine Richards, JC Niala, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, Jessica Horn, Joanna Brown, Johny Pitts, Kalaf Epalanga, Kayo Chingonyi, Keisha Thompson, Kinna Likimani, Koleka Putuma, Louisa Egbunike, Margaret Busby OBE, Mary Harper, Michael Donkor, Michelle Tiwo, Miss Jacqui, Momtaza Mehri, Nadifa Mohamed, Namwali Serpell, Nariman Youssef, Nick Makoha, Okechukwu Nzelu, Olivia Bellas, Olumide Popoola, Peter Kimani, Rachel Long, Raymond Anrobus, Robtel Pailey, Ruth Sutoyè, Samantha Williams, Sandra Jackson-Opoku, Sarah Ozo-Irabor, Sawad Hussain, Siana Bangura, Sitawa Namwalie, Sulaiman Addonia, Sumayya Lee, Sylvia Ofili, Theresa Lola, Yolande Mukagasana, Yomi Sode, Yovanka Paquette Perdigao, Zaahida Nabagereka and Zoe Norridge.
- 6. Countries represented include:** Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, South Africa, UK, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe

#### Listing Information

#### FESTIVAL (Adults and family)

#### Africa Writes 2019

**Friday 5 July, 14:00 – Sunday 7 July, 18:30**

The British Library, 96 Euston Rd, London NW1 2DB [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

Nearest tube: King's Cross

Ticketed headline events & day passes £7.20 - £20

Festival website: [africawrites.org](http://africawrites.org)

Ticket booking link: [bit.ly/AW2019Tickets](http://bit.ly/AW2019Tickets)

#### Chigozie Obioma in conversation and *The Fishermen*

#### Part of Africa Writes 2019

**Sunday 7 July, 15:30 - 18:30, The British Library**

**Ticket Price: £20 - £12**

Ticket booking link: <https://www.bl.uk/events/africa-writes-chigozie-obioma-in-conversation>

#### New Daughters of Africa

#### Part of Africa Writes 2019

**Saturday 6 July 2019, 19:00 - 20:30, The British Library**

**Ticket Price: £15 - £9**

Ticket booking link: <https://www.bl.uk/events/new-daughters-of-africa>

#### Our Bodies Speak Poetry

#### Part of Africa Writes 2019

**Friday 5 July, 19:00 – 21:00 (doors at 18:30), The British Library**

**Ticket Price: £12 - £7.20**

Ticket booking link: <https://www.bl.uk/events/africa-writes-our-bodies-speak-poetry>