

The Music is Black Festival from East Bank at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park Free summer music programme preview: curators announced, and line-up for the first festival weekend

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The Music is Black Festival curators and choreographers. Photography by Adama Jalloh.

A major new addition to London's international cultural calendar for 2026, The Music is Black Festival from East Bank at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park encompasses an eight-month season of events celebrating Black British music.

Between June and September, four specially programmed summer weekends of live music and performance, each responding to a different theme, take place across two stages in the Park (The Waterfront Stage and Mid Terrace). Meanwhile, with The Dance Floor Is Black, Sadler's Wells East (The Dance Floor) becomes the third stage and social dance hub for the festival with choreographer-curated nights and family activity in the daytime.

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The four weekends:

1. **The Music is Ours:** Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 June
Curated by [Footsie](#) and [The King Original Soundsystem](#), [YolanDa Brown OBE DL](#), [Soul Mama](#), [My Runway Group](#) and [Kloé Dean](#)
2. **Power and Respect:** Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 July
Curated by [Jamz Supernova](#), [BORN N BREAD](#), [Yazmin Lacey](#), [TYSON](#) and [Jade Hackett](#)
3. **Queer Frequencies:** Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 August
Curated by [Shy One](#), [Donnie Sunshine](#), [Mark-Ashley Dupé](#), [Joel Mignott](#) and [Zinzi Minott](#)
4. **Black to the Future:** Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September
Curated by [FLOHIO](#), [The Blues Project](#) and [Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe](#)

Inspired by V&A East Museum's inaugural exhibition 'The Music is Black: A British Story', the four weekends of live music and performance are built to reflect the breadth and depth of the impact made by Black music. The programme spans a wide range of genres, designed to engage London's diverse audiences and communities.

"This year, East Bank truly comes alive. After more than 25 years working in the arts, I remain continually inspired by the spirit of collaboration that defines our sector and especially by the scale and ambition of what East Bank has achieved. Building on a rich tapestry of partnership and creativity, we have brought together major institutions with a shared commitment to engaging communities and reimagining how we tell our collective stories from multiple perspectives. The result is the launch of the new Festival from East Bank. In its inaugural year, the festival celebrates Black British music, marking not only a landmark cultural moment but also a powerful statement of East Bank's commitment to collaboration, representation, and shared storytelling."
– Tamsin Ace, director of East Bank

"British music wouldn't be where it is today without Black artists. They are the originators, and it is in such an exciting place right now. The four Festival weekends showcase an entire kaleidoscope of Black music. Our curators represent all corners of sound and I'd love people to come away feeling like they've experienced something bold that has never been presented in this way before, because we are cooking something really special for everyone."

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– Gillian Jackson, lead curator

East Bank represents the biggest ever cultural investment by the Mayor of London – where creativity, innovation and learning come together to inspire the city and unlock opportunities for local young people.

“The Music is Black Festival is a wonderful demonstration of how East Bank is bringing together some of our country’s top institutions to inspire generations to come. It pays tribute to the huge influence Black music has had on shaping modern British identity through music, fashion and culture. Across four weekends, the festival will fill Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park with fantastic music, culture and creativity for Londoners and visitors to enjoy, as we continue to build a better London for everyone.”

– Justine Simons OBE, Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries

The Music is Black Festival is the first festival devoted to spotlighting the creativity, collaboration and community that define East Bank’s partnerships with local people and organisations across east London.

“The Dance Floor is Black is a chance for people to come and celebrate through social dance at Sadler’s Wells East. We’ve intentionally made sure that there are multiple ways in for communities to gather with offers for families, people who prefer a gentler day party, and for those who like to go into the night. I’ve picked these four choreographers because I believe they are part of the next wave of Black British talent who are pushing the artform forward whilst being extremely clear on who they are and where they come from, each responding to the culture in distinct and resonant fashion. Collaborating with these artists has been thrilling. They are not just co-curating but creating original works that respond to the themes of the festival. They’ve each created extremely special environments that bring art forms together on The Dance Floor, welcoming communities into a space of reverence celebrating Black British culture now.”

