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barbican

Barbican announces the return of Play Make Do, a joyful three-day festival transforming the Centre into a playground for imagination, movement and making for all ages

Fri 14—Sun 16 Aug 2026

(credit Matt Munday)
Play Make Do 2026 press images

The Barbican invites visitors of all ages to celebrate the return of ***Play Make Do***, a three-day festival packed with free and affordable activities designed to bring families, friends and communities together through creativity, play and participation. Taking place across the Barbican's public spaces from Friday 14 – Sunday 16 August 2026, *Play Make Do* transforms the Centre into a vibrant playground for imagination and discovery with circus play, dance, craft, storytelling and more.

Inspired by community, summertime and togetherness, this year's festival also draws on themes of carnival, identity and culture, connecting with ideas explored in the **Project a Black Planet** exhibition and the wider season programme, running throughout the summer until 6 September.

Play Make Do builds on the success of its inaugural edition in 2025, celebrating the creativity that emerges when generations come together to 'play', 'make' and 'do'. Each day of the festival is shaped around one of these themes, encouraging visitors to experience the Barbican in new and inspiring ways.

PLAY
Friday's programme, **PLAY**, is dedicated to imagination, movement and discovery. Families can explore the art of clowning with **Clowns without Borders UK** and circus-play collective **Reallynice**,

or step inside **Peut-Être Theatre**'s playful **Audiomoves BoogiePod** to explore movement, imagination and self-expression. Visitors can also enjoy storytelling with **Maryam Hashemi** and **Barbican Library** in the Conservatory, create cyanotype artworks with artists **Safiye Gray** and **Sneha Alexander**, and end the day on a musical journey through Colombia with **Montañera**.

MAKE
Saturday's programme, **MAKE**, invites audiences to spend the day crafting, creating and collaborating. Inspired by Carnival traditions and self-expression, participants can create masks, accessories and headpieces with **Tropical Isles Carnival Art of Mas Workshop**, contribute to a collective artwork in **Black Girl Knit Club's Braided Traditions** workshop, and enjoy stories, songs and rhythms with **Barbican Library** and drummer **Seneke** from **Mbilla Arts**. Families are invited to picnic at the Barbican, make use of the Kitchen's Kids Eat Free offer for under 10s, and spend the day enjoying summer creativity together.

DO
Sunday's programme, **DO**, closes the weekend with a day of dance, music, celebration and participation. Audiences can try hip hop street dance styles with our Artistic Associates **Boy Blue**, take part in Bollywood-inspired movement with **Bollyqueer**, discover the rhythms and culture of **Bullerengue Circle**, and round off the festival at a **Rueda Libre** salsa social. Visitors can also enjoy the **Sankofa Community Carnival**-inspired performance, featuring artists from **Mahogany Carnival Design**, **IRIE!** dance theatre and **Endurance Steel Orchestra**.

The Conservatory offers a quieter space for creativity, including **Travels in History**, a creative writing workshop with award-winning children's author **Claire Linney**, exploring Black British history, and **Take It Slow: Making Space**, a relaxed drop-in drawing session for all ages.

Oluwatoyin Odunsi, Senior Producer, Creative Collaboration, Barbican, said:
"We're delighted to welcome families and communities back to Play Make Do. This festival celebrates the creativity, learning and fun that happens when people of all ages make things together. We've brought together outstanding artists and collaborators to lead joyful, hands-on experiences. From circus play and storytelling to Carnival-making and dance, the weekend invites audiences to connect, explore the Barbican in new ways, and leave inspired to keep playing, making and doing long after the summer ends."

Karena Johnson, Head of Creative Collaboration, Barbican, said:
"Creating opportunities for people to play, connect and express themselves is at the heart of what we do. Play Make Do continues our commitment to opening up the Barbican as a creative civic space for everyone, where audiences can encounter exceptional artists, celebrate different cultural traditions, and explore their own creativity. We want everyone who joins us to feel welcomed, inspired and that this public space belongs to them."

