



STELLA KANU ANNOUNCED AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LIFT

LIFT is delighted to announce the appointment of Stella Kanu as Executive Director, who will join LIFT in July 2019 as the organisation prepares for the 23rd edition of its biennial festival taking place in June 2020. Stella is currently Executive Producer at Ovalhouse and since 2015 has overseen the organisational and community-led transition as Ovalhouse constructs London's newest purpose built £15m theatre in Brixton.

Stella joins LIFT at an important and exciting time. After almost four decades of iconic, inspiring programming, LIFT is embarking on the next significant chapter of the organisation's life following the appointment of Kris Nelson as Artistic Director & CEO in 2018. Stella will bring her extensive expertise to lead the team as it develops new and existing local, national and international partnerships and creates the context for daring and resonant artistic projects to come to life.

With over 25 years' experience of producing theatre, festivals and activities, Stella has worked for organisations in the UK and beyond including Soundwave Cumbria where she was CEO, Cardboard Citizens, Harlem Stage, Bernie Grant Arts Centre, Clean Break Theatre, Department of Public Health as well as arts, culture and community directorates at numerous local councils in London and across the UK. She has led a number of government-backed cultural investment initiatives including the Aylesbury Estate New Deal for Communities; the creation of a new cultural centre and a £1m programme of arts and training for the 10,000 residents. As a creative writer and performer, Stella created Africa Centre's first Children's Literature Festival; A List Performing Arts Festival and Southampton Live Street Arts Festival.

Awarded the Cultural Leadership Powerbrokers (CLP) International Leadership Fellowship in 2008, Stella is a leadership mentor on Engage's Extend Leadership programme and now mentors and coaches emerging, mid-career and established leaders. She has spoken at numerous conferences and symposiums, having most recently featured as part of Shakespeare's Globe's Women & Power festival (May 2019).

Stella Kanu said:

'It is an exciting time to be joining LIFT, a festival and programme that reclaims what internationalism means to Londoners and artists alike and is bold about localism. I am looking forward to joining Kris in developing those radical collaborations that LIFT is known for, and that audiences love, and I can't wait to work with the whole team to propel LIFT into its dazzling future.'

Kris Nelson, LIFT Artistic Director & CEO said:

'I am thrilled to welcome Stella to LIFT. Stella is a strategic, skilled and entrepreneurial producer who has worked across artforms. She is one of London's leading champions of cultural democracy; her ability to connect art and communities makes her a perfect fit for LIFT. Stella oversaw a period of tremendous growth and change at Ovalhouse, attracting new audiences, new civic and community partners and a great deal of momentum for the organisation. I know that together we will bring LIFT to great new heights.'

Bernard Donoghue, Chair of the LIFT Board said:

'I am absolutely delighted that Stella will be joining us as Executive Director. It's a hugely important role as we prepare not only for next year's festival but how we position the organisation to respond to, and influence the changing political, financial and cultural climate over the next few years. Having someone of Stella's experience, passion, enthusiasm and energy is very exciting and I have every confidence that with Kris Nelson, our Artistic Director and CEO, we have secured the dream team.'

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For more information, images and interviews please contact: Bonnie Smith, Head of Marketing & Digital at LIFT on bonnie@liffestival.com / 07525 856018

Notes to Editors:

LIFT biography

Since 1981, LIFT has travelled the world to bring global stories to London for our biennial festival, creating spectacular performances and moments of magic in every corner of the Capital and presenting shows in partnership with London's major arts venues, theatres and galleries including the Barbican, Southbank Centre, Historic Royal Palaces, Tate, Royal Court Theatre and Lyric Hammersmith, but also in countless hidden spaces and places across the city.

In recent years LIFT has presented artists from 66 countries and commissioned over 40 new productions and events from around the world. Our most recent festival took place in summer 2018 and reached over 160k audience members through a programme that stretched the breadth of London, from a disused golf course in Thamesmead to the iconic Tower of London, bringing over 1000 international and homegrown artists and participants together across 7 weeks of critically-acclaimed performances.

Alongside LIFT's biennial London-wide festival, we run a programme of year-round activity that includes large scale projects, artist residencies, national touring and our ground-breaking participatory work, LIFT Tottenham. This summer, LIFT's 2018 Tottenham Original co-commission SESSION will travel to festivals across the UK in a new tour produced by Mayk, in association with LIFT. Catch it at [Brighton Festival](#) this weekend (23 - 26 May).

The LIFT 2020 Festival programme will be announced in February 2020.