

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

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

She was the Southbank Artist in Residence and on the WOW panel. 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. She wants to start a national movement towards opening up and communicating better with one another. *Open* came out in paperback in 2018, in two books, published as *Open Your Heart* and *Open Your Mind*. Gemma is also the author of *Hometown Tales: South Coast*.

She is currently writing her new book, *The Immortal Sisterhood*. It explores the lives of extraordinary women – including Nanny of the Maroons, Jeanne Duval, Poly Styrene, Maya Angelou, Wang Zhenyi, Audre Lorde, Lizzy Mercier Descloux, Betty Davis, and more. Along the way, she encourages the reader to find their own sisterhood support group – both learning from other women’s stories and, in turn, celebrating what those women overcame at certain points in their lives; many of whom have not been celebrated, or have been reflected upon negatively or even written out of history.

Through the writing process, Gemma has developed a concept of reverence practice and has written and directed an experimental live theater piece called *The Immortal Sisterhood Live*, with composition, operatic scales and poetry. There is also a *Sisterhood Ceramics* collection to create altars in ode to the women featured in the book.