

Honorary – Kate Tempest (Doctor of Letters)

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Vice-Chancellor, it is my pleasure to present to you Kate Tempest for the degree of Doctor of Letters honoris causa.

Kate Tempest is truly a renaissance artist who has achieved great distinction in music, literature and poetry. Kate's work explores issues such as global inequality, capitalism, celebrity culture, environmentalism, the failure of politicians and urban gentrification. Her influences range from Wu-Tang Clan, to modernist poetry, to Tracey Emin.

Kate was born and has lived her whole life in London and is no stranger to the challenges and joys the city presents.

She once said of London: *'The pace that it gives us, the teachings, the ancientness of all of these layers of time and life being built on top of the other. London especially, it goes deep. The souls of the city are everywhere, living and dead. Especially if you're the kind of person that's hungry for life, in a city: there it is.'*

Kate left school at 16 to study at the BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology in Croydon, going on to graduate in English Literature from Goldsmiths, University of London.

She began performing at open mic nights at Deal Real, a small hip-hop store in Carnaby Street, before supporting acts such as John Cooper Clarke, Billy Bragg and Benjamin Zephaniah. Kate achieved wide-scale recognition with her breakthrough *Everybody Down* which was nominated for the Mercury Music Prize in 2014.

In 2013, she won the Ted Hughes Award for her poetry; 'Brand New Ancients.'

One of the award's judging panel, artist Cornelia Parker, said: *'I read it first as a piece of prose and thought it was compulsive. But when I heard it as an audio piece it was electrifying. It's a new departure that has informed the way I see the world since. It rings in my head.'*

Kate's reputation as an immensely talented live performer has propelled her career to greater heights and left audiences all over the world in awe. Her performance at Glastonbury last year set social media alight and is already the stuff of legend.

She puts a powerful voice to the frustrations many feel. In her 2016 debut novel, *The Bricks that Built the Houses* (a Sunday Times Best seller), she says: *"It's on us, the people at the bottom to fix things for ourselves even though it's us who suffer the decisions of the people at the top the most."*

Kate has not achieved her success through talent alone. All her adult life has been focussed on honing her craft, reading and absorbing lessons from the world she

inhabits and the lessons of history. This hard work has enabled her to tackle grander themes and express her ideas in new ways.

Kate deconstructs the confusing fast-paced developments in world affairs. Last year, she released 'Europe is Lost' which tackles hypocrisy in both the media and politics. The music video features clips from the recent US election, Isis, the KKK, Trump, beauty pageants and apocalyptic film scenes.

However, Kate is also aware that contemporary concerns should not consume us completely. The escape that art gives us is as important as engaging with the visceral realities in our lives. As she once said *'If you live entirely in this world, it's not healthy. Sometimes you just need to read poems or listen to music.'*

As a city, country and a global community we face many issues that divide us. Artists like Kate give a voice to people who otherwise would not be heard.

Vice-Chancellor, it is my pleasure to present to you Kate Tempest poet, writer and musician, for the degree of Doctor of Letters honoris causa.