

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

**John Plunkett, “Steve McQueen to make BBC drama set in Enoch Powell’s ‘rivers of blood’ era,” *The Guardian*, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

Oscar-winning director to make first television drama with six-part series telling story of West Indian community in London across three decades



Steve McQueen, who won an Oscar for *12 Years a Slave*, said his BBC drama is about a ‘legacy that shaped the Britain we live in today’. Photograph: Xinhua/Landov/Barcroft Media

The Oscar-winning writer and director [Steve McQueen](#) will make his first British television drama for BBC1, while Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* will be reimaged by the man who brought back *Doctor Who*, the corporation has announced.

McQueen’s six-part series will tell the story of a West Indian community in the heart of London across three decades, beginning at the moment of Enoch Powell’s notorious “rivers of blood” speech in 1968.

McQueen, who won an Oscar for *12 Years a Slave*, and acclaim for his earlier films *Hunger* and *Shame*, said: “These stories are passionate, personal and unique.

“They are testimony to the truth of real lives and urgently need to be told. This is about a legacy which has not only made my life as an artist possible, but also has shaped the Britain that we live in today.”

BBC1 controller Charlotte Moore said the drama would “tell the stories of people whose voices have never been heard”. It comes at a time when the BBC has been under pressure from campaigners such as Lenny Henry to increase the diversity of its output and the people who work for it.

The BBC said the series, as yet untitled, would focus on a West Indian community whose “lives have been shaped by their own force of will despite an often hostile environment”.

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At its heart is a restaurant in Ladbroke Grove, the Mangrove, “a place of camaraderie and friendship that becomes a social heart for the community – and, over time, a flashpoint for resistance”.

It was one of a number of new programmes announced at the Guardian Edinburgh International TV Festival on Wednesday, including a new version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Russell T Davies, 10 years after he reinvented *Doctor Who*.

The BBC said the new 90-minute production would be “bold and accessible” with something for all the family. It will be made in Cardiff, the home of *Doctor Who*, and is part of a Shakespeare season next year.

Davies, whose other TV credits include Channel 4’s *Queer as Folk* and *Cucumber*, said: “I’ve wanted to make this for the BBC for my entire adult life – and only the BBC can put on a play like this, for all the family, smack-bang in the heart of prime-time.

“With a riot of prosthetics, CGI, magic and action, it needs the brilliant *Doctor Who* team in Cardiff to bring it to life.”

The new adaptation is described as a “truthful version of the play ... the original Shakespeare. Warm and funny, it will have as much attitude and invention as any theatrical interpretation”.

Another new BBC1 drama, *Stop!*, is a four-part Motown musical drama from former *EastEnders* lead writer Tony Jordan and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* producer Duncan Kenworthy.

In development for 18 months, Jordan said it would be “something completely different from any other show on television. The musical arrangements and cutting edge choreography will give us a uniquely modern take on a genre of music that is truly timeless”.

Other new commissions include historical travelogue *Italy’s Invisible Cities* with Alexander Armstrong; *Tomorrow’s Food*, in which Dara Ó Briain will uncover the future of what we eat; and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall on poaching and the illegal wildlife trade.

Moore said the new commissions “reflect the diverse range of distinctive, pioneering programmes audiences expect from BBC1”.

<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/aug/26/steve-mcqueen-bbc-drama-enoch-powell-rivers-of-blood-era>