– Rob Jones, associate artistic director, Sadler’s Wells

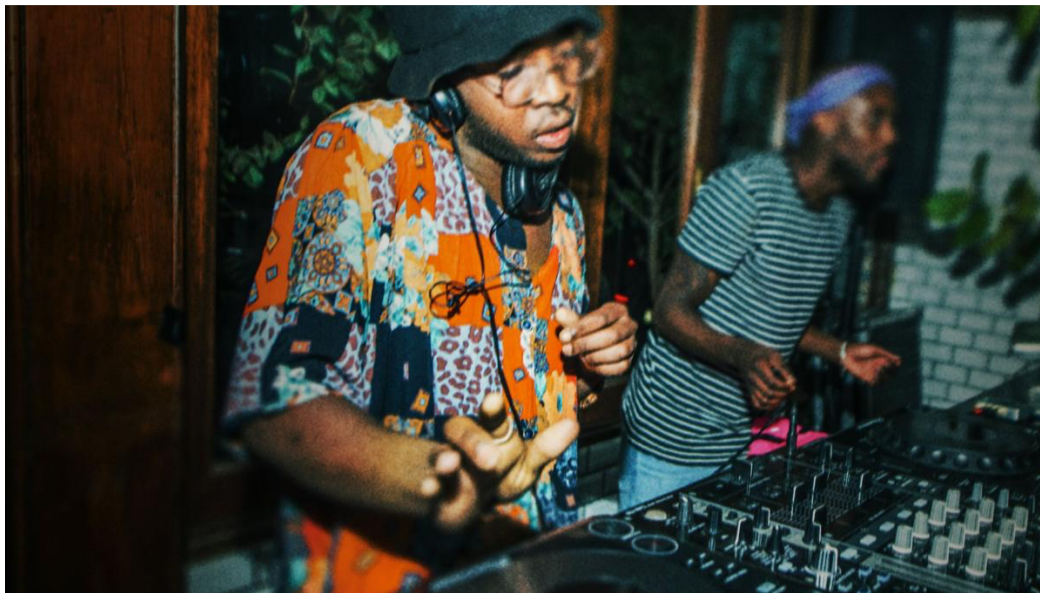
The open-air festival weekends are free to attend. Registration is optional from Wednesday, 6 May via Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park’s website:

queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/themusicisblackfestival

Bloomberg Connects is the official digital guide for East Bank and the East Bank Festival. Find all East Bank content with behind-the-scenes insights on the Bloomberg Connects app.

Weekend 1: The Music is Ours (13–14 June)

A 'block party' in the birthplace of Grime, honouring east London's Soundsystem legacy



Main image credit: Hangula Lucas

From left: Footsie, Kloé Dean, Yolanda Brown and My Runway Group

Curated by [Footsie](#) and [The King Original Soundsystem](#), [Yolanda Brown OBE DL](#), [Soul Mama](#), [My Runway Group](#) and [Kloé Dean](#)

Exploring the impact that Grime's sound has had on Black music and culture today, The Music is Ours is set to be an intergenerational community weekend that celebrates east London and the roots of its culture. Combining the carnival spirit and Soundsystem culture with a block-party vibe, the inaugural family-friendly weekend shines a light on east London's finest, recognising Grime's game-changing impact on sound and bass.

Saturday 13 June, curated by Fotsie: Fotsie's father, Farda Waz, made the legendary soundsystem King Original which Fotsie has adopted today. Known for his role in [Newham Generals](#), Fotsie is one of east London's treasures, and a beacon within the Grime community. His artistic and cultural legacies are deeply interwoven with the very fabric of the genre, from its gritty realism to foundational dub roots. Fotsie's curated lineup includes:

- King Original
- King Original & D Double E
- Danniella Dee & ET ROCKERS
- Tailor Jae
- Nicole Blakk
- JayaHadADream
- Eljé
- Mak10
- Mimi Mxnroe
- Kruz Leon
- Snowman
- Supa D & Terminal 4
- Rebel clash
- Hughie Izachaar
- Kingjay
- Tafara
- Sir Spyro
- Killa P
- Gussie P

Sunday 14 June, curated by Yolanda Brown OBE DL and Soul Mama: An unforgettable celebration of sound, culture and connection, showcasing the richness, rhythm and legacy of Black music across generations and genres. From the uplifting spirit of Gospel and the deep grooves of Soul, to the pulse of Reggae, the energy of Afrobeats and the improvisational brilliance of Jazz, this is a day where musical worlds meet on one powerful stage. More than a concert, this is a celebration of Black excellence, storytelling and shared experience through music that lifts the soul and celebrates heritage through sound.