Activities and events are designed to be enjoyed by all ages, with many free for under 18s, and other events free for the whole family. *Play Make Do* is an inclusive and welcoming summer destination for families, local communities and visitors from across London.

ENDS

PRESS CONTACTS

For further information, images or to arrange interviews around *Play Make Do* please contact

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DOWNLOAD IMAGES
Play Make Do 2026 press images

LISTINGS

Play Make Do
Friday 14 - Sunday 16 August 2026
Barbican Centre Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS
@barbicancentre

General booking opens: 10am Friday 19 June

Box Office: www.barbican.org.uk
020 7870 2500 (Monday-Friday 12noon - 5.30pm)
Email: info@barbican.org.uk
Contact Barbican Centre's ticket sales team via WhatsApp on 07480 801406 or send a text to 07380 975000
Access enquiries: 020 7101 1188 (Monday–Sunday 10am–5.30pm), via WhatsApp on 07480 801406 or send a text to 07710 854085

There will be limited tickets available at the events.
We advise booking tickets in advance for all events.
Please ensure that you arrive on time, attendees who have not arrived within 15 minutes of events that have set timeslots may risk losing their slot to another attendee.

The Sankofa Carnival programme is supported by The Mercers' Charitable Foundation and the John S Cohen Foundation.

Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrica is generously supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch).

Kids Eat Free
Children under 10 can enjoy a complimentary meal from our kids' menu with every adult meal over £10 purchased.

Fri 14 Aug: PLAY

Come play with the circus!
Freestage (Level G)
10-10:45am & 1:30-2:15pm Clowns without Borders UK
11-11:45am & 2:30-3:15pm Reallynice
Adults £8, Under 18 free, advance booking recommended (half price if booking both)

Join **Clowns without Borders UK** and **Reallynice** to explore clowning, circus-play and all-round silliness.

Step into a world of laughter and playful chaos with **Clowns Without Borders UK**. The workshop encourages children and families to collaborate, share ideas and discover classical clowning skills and tricks. Clowns Without Borders UK supports children in crisis settings to heal, learn and thrive through laughter and play. Since 2014, they have delivered our joyfully silly performances and workshops to over 150,000 children across 20 countries.

Reallynice return with their playful story-led creative workshops. They've got dances and songs and circus tricks to share if you can find them in the hidden corners of the foyer. Reallynice is a community of play-based artists creating accessible, embodied, participatory experiences that cultivate joy, connection and compassion within and between communities of young people.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Slow Sun Prints

Conservatory Terrace (Level 3)
5 slots: 10-11am, 11:15-12:15pm, 12:30-1:30pm, 2:15-3:15pm, 3:30-5pm
Free, booking advised

Join artists **Safiye Gray** and **Sneha Alexander** to make a collaborative cyanotype art piece in the Conservatory.

Using found materials, objects and textures to respond to your surroundings in the Conservatory, this workshop will invite you to collaborate on a communal art piece made of cyanotype prints.

Safiye and Sneha are visual artists based in London. They have been collaborating since they met on the Barbican Young Artists programme in 2019. They are experienced print-makers and facilitators specialising in book forms and lino printing.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under-16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Stories in Nature with Barbican Library

Conservatory Well (Level 3)
Free, booking advised

10:00 – 12:00
Drop in space with book swap shop and activities

10.45-11.30am
Join Adenike from Barbican and Community Libraries for a lively Rhyme Time with singing, movement, and stories in the spectacular indoor Barbican jungle.

Find out more about Barbican and Communities Library.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Storytelling with Maryam Hashemi

Conservatory Well (Level 3)
4 slots: 12-1pm, 1:15-2:15pm, 2:30-3:30pm, 3:45-4:45pm
Free, booking advised

Join multidisciplinary artist **Maryam Sandjari Hashemi** for a delightful story writing workshop. Using props and prompts you will be playfully guided to create and explore stories that have never been told before.

