

GEMMA CAIRNEY

“[Gemma Cairney’s] ‘Open’ is more than a book, it’s a movement for open hearts and open minds.” —United by Pop

Gemma is a writer, broadcaster, documentary maker, journalist, and producer. A former Brit School pupil and fashion stylist, Gemma has presented across the breadth of the BBC and is host of The Leisure Society (BBC6 Music) and The Sound Odyssey (BBC Radio 4).

She has written for, edited, and contributed to *The Guardian*, *Company Magazine*, *Red*, *Glamour*, and *Cosmopolitan*. She has won Sony awards for her documentaries on subjects such as domestic abuse and produced podcasts and theater productions through her company Boom Shakalaka.

She was the previous Southbank Artist in Residence and on the Women Of The World (WOW) committee. In 2017, Macmillan published her first book, *Open: A Toolkit for How Magic and Messed-Up Life Can Be*, giving advice and personal insight on subjects ranging from grief, depression, body image, sex and relationships, and everything in between. With the hope of starting a movement to get young people to open up and communicate better, *Open* came out in paperback in 2018, in two books, published as *Open Your Heart* and *Open Your Mind*. Gemma is also the co-author of *Hometown Tales: South Coast*.

She is currently Chair of The Edinburgh Art Festival and is writing her new book, *The Immortal Sisterhood*. It explores the lives of extraordinary women – including Nanny of the Maroons, Jeanne Duval, Grace Jones, Wang Zhenyi, Mary Seacole, Audre Lorde, Hatshepsut, Betty Davis, and more and in an unusual literary style poetically explores the interconnections of these women’s lives and her own lived experience.

Through the writing process, Gemma has developed a concept of reverence response + practice. She has created, written, and directed a collaborative and experimental theater piece called The Immortal Sisterhood Live, with composition, operatic scales, and poetry. It premieres at The Lincoln Centre in January 2025. There is also a Sistxrhood Ceramics collection in ode to the women featured in the book.