The Mid Terrace stage is curated by [My Runway Group](#), the discipline-blending collective known for transforming traditional spaces into dynamic hubs for contemporary African and diasporic creativity.

Sunday's line-up includes:

- Yolanda Brown
- My Runway Group
- Acantha Lang
- Melodees from Heaven
- Koyesax and The Fortune Collective
- Brit Funk Association

'The Music Is Ours' Weekender at Sadler's Wells East

On Saturday 13 June, [Kloé Dean](#) presents Garage X Grime Reload, an evening inspired by the respective music scenes, which includes a new commissioned duet, [Mr S](#) as the house DJ and a very special guest set from [DJ Sticky](#), known for hits including 'GOLLY GOSH' and 'Boo' with Miss Dynamite which now celebrates its 25th year. Kloé Dean, a renowned dancer and choreographer who has worked with Little Simz, Ezra Collective, Cleo Sol and SAULT, and was Associate Choreographer on Sadler's Wells East's opening show Our Mighty Groove, brings her signature style to the programme.

During the day, from 12–3pm, east London-based Flykid bring fun for all the family with hip hop, R'n'B and a pop party from the creators of Supa Dupa Fly. Suitable for all ages.

On Sunday 14 June, [Breakin' Convention](#) will take over The Dance Floor with exhibition battles and DJs in the world of Soundsystem culture and Grime.

BASSTONE PLAYGROUND an immersive play installation

Primary school children from [Culture Within Newham](#)'s Children's Board have commissioned artist and DJ [Linett Kamala](#) to design an immersive play installation for the inaugural festival weekend. The musical environment blends moments of calm, with speakers playing dub, low-fi and chilled instrumentals. BASSTONE MAYPOLE is the world's first LED and sound maypole (premiered at the Light Up Kilburn Festival in February 2026).

2: Power and Respect (11–12 July)

A celebration of Black women and non-binary people in all of their glory



Main image credit: Flashpop

From left: Jamz Supernova, BORN N BREAD, TYSON and Yazmin Lacey, and Jade Hackett

Curated by [Jamz Supernova](#), [BORN N BREAD](#), [Yazmin Lacey](#), [TYSON](#) and [Jade Hackett](#)

Smashing together a melange of partners working across legacy and future-facing live music and DJ culture, the second weekend's programme centres Black women's contribution to music on stage, behind the scenes and across the infrastructures that make scenes possible. This weekend represents a pivotal moment to document, celebrate and amplify the role of Black women in shaping sound, space and cultural movement, while setting a precedent for how festivals can more equitably platform women who define the future of music.

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[Full line-up to be announced]

Saturday 11 July, curated by Jamz Supernova: Known for championing artists at every stage of their journey, Jamz brings her signature approach to storytelling through music, bridging generations, scenes and cultures with intention and care. Saturday's line-up embodies her mission to connect sonic histories with future-facing sounds.

Sunday 12 July: Curated by Yazmin Lacey, TYSON and BORN N BREAD: Yazmin Lacey and TYSON step into the role as architects of a future-facing sonic world, bringing their distinct artistic languages together to shape a stage rooted in intention, experimentation and emotional depth.

Founded as a sisterhood of women determined to platform diverse voices, BORN N BREAD bring a decade-long commitment to community-building, equity and grassroots discovery into the heart of the programme. Rather than simply programming established names, BORN N BREAD are actively opening the door, offering up-and-coming DJs and artists a platform to break into festival spaces and connect with wider audiences through a DJ competition designed to spotlight and elevate new talent.

'Power and Respect' Weekender at Sadler's Wells East

On Saturday 11 July, as part of the Power and Respect weekend celebrating Black women, [Jade Hackett](#)'s Let Love Be Your Rock will showcase original group work set to Lovers Rock and Reggae music, and a live set from The Queen of Lovers Rock, Carroll Thompson. On Sunday's Dance Stage 12 July, DJ's [L'attise Rhoden](#) and [Glade Marie](#) will be sharing the decks.