Maryam Sandjari Hashemi is a London-based multidisciplinary artist and mentor. In her group workshops she brings different elements of her practice together to inspire creativity and playfulness. Her aim is creating a safe and gentle space and building communities around the work.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Peut-Être Theatre: Audiomoves BoogiePod

Conservatory Garden Room (Level 3)
4 performance slots: 11-11:30am, 12-12:30pm, 1:30-2pm, 2:30-3pm
Children £5 + accompanying adult Free

Step inside **Peut-Être Theatre's** Audiomoves BoogiePod; a vibrant, pop-up world where sound sparks movement and imagination.

Inspired by Peut-Être Theatre's award-winning podcast series, Audiomoves, the BoogiePod is a celebration of movement and creativity, bringing joy, connection and a good dose of silliness to children and their grown-ups alike. Led by a live DJ and playful performer, this joyful experience invites children aged 4–9 to move freely, respond creatively, and let their bodies tell stories. In this session, inspired by the weather, children create cloud shapes, rumble like storms, and leap through puddles.

Led by Artistic Director Daphna Attias, Peut-Être Theatre has been creating unforgettable theatrical experiences for young audiences since 2008. Their shows effectively combine the visual, the physical and the musical for the enjoyment and inspiration of children of all abilities and families.

Age recommendation: These sessions are suitable for ages 4–9. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Music play - Golden Anaconda: Music Journey through Colombia!

Freestage (Level 4)
4-5pm
Free, booking advised

End your day of play with Montañera and experiment with music, songs and storytelling.
Join us for a musical journey through Colombia's diverse landscapes, from the Andes to the Amazon. Listen to a story from each zone, sing together and end the day with a collective performance.

María Mónica Gutiérrez, known as Montañera (Mountainess), has established herself as one of the most intense and unique voices hailing from Colombia. Her latest solo album *A Flor De Piel* was released with the label Western Vinyl, and received glowing reviews from Pitchfork, The Guardian, Iggy Pop (BBC Radio) and David Byrne. Alongside her musical work, she develops and leads social impact initiatives that bring together music, movement, mindfulness, and the arts, facilitating spaces that nurture creativity, wellbeing, and collective connection within communities across Colombia and the UK.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Sat 15 Aug: MAKE

Rhyme Time with Barbican Library: Party Time

Freestage (Level G)
10:30-11:30am
Free, booking advised

Join **Adenike** from Barbican and Community Libraries for a lively Rhyme Time with singing, movement, and stories. Accompanied by African Drummer **Seneke** from **Mbilla Arts**.

Find out more about Barbican and Communities Library.

All ages welcome.

Carnival Make Space – The Art of Mas: Tropical Isles Carnival Workshop

Freestage (Level G)
5 slots: 12-1pm, 1-2pm, 2-3pm, 3-4pm, 4-5pm
Free, booking advised

Get into the party spirit ahead of Sunday's carnival-inspired performance with **Tropical Isles.** Get stuck in with a range of craft workshops from making masks to accessories and headpieces.

Join a creative mask-making session inspired by Caribbean masquerade traditions, exploring expression, colour and storytelling through wearable art. Design and create your own carnival-inspired crowns and headdresses using feathers, ribbons, gems and decorative materials. Complete your look and create carnival accessories and showpieces.

Tropical Isles is a collective of Caribbean creative practitioners specialising in carnival arts, community engagement and participatory making. Rooted in the traditions and spirit of Caribbean Carnival, the collective brings together experienced artists working across costume design, mask-making and wearable art. Their practice celebrates creativity, cultural heritage, and self-expression, delivering inclusive workshops that invite participants of all ages and abilities.

