

**Strictly Embargoed Until 6.30pm**  
**Thursday 6 June 2019**

## **We Need New Stories** **Edinburgh International Book Festival Launches 2019 Programme**

In an era of contradiction and division the 2019 Edinburgh International Book Festival invites authors and audiences to find new stories to give meaning to the world. Stories are to society what DNA is to human life - small strings of information which become bound together to make up a shared understanding of humanity's place in the world. The 2019 programme, launched today, brings together writers from all over the world for the most international gathering in the Festival's history to participate in a series of conversations, debates, workshops and performances to champion their stories.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said: "Stories are devices that help humans make sense of a complex world. At a time of uncertainty, simple narratives such as 'Make America Great Again' or 'Take Back Control,' may be enticing to some, but do they tell us what's truly achievable? The 2019 Book Festival looks at seismic changes in 21st century society, including the impact of technology; the collapse of trust in who's telling the truth; and the increasing dominance of certain languages at the expense of others. These have long been the terrain of science fiction, but this Festival's theme is not only focusing on fiction. Whether we're listening to scientists and politicians or mythmakers and poets, to understand the world around us We Need New Stories."

New voices at the Book Festival this year include award-winning Indian author, citizen and activist Arundhati Roy who makes her first appearance in Edinburgh in conversation with Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. Joining her in making their long-awaited debuts in Charlotte Square Gardens are two leading Australian novelists Thomas Keneally and YA writer Markus Zusak. From Indonesia the world-renowned poet, essayist and playwright Goenawan Mohamad comes to discuss his life and work and from France the Festival welcomes two writers shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize - Annie Ernaux and Mathias Énard.

Major book launches at the Festival across the adult and Baillie Gifford children's programmes include new novels from Salman Rushdie, Cressida Cowell, Tracy Chevalier, Ann Cleeves (who introduces her new detective), Julia Donaldson and illustrator Axel Scheffler, James Meek and Deborah Levy. Composer James MacMillan launches his memoir and Branko Milanovic is interviewed by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Eddie Izzard speaks about his audio recording of Dickens' *Great Expectations* and there is more great fiction from Kate Atkinson, Harry Hill, Clare Balding, Tim Winton, David Nicholls, Joanne Harris, Mark Haddon and Roddy Doyle who is in conversation with Blindboy, one half of the Irish comedy hip-hop duo Rubberbandits.

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Lead sponsors Baillie Gifford have expanded their support of the children's and education programmes resulting in a new interactive children's area and, in a new collaboration for 2019, The New York Times is not only sponsoring the Main Theatre in Charlotte Square Gardens but also working with the Festival to present a series of panel discussions on climate, gender, the future of technology and China. Leading writers from the newspaper including European tech correspondent Adam Satariano, European styles correspondent Elizabeth Paton and photographer Josh Haner are joined by *Energy at the End of the World's* Laura Watts, American feminist campaigner Naomi Wolf and Yuan Yang, co-Founder of Rethinking Economics amongst others to discuss the key issues of the day.

Important women's voices include former BBC China Editor Carrie Gracie, who launches her new book *Equal*, Caroline Criado-Perez and Mary Portas who all call for radical change. Campaigner Gina Martin offers an empowering toolkit for activism and change while Danish comedian Sofie Hagen discusses body image. Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson in conversation with Olympian Katherine Grainger, Channel 4's Cathy Newman, Labour MP Rachel Reeves and broadcaster Mariella Frostrup all share their collections of inspirational women.

Stories around race and identity are explored by actress Zawe Ashton, Scottish model Eunice Olumide, US author and Pulitzer Prize winner Colson Whitehead and former Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman, who both launch their highly anticipated new novels. Former Blue Peter presenter Konnie Huq, children's illustrator Mylo Freeman and author Serena Patel explore similar themes for younger audiences and three voices from the US - Kwame Alexander, National Poetry Slam Champion Elizabeth Acevedo and Jason Reynolds bring their lyrical verse novels for young adults. Other authors writing gritty stories for young adults on topics including transgender, #MeToo, sexuality and mental health include Irish novelist John Boyne, Juno Dawson, Robert Muchamore, Alex Wheatle and Anthony McGowan.

