

St Martin-in-the-Fields announces The Conversation, a new series of talks



featuring
ANITA ANAND | JEREMY BOWEN | JUNG CHANG
STEPHEN FRY | NATALIE HAYNES |
HELENA KENNEDY | BEN OKRI

Mondays from 7.30pm - 20 May to 15 July

LINK TO ST MARTIN'S

<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/the-conversation/>

St Martin-in-the-Fields launches a new series of Monday evenings talks - **The Conversation** – with a distinguished array of thinkers and writers, commencing and ending with two celebrated classicists **Stephen Fry** on **Monday 20 May** and **Natalie Haynes** on **Monday 15 July**. This first series will tackle the burning topics of the day including - **peace, democratic vulnerability, equalities and climate action** – with leading speakers **Jeremy Bowen, Helena Kennedy, Anita Anand, Jung Chang** and **Ben Okri**.

The Conversation celebrates St Martin's role as the birthplace of Shelter, Amnesty, Liberty and the Pride movement, and a place that invites open and honest discussion about key issues affecting society. In a continuation of the highly successful Autumn Lectures, **The Conversation** is directed by **Peter**

Florence, and the conversations will be chaired by **Claire Armitstead, Peter Florence** and **Caitlin McNamara**.

Starting at 7.30pm in the main church, **The Conversation** starts with an interview discussion, followed by a unique invitation for the audience to continue the debate downstairs in the Crypt in a relaxed discussion with other audience members.

St Martin's is famous for its progressive work with homeless and vulnerable people – providing a place of opportunity, sanctuary and support for everyone. The revenue generated from its concert series and other commercial activities plays a vital part in helping it sustain this important work. **The Conversation** is joining the **European Festivals Forest** to plant trees to capture carbon in mitigation of emissions.

Peter Florence comments:

"I've always loved the conversations that grow from talks and literary events, like a big public book club, and I am thrilled to have the freedom and the context to make the audience more and more a part of the whole experience. Trust the room. And what a room. I love the activist heritage of St Martin in the Fields, and I hugely admire all these writers. We're going to have a great summer in the city talking about big ideas."

Chris Denton, CEO of St Martin's comments:

"We are delighted to launch this unique new series. Building on the success of our popular Autumn Lecture Series, director Peter Florence has brought together a powerful roster of some of today's leading thinkers and writers to stimulate discussion and conversation on important issues of the day. We want The Conversation to become established as a place where the discussion really begins as the talking on stage stops."

Monday 20 May **STEPHEN FRY**

The writer and actor talks about the wars and peace, the equalities and dictatorships, the divine interventions and the earthly experience that he retells in his books *Mythos*, *Heroes* and *Troy*. He wonders at the meeting place of humane wisdom and artificial intelligence. *Odyssey*, the fourth book in his series about Greek myth, will be published in September. Chaired by Peter Florence.

Monday 10 June **BEN OKRI**

Inspired by environmental activism, *Tiger Work* blends fiction, poetry and essays to make a powerful and personal appeal for change. It is "both a work of lyrical imagination and a warning about the dangers we will face unless we take immediate action" — *New Yorker*. Ben won the Booker Prize for his novel *The Famished Road*. His poetry collections include *Astonishing the Gods*, *A Fire in My Head* and *Mental Fight*. "Ben Okri is that rare thing, a literary and social visionary, a writer for whom all three – literature, culture and vision – are profoundly

interwoven" – Ali Smith. Chaired by Claire Armitstead, Associate Editor of The Guardian.

Monday 17 June

JEREMY BOWEN

The International Editor of the BBC reflects on the realities of the region he has reported on for 35 years, and which he explores in his books, *Six Days*, *The Arab Uprisings* and *The Making of the Modern Middle East: A Personal History*. Chaired by Peter Florence.

Monday 24 June

ANITA ANAND

In the year when more people around the world than ever before will head to the polls in unprecedentedly consequential elections from America and India to the EU and UK, the broadcaster and writer reflects on the democratic processes. Anita co-hosts the global phenomenon *Empire* podcast, presents Any Answers and The Westminster Hour for the BBC and is the author of best-selling books *The Patient Assassin* and *Sophia: Princess, Suffragette, Revolutionary*. Chaired by Peter Florence.

Monday 1 July

JUNG CHANG

The writer discusses the trajectory of the world's emerging superpower over the past 150 years, and the role of women in its political culture. Jung is the author of *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, *Mao: The Untold Story*, *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China* and *Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister: Three Women at the Heart of Twentieth Century China*. Chaired by Peter Florence.

Monday 8 July

HELENA KENNEDY

From pay gaps, social media malice and women's prisons to the relentlessly atrocious statistics on abuse, rape and murder the human rights lawyer and working peer examines the structural inequalities in politics and law that are failing women. Helena is the author of *Misjustice: How British Law is Failing Women*, *Just Law* and *Eve Was Framed*. Chaired by Caitlin McNamara.

Monday 15 July

NATALIE HAYNES

The Conversation series finale sees the rockstar classicist celebrate the goddesses of Greek myth in her new book *Divine Might*. Here are Hera, Athene and Aphrodite in all their vengeful superpower and the brighter gifts of Hestia, Demeter and Persephone. The swaggering dash of Beyoncé thrown in reminds us of the contemporary weight of Natalie's retelling of feminist perspectives in the novels *A Thousand Ships*, *The Children of Jocasta*, *The Amber Fury* and *Stone Blind* and the



non-fiction best-seller *Pandora's Jar*. All 8 seasons of the BBC Radio 4 show Natalie Haynes *Stands Up for the Classics* are available wherever you get your podcasts. Chaired by Peter Florence.

For more information on any of the above, please contact:

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