Age recommendation:
This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Carnival Make Space – Braided Traditions Common Threads: Finger Knit workshop with Black Girl Knit Club

Freestage (Level G)
3 slots: 1-2pm, 2-3pm, 3-4pm
Free, limited space, booking advised

Inspired by Black women's hair and stories, explore various yarn textures, colours and fibres to create your own knitted pieces and add them to the larger arm knitted installation.Contribute to an installation arm knit piece from the *Black Girl Knit Club (BGKC), Braided Traditions: Common Threads*, in this finger knitting and braiding workshop. Inspired by Black women's hair and hair stories, explore various yarn textures, colours and fibres to create your own knitted pieces and join them to the installation, showing how community can be woven together through both play and making.

BGKC is a knitwear collective based in East London founded by **Sicgmone Kludje** and **Vea Koranteng**. Realising there was a lack of diverse craft spaces and groups, they established BGKC to create an inclusive environment for Black women to gather, share stories and inspire. Their aim is to empower the next generation of women, bring greater diversity to the craft industry and encourage creativity and connection.

Age recommendation:
This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Sun 16 Aug: DO

Travels in History

Conservatory Well (Level 3)
4 slots: 11-12pm, 12:30-1:30pm, 2-3pm, 3:30-4:30pm
Free, booking advised

Join us for a creative writing workshop with author Claire Linney. Take a trip in time to explore some hidden figures from Black British history and how you bring the past to life in fictional stories. Then create your own time travel story blueprints with a step-by-step creative process to create characters and bring novel and weird objects to life as time machines.

Claire Linney is a children's author and a book content creator. After working in marketing for over twenty years, she stumbled across *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*, which inspired her to want to bring the hidden stories of Black British history to life for the next generation. Her debut children's book *Time Tub Travellers and the Silk Thief* was the Reader's Choice winner in the Diverse Book Awards 2025, won Best Debut in the Ink Book Prize 2024, and was Highly Commended in the Selfies Book Awards 2025.

Age recommendation: 7+. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Take It Slow: Making Space

Conservatory Terrace (Level 3)
Slots: 11am - 5pm
Free, booking advised

Bring the whole family to step into a welcoming space to create together. This relaxed drawing session welcomes all ages and skill levels to explore imagination through playful sketching and shared creativity.

This is a drop-in event. You can come in at any time between 11am and 5pm. During busier periods you may be asked to queue.

Age recommendation: 3+. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Dance Around the World!

Immerse yourself in a day full of movement and rhythm.

Dance Around the World! – Hip hop dance workshops with Boy Blue for all ages

ClubStage (Level-1)
11:30 – 12:30pm
Adults £8, Under 18 free, advance booking recommended

Join our Artistic Associates Boy Blue for a dance workshop for all the family as they celebrate their 25th anniversary this year.

Boy Blue is excited to be a part of this year's *Play Make Do* festival at their home venue. Join them for a workshop for all the family to get involved - learn the foundations of hip hop dance alongside signature Boy Blue grooves in a fun and welcoming environment.

Following the workshops, audiences are invited to stay and enjoy an energetic freestyle dance performance from Boy Blue dancers, celebrating creativity, musicality and the spirit of hip hop culture.

As Boy Blue celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, there's never been a better time to get involved, try something new and experience what Boy Blue is all about!

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Bollyqueer follow along

Freestage (Level G)
12:00 – 12:30 & 1:15 – 1:45pm
Free, booking advised

Join **Bollyqueer** for a joyful celebration of Bollywood dance, self-expression and the magic of moving together. Through a high-energy performance and an inclusive, accessible workshop, Bollyqueer invites audiences of all ages to experience the energy, storytelling and beauty of Bollywood in a fresh and uplifting way.

Celebrating South Asian and LGBTQ+ identity, Bollyqueer creates spaces where everyone is encouraged to dance freely, have fun and move in a way that feels good for them. With moves that transcend the traditional and music to get the whole family grooving, this is a feel-good celebration of Bollywood, joy and connection.

Boy Blue performance

Freestage (Level G)
12:45 – 1pm
Free, booking advised

Celebrating their 25th anniversary this year, our Artistic Associates **Boy Blue** is excited to be a part of *Play Make Do* festival at their home venue. With one workshop for families and another for young people, participants will have the chance to learn the foundations of hip hop dance alongside signature Boy Blue grooves in a fun and welcoming environment.

