



BROUGHT TO YOU
BY
THE ROYAL
AFRICAN SOCIETY
30 OCT - 8 NOV 2020



London's biggest celebration of African cinema, Film Africa, comes to London cinemas and BFI Player this month

30 October - 8 November
Physical screenings: BFI Southbank & Rich Mix
Online screenings: BFI Player
filmafrica.org

London, Thursday 1 October 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Film Africa, London's biggest celebration of African and African diaspora cinema presented by the Royal African Society, returns for its 9th edition from **Friday 30 October to Sunday 8 November 2020**. Showcasing **45 titles** from **14 African countries**, including **26 UK, European and World premieres**, Film Africa will host **12** socially-distanced screenings at BFI Southbank and Rich Mix as well as featuring a selection of **8 narrative and documentary films** on BFI Player - the festival's first online collaboration with a streaming platform in its 10-year history.

Click here to watch the [Film Africa 2020 trailer](#).



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This year's selection of films mirrors the combined minds and sensibilities of three curators, based in three corners of Africa - **Aseye Tamakloe** in Accra, Ghana (West); **Nyambura M. Waruingi** in Nairobi, Kenya (East); and **Katarina Hedrén** in Johannesburg, South Africa. The films – feature-length and shorts, fiction and documentary – reflect a multitude of experiences, subject matters and styles, with stories unfolding on the African continent as well as in its Diaspora.

Sheila Ruiz, Deputy Director at the Royal African Society and Film Africa Director, said: *“The Royal African Society is delighted to present this year’s Film Africa - an eclectic collection of films, to be screened in cinemas and online. COVID-19 has disrupted the entire world and the film festival space is no exception. We hope and trust that this year’s festival experience will be one of community and sharing, in the cinema and online, at home with friends and family. We are also very excited to announce our partnership with the BFI Player for this year’s festival. This new online access will enable audiences anywhere in the UK to enjoy Film Africa for the first time from the comfort of their own homes.”*

Stuart Brown, BFI Head of Programme and Acquisition, said: *“We’re pleased to see Film Africa back at venues including BFI Southbank for this year’s festival, and to celebrate and showcase work by and about African people and the African diaspora in our cultural programme. With the pandemic having challenged all of us in film exhibition to think in new and innovative ways, and online screenings and events being a big part of the viewing experience at the moment, we’re also delighted that this year’s festival will be presented online on BFI Player, and that support from the BFI Audience Fund will also help the festival reach new audiences right across the UK.”*

The festival launches on Friday 30 October at BFI Southbank with the European premiere of award-winning Nigerian director Akin Omotoso’s ***The Ghost and the House of Truth***. Set in Lagos, Nigeria, the film follows Bola Ogun, a dedicated counsellor who brokers reconciliation sessions between convicts and their victims. The film recently won *Best World Narrative Feature* at the Urban World Film Festival in New York. The European premiere of ***Barakat***, by emerging director Amy Jephta, is the first Afrikaaps Muslim film to be produced in South Africa, and will close the festival on Sunday 8 November at BFI Southbank. The Opening and Closing films will also be available on BFI Player and audiences will be able to join Live Director Q&As on Facebook, which will be British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreted, as part of the films’ planned Watch Parties.



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The filmmakers represented in the Film Africa 2020 selection address new and old concerns, each in their own distinct and unique voice, with empathy, and in ways that both reflect and stimulate boundless imagination. There are films that speak of secrets, taboos, of painful memories and unhealed wounds, at individual, family and community levels.

Thanks to a BFI Audience Fund Award, using funds from the National Lottery, Film Africa will reach more audiences across the UK than ever before.

Special strands this year include **BEYOND NOLLYWOOD**, presented by guest curator Nadia Denton and celebrating new wave audio-visual content from Nigeria; and **HERE / NOT HERE**, presented in partnership with Deaffest, the UK's leading Deaf-led Film & Arts Festival.