3: Queer Frequencies (22–23 August)

Bringing together the Queer collectives and communities that shape the rich tapestry of London's queer scene



Main image credit: Leo Patrizi
From left: Shy One, Joel Mignott and Zinzi Minott

Curated by [Shy One](#), [Donnie Sunshine](#), [Mark-Ashley Dupé](#), [Joel Mignott](#) and [Zinzi Minott](#)

Exploring the evolution of Black music, tracing a journey from disco through to the birth of house music, Queer Frequencies will celebrate the sound, legacy and future of Black Queer music culture from underground club spaces and grassroots collectives to the globally recognised artists shaping culture and dancefloors today.

The Queer Frequencies weekend creates space to honour the movements whose influence runs through decades of nightlife and organising, while opening the floor for new generations to connect, collaborate and move forward together. Across DJ sets, live music and shared moments, the programme will take you on an unexpected journey from forgotten cult classics to high-energy dance music and into the beyond.

[Full line-up to be announced]

'Queer Frequencies' Weekender at Sadler's Wells East

On Saturday 22 August, [Zinzi Minott](#)'s Together We Felt The Bass responds to the Queer Frequencies weekend with an evening of dance, poetry and sound art inspired by Queer nightlife and will celebrate drum and bass, dancehall, jungle; collaborators for this evening include the DJ GIN_, and poet and sound artist [Remi Graves](#). On Sunday 23 August, Queer carnival collective [Faggamuffin Bloc Party](#) will host a full-day pre-carnival party with DJs, MCs and dancers.

4: Black to the Future (12–13 September)

Bending genres and pushing the boundaries of storytelling, imagination and science fiction



Main image credit: Atlantide Phototravel
From left: FLOHIO, The Blues Project and Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe

Curated by [FLOHIO](#), [The Blues Project](#) and [Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe](#)

Bringing together artists who bend genres and push the boundaries of storytelling, imagination and science fiction, the Black to the Future programme is rooted in ideas of futurism and possibility. It celebrates musicians and creatives expanding what contemporary Black music and culture can sound and feel like.

The weekend carries a strong intergenerational spirit, welcoming families, neighbours and audiences of all ages, creating a space where forward-looking creativity sits alongside a deep sense of local connection.

[Full line-up to be announced]

Saturday, curated by FLOHIO

Nigerian-born, South London-raised [FLOHIO](#) is known for her genre-defying sound and experimental approach to rap. Blending elements of hip hop, grime and electronic music, her work is characterised by high-energy delivery, unconventional production, and a forward-looking, often futuristic aesthetic.

Sunday, curated by The Blues Project

Founded by Simi Agbaje, [The Blues Project](#) collective takes a community-centred approach to platforming forward-thinking and boundary-pushing talent, harnessing the power of the internet while creating meaningful in-person experiences that connect artists and audiences. Through its online content and live events, it has built one of R&B's most credible communities, championing outstanding rising and underground talent.

'Black to the Future' Weekender at Sadler's Wells East

On Saturday 12 September, [Dannielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe](#) takes the reins for Black to the Future weekend with [Soul System](#): Afrofuture Funk an evening celebrating Brit Funk music with an Afrofuturistic twist. Her evening will feature live performances, singing and music from legendary DJs. In a full-circle moment, Rhimes also led creative for the London 2012 Olympics.

Returning on Saturday 12 September, 12–3pm, east London-based Flykid will bring more fun for all the family with hip hop, R'n'B and a pop party from the creators of Supa Dupa Fly.

On Sunday 13 September, to close the festival, [Poetic Funk](#) – a DJ collective led by Mark Alexander – will deliver an Afrofuturism-inspired set, drawing on their long-standing passion for London's music scene and celebrating brit and jazz funk, afro futurism and 80s soul through vibrant, community-driven events.