Following the workshops, audiences are invited to stay and enjoy an energetic freestyle dance performance from Boy Blue dancers, celebrating creativity, musicality and the spirit of hip hop culture.

Dance Around the World! – Hip hop dance workshops with Boy Blue for 11+

ClubStage (Level -1)
1-2pm
Adults £8, Under 18s free, advance booking recommended

Join our Artistic Associates Boy Blue for a dance workshop for 11+ year-olds and their families as they celebrate their 25th anniversary this year.

Boy Blue is excited to be a part of this year's *Play Make Do* festival at their home venue. Join them for a workshop for ages 11+, designed for those with some previous dance experience. Participants will have the chance to learn the foundations of hip hop dance alongside signature Boy Blue grooves in a fun and welcoming environment.

Following the workshops, audiences are invited to stay and enjoy an energetic freestyle dance performance from Boy Blue dancers, celebrating creativity, musicality and the spirit of hip hop culture.

As Boy Blue celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, there's never been a better time to get involved, try something new and experience what Boy Blue is all about!

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for ages 11+. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Dance Around the World! – Bullerengue Circle

Freestage (Level G)
2:15 – 3:15pm
Free, booking advised

Bullerengue Circle invites audiences into the living tradition of bullerengue.

Born from Afro-Colombian communities of resistance, celebration and collective memory, bullerengue is experienced through rhythm, voice, dance and the shared energy of the rueda (the symbolic space where bullerengue happens). This participatory event invites audiences to move beyond spectators and become part of the circle through collective singing, dancing and rhythm.

Bullerengue Circle is a London-based collective using and encouraging the Afro-Colombian tradition of bullerengue as a tool to find self-awareness, understand our inner rhythm and connect with our creative selves.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Sankofa Community Carnival Performance

Freestage (Level G)
4:30 – 5:30pm
Free, unticketed

Step into the vibrant world of Carnival arts this summer.

Experience and dance along with a unique and special Carnival-inspired performance at the Barbican Centre!

Our joyful spring programme of participatory workshops part of the Barbican's **Project a Black Planet** season, led by some of the UK's most celebrated innovators **Mahogany Carnival Design, IRIE! dance theatre** and **Endurance Steel Orchestra** will conclude with this vibrant shared moment of dance, music and community.

Find out more about **Sankofa Community Carnival: Costume-Making Workshops with Mahogany Carnival Design** (running until Sun 8 Aug) here.

Age recommendation: This programme is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

Dance Around the World! – Rueda Libre Social Dancing

ClubStage (Level -1)
6-7:30pm
Free, booking advised

Join us for an electric, enjoyable and entertaining evening of Salsa dancing in a fun and relaxed environment as we welcome back Rueda Libre to the Barbican.

Rueda is one of the most fun ways to enjoy Salsa. It consists of a group of people all dancing together in a circle with one person calling the moves. In a Rueda you will be doing different combinations of Salsa moves old and new, playful gestures and swapping partners all in unison and in sync with the music; it really is as fun as it sounds. It started out in the streets of Cuba and it's very popular all over the world, so jump in!

No need to bring a partner as everyone swaps partners as the songs change. Come, relax and enjoy.

Age recommendation: This event is suitable for all ages. Children under 16 must have a parent or guardian present during all workshops and performances.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Barbican press room
All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

About the Barbican
The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the London Symphony Orchestra, our Resident Orchestra, and a London base for the Royal Shakespeare Company. We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our Artistic Associates the Academy of Ancient Music, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Boy Blue, Darbar Arts, Culture and Heritage Trust, and Serious, who produce the EFG London Jazz Festival, alongside other associates and partners including Doc'n Roll Film Festival, London Palestine Film Festival, and Trafalgar Theatre Productions.

For more information, visit our website or connect with us on Instagram | Facebook | YouTube | Spotify | LinkedIn