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For immediate release

**New display and performance at the Horniman remembers**

**Ella Roberta Adoo Kissi Debrah**

A new display opening at the Horniman Museum and Gardens marks the progress through Parliament of the historic Clean Air Bill, also called Ella’s Law, which establishes the human right to breathe clean air.

Ella’s Law is named for Ella Roberta Adoo Kissi Debrah, a young girl from Lewisham whose premature death was due, in part, to air pollution from the South Circular road. Ella Roberta was the first person in the world to have air pollution listed on her death certificate.

**Matters of Life and Breath** opens in the Horniman’s acclaimed Music Gallery on Thursday 8 June. The display features a Yamaha school model cornet which belonged to Ella Roberta. Despite a respiratory condition induced and aggravated by air pollution, she chose to play an instrument which demands skilled breath control.

Ella Roberta’s instrument can be seen alongside an intricately ornamented end-blown conch, or *dung dkar,* from Tibet. The roots of the cornet lie with the ancient conch, a symbol of the breath of life itself. This example from the Horniman’s collection, acquired relatively recently, has never been on display before.

Both instruments belong to a large family of wind instruments called ‘labrasones’ which are played using a lip-buzzing technique. Although the sounds of the labrasones are popularly associated with power and war, they were also used for healing rituals and communication over long distances.

Mimi Waitzman, Senior Curator of Musical Collections and Cultures says: ‘The Horniman, which declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, is proud to champion legislation that brings us closer to cleaner air for all. Our display and its opening performance underline how the music and culture that lift our spirits and enrich our lives are entwined with the health of our planet.’

To mark the opening of the display, musicians Katie Lodge (Trumpet/Cornet) and Letty Stott (Ancient Horns (conch)/French Horn) will give a special performance in the Horniman’s Music Gallery on Thursday 8 June at 3.15-4pm. This will be introduced by Rosamund Adoo Kissi Debrah, founder of the Ella Roberta Foundation.

The performance is part of the Horniman’s ongoing **Hear it Live!** programme.

**Matters of Life and Breath** has been co-created with the[Ella Roberta Foundation](https://ellaroberta.org/) and Rosamund Adoo Kissi Debrah CBE. The display runs from Thursday 8 June to Sunday 10 December 2023. **Hear it Live**! takes place on the second Thursday of each month. Both are free to visit.

**Ends**

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**Notes to Editors:**

* Find more information on [**The Ella Roberta Foundation**](https://ellaroberta.org/)
* On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman’s environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman’s manifesto commitments and progress so far at [horniman.ac.uk/climate](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/about-the-horniman/climate-and-ecology/).
* **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** has won [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/horniman-wins-100000-art-fund-museum-of-the-year-2022/), the world’s largest museum prize.
* **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to ‘bring the world to Forest Hill’. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include natural history, music and an acclaimed aquarium, alongside a World Gallery of anthropology and a flexible arts and exhibition space, The Studio. Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. [horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk/)
* **Coronavirus impact: Every month the Horniman was closed cost around £150,000 in lost income** from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and café. In recent years, the Horniman has increasingly relied on this vital income to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of returning visitors, our supporters and their generous donations are more needed than ever. [horniman.ac.uk/support-us/](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/support-us/)
* The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.