Behind the scenes of the festival

East Bank Creative Academy

In partnership with London Legacy Development Corporation, East Bank is continuing its work with the [Good Growth Hub](#), a creative industries skills and training centre based at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, to deliver the East Bank Creative Academy. The programme delivered by A New Direction supports children and young people across London to develop their creativity, shape culture, and access pathways into the sector.

As part of the Festival, the Academy will work with East Bank partners and local creative organisations to present a programme of careers events and masterclasses inspired by the festival themes. These sessions will connect young people with industry professionals, helping them build networks and gain first-hand insight into careers in the creative industries, alongside 16–20 commissioned freelance roles supporting pathways into employment. These roles will span social media and marketing, photography, content creation, event management and production, artist liaison, stage management, and sound and lighting. [More information is available here.](#)

Beyond the weekends

Eight months of festival programming from East Bank's partners

As well as live music weekends The Music is Black Festival encompasses a programme of music, exhibitions, talks, screenings, dance and digital content taking place at all East Bank institutions throughout 2026. Featuring free talks, screenings and exhibitions presented by UCL and London College of Fashion, UAL; and unique contributions from V&A East and the BBC, diving deep into the history of Black British music.

UAL presents: Resonant Matter

14 April – 14 June 2026

Free exhibition

Resonant Matter explores how London's underground culture is powered by the music and fashion born from its diverse communities – from pirate radio and street protests to sound-system culture and club nights.

arts.ac.uk/colleges/london-college-of-fashion/cultural-programme/resonant-matter

UCL talks and screenings

23 April – 3 December 2026

UCL presents a series of talks and screenings exploring and honouring Black British music's contribution to fashion, film and sport as well as investigating its impact not just in London, but across the UK. The programme features reggae legend Dennis Bovell, Mercury Prize-winning Femi Koleoso, queen of soul Beverley Knight MBE, fashion icon, Bianca Saunders, and many more. The series is curated by UCL's Dr Clive Chijioke Nwonka, Academic-in-Residence for the festival, whose research spans Film Studies, Literature, Cultural Studies, Black Studies, and Art History.

ucl.ac.uk/events/events/2026/apr/music-black-festival-ucl-talks-and-screening

BBC Bitesize

BBC Bitesize has launched a series of resources for secondary school teachers celebrating the contribution of Black Music makers from the 1900s to the present day. These classroom films cover everything from the popularity of jazz in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s to the evolution of UK Garage and Grime and Stormzy's headline stage performance at the 2019 Glastonbury Festival, all developed in collaboration with V&A East Museum.

bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/articles/z6mxdnb

BBC's The Music is Black digital hub

Across TV, radio, iPlayer, Sounds and online, the BBC reflects and celebrates some of the key genres, personalities, scenes and music that define the last 125 years of Black Music in the UK through a variety of bespoke content and programmes. The project has been shaped in collaboration with V&A East Museum's inaugural exhibition and celebrates the important contributions of Black British music to the UK's cultural landscape. This special season of programming is available on BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds and from the dedicated webpage, which contains archive pieces as well as all the latest content including an in-depth visual and audio DJ mixtape, curated by Shortee Blitz and Beat A Maxx for Radio 1Xtra and iPlayer.

bbc.co.uk/themusicisblack

The Music Is Black Mixtape by the BBC

Celebrating 100 years of Black Music in the UK with a fast paced mixtape, featuring over 200 artists and tracks, from the earliest performers through to those from the present day. DJs Shortee Blitz and Beat A Maxx take you through the history of UK Black music and the impact it has had on cultural life: from the Black singers, Black

musicians and Black band-leaders of the early 20th century, right through to the Black rappers, Black producers and visionaries of the 21st century. The Music Is Black Mixtape combines mash-ups and mixes with genre-defining anthems and overlooked gems to create a unique mix. Produced by the BBC. The Music Is Black is a collaboration with V&A East Museum.

bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002vf1g

back2back: Up Ya Archives x Rendezvous Projects at V&A East Museum and V&A East Storehouse

Saturday 16 May

V&A East's flagship live programme back2back amplifies diverse local and global stories through live performance, films, installations, talks, hands-on workshops and more across V&A East Museum and V&A East Storehouse. As part of The Music is Black Festival, this year's artist-led takeover has been shaped by Nia Archives through her creative platform Up Ya Archives. Co-curated with Rendezvous Projects, the programme explores how music travels across time and geography, and how histories are constructed, circulated and contested.

vam.ac.uk/event/ZEKm3jP1/back2back-up-ya-archives-with-nia-archives-may-2026

Notes for editors

For all enquiries about East Bank, please contact eastbank@zetteler.co.uk OR +44 (0)7800 995697. [The press image bank can be found here.](#)

Further line-up details will be announced throughout the summer.