At Rich Mix in East London, Film Africa will screen a selection of features and documentaries including a Double Screening of Kenyan documentaries *I am Samuel* and *Kenyan, Christian, Queer (UK Premiere)* with live Director's Q&A. Filmed over five years, *I am Samuel* follows the story of a young man who struggles with his new life in Nairobi, while *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* introduces us to the first LGBT church in Nairobi, the Cosmopolitan Affirming Community, which seeks to promote an inclusive and progressive form of Christianity, in a rather conservative society.

In addition to the core film programme, Film Africa will host a series of virtual events - including live Director Q&As, panel debates and a masterclass on curating African cinema - which anyone in the world will be able to access and enjoy. As part of the online festival experience, there will be **Watch Parties** and at-home **Dine & View** screenings, which will bring a sense of community to all those involved.

Film Africa's mission remains the same - to offer a platform to showcase and celebrate the best contemporary African cinema in London and the UK. As in previous years, the festival will once again present a programme of innovative shorts in competition for the annual **Baobab Award for Best Short Film**, judged by a panel of industry experts. The **Film Africa Audience Award for Best Feature Film** also returns to give festival audiences a vote. Both awards carry a cash prize of £1,000 and will be announced on Sunday 8 November.

Film Africa 2020 has been made possible thanks to the support of the BFI Audience Fund, awarding funds from the National Lottery, and the Miles Morland Foundation.

For full programme information and online booking, please visit: filmafrica.org.

Book tickets for physical screenings at the BFI Southbank at bfi.org.uk and Rich Mix richmix.org.uk. Watch online screenings on BFI Player player.bfi.org.uk.



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For Film Africa 2020 publicity materials, please [click here](#). For further information and to request a screening link, please contact Beth O'Connor at press@filmafrica.org.uk or 07495 941 893.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

1. **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 share insight, instigate debate and facilitate mutual understanding between the UK and Africa. We amplify African voices and interests in academia, business, politics, the arts and education, reaching a network of more than one million people globally.
2. **Film Africa** is the Royal African Society's biennial festival celebrating the best contemporary cinema from Africa and its diaspora. Established in 2011, the festival offers a respected platform for African film and increased film choice for London audiences.
3. **BFI Player** <https://player.bfi.org.uk/> is the greatest global cinema on demand; the go-to destination for all film lovers in the UK, that offers a different type of streaming experience. There are brand new releases to watch on rental and a subscription service expertly curated by BFI programmers and special guests, offering classic and cult films. Recent collections include selections by Tilda Swinton and Bong Joon Ho and a huge range of Japanese cinema in JAPAN2020. Also available, completely free for anyone to view, are films and collections from the BFI National Archive and regional archives, including 120 years of BRITAIN ON FILM. BFI Player is accessible through the BFI website and through a range of video platforms, including Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV.
4. The **Miles Morland Foundation** is a London-based registered charity, which makes grants in areas reflecting its founder's interests. The Foundation's main aim is to support entities in Africa, which allow Africans to get their voices better heard with a particular focus on contemporary African writing. The Foundation awards a small number of annual writing scholarships for works of fiction and non-fiction. The scholars receive £18,000.00 paid over the course of a year.
5. The **BFI Audience Fund** invests £5.6m of National Lottery funding each year to expand access and encourage greater enjoyment of cinema by connecting audiences with great films - in venues, at events and online. We do this by supporting:
 - a. leading exhibition organisations, including film festivals, to deliver culturally rich and nationally significant programmes and events on a year-round basis
 - b. projects which help exhibitors and distributors bring the best of UK and international cinema to audiences across the UK through events, distribution releases, multiplatform distribution proposals, touring film programmes and more
 - c. initiatives that address under-representation and are innovating audience development bfi.org.uk/audience-fund
6. The **National Lottery** Thanks to National Lottery players, up to £600 million of funding has been made available to support communities across the UK during the Coronavirus crisis. The National Lottery is playing a critical role in supporting people, projects and communities during these challenging times. By playing The National Lottery, you are making an amazing contribution to the nationwide-response to combatting the impact of COVID-19 on local communities across the UK.