

PRESS RELEASE

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Southbank Centre
Belvedere Road
London
SE1 8XX

Press Office: +44 (0)20 7921 0888
Ticket Office: +44 (0)844 847 9910
press@southbankcentre.co.uk
www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Embargoed until 00.01am, Thursday 6 October 2016

Southbank Centre to acquire ownership of the world's largest public collection of modern poetry

- **The Poetry Library at London's Royal Festival Hall will become the permanent home to the world's largest public collection of modern poetry, as Arts Council England formally transfers ownership to Southbank Centre in recognition of its long term development and care of the collection**
- **The new ownership coincides with a major new digitisation project, funded by Arts Council England**
- **In celebration, The Poetry Library has commissioned poet Hannah Silva to write a new piece, to be performed at Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival on National Poetry Day (6 October), and broadcast on BBC Radio 3's *The Verb***

www.poetrylibrary.org.uk

On National Poetry Day (Thursday 6 October) The Poetry Library at Southbank Centre announces a new lease of life. The library was established by Arts Council England in 1953 and after numerous homes around London came to its present home at Southbank Centre in 1988. During this time the library has grown to become the largest public collection of modern and contemporary poetry in the world and is open for all to enjoy for free its extensive collection of over 150,000 items.

After a successful 28 years at Southbank Centre, Arts Council England is formally transferring the collection to Southbank Centre ownership. The arts centre's ethos in providing art for all will ensure that the collection continues to be enjoyed by its regular visitors and its many newcomers over the years ahead.

To mark this transition, with the support of Arts Council England, The Poetry Library will make many of its special collections available digitally as its holdings across audio, posters, postcards, press cuttings and images of poets are transformed from print and analogue into digital versions. These unique collections will become the core of the library's future website which will give further access to poetry wherever you are in the world. The Poetry Library

website will begin to house some of its newly-digitised items by National Poetry Day 2017, and a new website with poetry at its core is planned for March 2018.

To celebrate this exciting news The Poetry Library has commissioned poet **Hannah Silva** to write a new piece which she will perform on The Clore Ballroom at 4pm on National Poetry Day (Thursday 6 October) - part of the celebrations for *National Poetry Day Live 2016*. Hannah's performance will be recorded for a special edition of BBC Radio 3's [The Verb](#) to be broadcast the following day, Friday 7 October, 10pm.

Chris McCabe, Poetry Librarian, Southbank Centre, said: *"The creation of The Poetry Library by the Arts Council in 1953 was an such an incredibly forward-looking idea which has long been embraced by Southbank Centre's vision in reaching people across the arts. After nearly three decades of its life in the Royal Festival Hall it feels like the right moment for Southbank Centre to take ownership of this rich and ever-growing collection of poetry. There is lots to look forward to in the years ahead, not least of which will be seeing its collections given a new lease of life in the digital age. It's very exciting to think of some of the library's most hidden collections being opened up to new generations of poetry-lovers who can access them on their laptops, tablets and phones. And of course the library will continue to offer its borrowing services from its growing collections and to engage audiences through its regular events and exhibitions."*

Scott Furlong, Director, Collections and Cultural Property, Arts Council England, said: *"The Poetry Collection is a unique and wonderful source of inspiration, pleasure and knowledge and has flourished in its home at the Southbank Centre since 1988. We are delighted to confirm the transfer of the collection which we believe will ensure that it is developed and cared for to the highest standards for the long-term public benefit. We are excited by the Southbank Centre's plans to open up digital access to the collection and are confident that The Poetry Library will continue to go from strength to strength as a treasured public resource."*

NATIONAL POETRY DAY LIVE (6 October)

Presented by Southbank Centre and The Poetry Society, National Poetry Day Live features readings from Mercury Prize-winning artist **PJ Harvey** and live drawing from Children's Laureate **Chris Riddell**. The annual free celebration of the UK's thriving poetry scene is part of Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival (5 - 16 October) and features a packed programme of live performances by top poets and free activities for the public. Hosted by Inua Ellams and Indigo Williams, this year's event features readings, activities and performances on the theme of 'messages'. The line-up includes poets **Rob Auton, Salena Godden, Keaton Henson, Luke Kennard, Fran Lock, Hannah Lowe, John Lyons, Sabrina Mahfouz, Ian McMillan, Simon Mole, Cheryl Moskowitz and Hannah Silva**.

For more information about The Poetry Library, please visit: www.poetrylibrary.org.uk

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For further press information please contact:

Naomi Burgoyne, Senior Press Manager, Southbank Centre:
naomi.burgoyne@southbankcentre.co.uk / 0207 921 0824

For London Literature Festival press enquires, please contact:

Louise Gilbert, Press Manager: louise.gilbert@southbankcentre.co.uk / 0207 921 0780
Naomi French, Press Officer: naomi.french@southbankcentre.co.uk / 0207 921 0678

NOTES TO EDITORS**About Southbank Centre**

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21 acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as The Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. For further information please visit www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

Let the Light In

In September 2015, our iconic Brutalist arts venues Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery closed their doors for two years so we could give them the essential refurbishment they deserve. Renowned for their architectural significance, the buildings are most importantly recognised for the exceptional performances and exhibitions that have happened in them since they first opened nearly 50 years ago. The £25 million refurbishment project has been funded by Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and through the generous support of Southbank Centre friends. We launched the Let The Light In campaign to raise £3.9 million and have just £1.9 million left to raise so we can transform these buildings for the reopening in 2018 and for future generations to enjoy. For more information, visit: letthelightin.southbankcentre.co.uk

About The Poetry Library

The Poetry Library is the largest public collection of modern poetry in the world. It was opened by T.S. Eliot in 1953 and is now open to everyone and free to join. Members can borrow from the extensive loan collections, including audio items, and take advantage of the library's e-loan service through which ebooks can be loaned at distance. The extensive collection of current poetry magazines gives a window into the breadth of poetry in the UK and beyond. The library runs a monthly event series called Special Edition, a programme of exhibitions which run throughout the year, a book club, shared readings and an occasional tutored workshop for budding poets called The Poetry Butcher. The library's website features publishers' information, poetry news and a list of UK-wide events; the digital archive at www.poetrymagazines.org.uk is a free database of contemporary poems from UK magazines. www.poetrylibrary.org.uk

About Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival, 5 - 16 October

Southbank Centre's 2016 London Literature Festival explores the theme *Living in Future Times*. Now in its tenth year, the festival rediscovers farsighted classics and examines how we are already living in an era predicted by Science Fiction, celebrating the work of the world's most visionary established and upcoming writers and artists. The festival features a day celebrating the best international writers of science-fiction and the Young Adult Literature Weekender which offers more opportunities than ever before to the next generation of writers. For more information visit southbankcentre.co.uk or contact press@southbankcentre.co.uk / 0207 921 0888