Stage locations – plan your visit

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is vast, with lots to do, see and explore. It's useful to get to know the Park better to make your visit as smooth as possible. Download the map here to have it ready for when you need it. The Information Point is located near the main entrance next to Westfield, in Endeavour Square, if you have any questions for our team.

- The Waterfront Stage: what3words.com/drives.active.snap
- Mid Terrace: what3words.com/junior.origin.intervals
- Sadler's Wells East: what3words.com/float.given.noisy

The outdoor Festival will be 12–7pm on Saturdays and 12–5pm on Sundays. For more information visit queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/themusicisblackfestival.

About East Bank

East Bank is the UK's newest culture and education quarter at the heart of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. It's the place where everything happens – entertainment, inspiration and discovery – and it is open to everyone who visits, lives and works in east London. East Bank is a unique collaboration between cultural institutions, world-leading universities and the people of the four neighbouring Growth Boroughs (Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest).

East Bank is made up of five partner institutions: BBC Music Studios; London College of Fashion, UAL; Sadler's Wells East; UCL East campus and V&A East Museum and Storehouse. It is the largest ever cultural investment by the Mayor of London, and marks a commitment to long-term, world-class culture and education in east London.

East Bank provides skills and jobs for local people, brings more than 10,000 students to the site, and attracts thousands of visitors from London and beyond. East Bank will help cement the capital's reputation as a world leader in culture, education and innovation, creating 2,500 jobs and £1.5 billion of economic benefit. More information on East Bank can be found [here](#).

About Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is a vibrant east London destination where culture, creativity and community converge. Built on the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is now an innovation district where people can live, work and play – bringing new homes, jobs and opportunities while driving long-term growth and investment across east London, the capital and the UK.

Spread across 560 acres, it brings together dynamic neighbourhoods, diverse communities, world-class cultural, entertainment and sporting venues, leading education and research institutions and a food and drink scene, all set within expansive parklands, historic waterways and rich biodiversity.

At its heart lies a collaborative ecosystem anchored by innovation leaders, universities and East Bank – the UK’s most ambitious cultural and education quarter, home to BBC Music Studios, UAL’s London College of Fashion, UCL’s East campus, Sadler’s Wells East and V&A East Museum and Storehouse. Working alongside local entrepreneurs and communities, these globally recognised institutions develop, test and scale bold ideas in real-world conditions that deliver tangible benefits for east London and beyond.

[QueenElizabethOlympicPark.co.uk](https://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk)

About Tamsin Ace

In September 2023, Tamsin became the first Director of East Bank, bringing a wealth of leadership experience across the UK’s most influential cultural institutions. She brings together the cultural, educational and inclusive talent ambitions of the five partners to reinforce East Bank’s role as a leading cultural quarter.

Tamsin was previously Head of Cultural Programming at London College of Fashion, UAL and Director of Creative Programmes and Collections at the newly renovated Museum of the Home, where she also introduced new cultural strategies and creative methodology as part of both organisations’ transformation programmes.

Prior to this role, Tamsin spent 12 years at Southbank Centre, culminating in her role as Head of Public Programme. Tamsin’s responsibilities included curating an ambitious programme of annual festivals and special projects.

About Bloomberg Connects

Bloomberg Connects is a free, best-in-class app designed for cultural organisations to inform, engage, delight, and grow audiences. Driven by Bloomberg Philanthropies' commitment to the arts as a way of improving lives, we are dedicated to inspiring users and expanding the sector's nimbleness, collaboration, and impact. Discover more about East Bank and enjoy exclusive content on the Bloomberg Connects app for free:

guides.bloombergconnects.org/en-US/guide/EastBankPresents

Curators "who's who" – The Music is Black Festival