A key voice in the US protest movement Black Lives Matter, DeRay Mckesson makes his first appearance in Edinburgh as one of the 2019 Guest Selectors. Mckesson talks to Texan writer Casey Gerald about growing up underprivileged, black and gay in Dallas; to Ibram X Kendi, founding director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center in Washington DC, who launches his new book *How To Be an Antiracist*, and to Fatima Bhutto and Regina Porter about why everyone, no matter who they are, should have a role in making a better society. Val McDermid tackles Home/Less in her Guest Selector strand, speaking to Ali Smith, Karine Polwart and Palestinian author Nayrouz Qarmout about individuals and families who've faced the decision to leave their homeland; to Leila Aboulela, Robin Robertson and Kamila Shamsie about the meaning of 'home' and explores the many forms of homelessness in conversation with Danny Dorling, Geetha Marcus and Joelle Taylor. The 2019 Illustrator in Residence, Eilidh Muldoon, is a hugely popular Edinburgh artist who will be hosting a series of events including a cocktail and colouring event for adults, a bookmaking workshop for teens and a discussion about picture books in translation.

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The 2019 Book Festival presents the most international programme in its history, with over 60 countries represented. In addition to Oman's Jokha Alharthi, winner of the 2019 Man Booker International Prize, audiences can enjoy novels from Mexico's Emiliano Monge, musician Rita Indiana from the Dominican Republic, Sulaiman Addonia who originates from Eritrea and Khalid Khalifa from Syria. Margaret Busby introduces her collection *New Daughters of Africa* and is joined by contributors Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor and Bernardine Evaristo, and in the Baillie Gifford Children's Programme illustrators Fifi Kuo from Kuwait and Czech Petr Horáček appear together with debut novelist Yasmin Rahman from El Salvador and Finland's Maria Turtschaninoff who concludes her thrilling *The Red Abbey Chronicles* series.

Alongside the internationalism of the programme, indigenous languages play a key role. Throwing Voices is a unique collaborative project looking at how local language, culture and tradition can resonate across linguistic divides. Supported by the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund, five pairs of authors have shared words and objects and worked with a musician to create a boundary-crossing performance. Among them, Basque writer Uxue Alberdi and Irish poet Ciara MacLavery have collaborated with harpist Rachel Newton; Sami writer Linnéa Axelsson and Inuit poet and throat singer Taqralik Partridge share their experiences with folk musician Kate Young, and Gaelic poet Rody Gorman and New Zealand writer Tayi Tibble have worked with Scottish Indian beatbox artist Bigg Taj. As part of the Scotland goes Basque programme the Festival welcomes leading figures in the Basque literary scene including Harkaitz Cano, Miren Agur Meabe and Bernardo Atxaga.

Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop said: "The Edinburgh International Book Festival raises Scotland's cultural profile on a worldwide stage, by stimulating debate and intriguing audiences. The Scottish Government is proud to provide support through our Expo fund, with £120,000 in 2019 for Throwing Voices, which shows how language connects us to powerful expressions of local and international identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

International authors also feature in the 46 novels and short stories eligible for the Festival's First Book Award. Alongside Greenland's Niviaq Korneliussen, Singaporean Jing-Jing Lee and Nigerian authors Jumoke Verissimo and Dean Atta, news reader George Alagiah, scientist Jim Al-Khalili, actor Richard Lumsden and Laura Bates, founder of Everyday Sexism, all bring their debut fiction to Edinburgh.

Authors finding new ways to talk about climate change in a series of events presented in collaboration with WWF include former President of Ireland Mary Robinson, sustainability expert Mike Berners-Lee, geneticist Professor Steve Jones and Alex Rogers, a pioneer in marine biology and consultant on BBC's *Blue Planet II*. The Festival also introduces new nature writing celebrating the wonders of our natural world. Master wordsmith Robert Macfarlane takes a lyrical journey into the hidden worlds beneath our feet and Kathleen Jamie previews her luminous new essay collection, *Surfacing*. Norwegian explorer Erling Kagge and adventurer Robin Knox-Johnston discuss their extraordinary lives, historian Neil Oliver turns his attention to the landscape of the British Isles and Brigid Benson reveals the secrets of the North coast of Scotland. For younger readers Chris Mould has illustrated a new edition of *Iron Man*, Nicola Davies brings her *Country Tales* series and YA writers Marcus Sedgwick & C A Fletcher introduce ideas about civilisation and its impact on the planet.

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The Book Festival's *Citizen* project, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery and through the PLACE Programme, is bringing together people in communities across the city, in Muirhouse, Liberton and Wester Hailes, to interrogate the word 'citizen'. Participants in *Citizen* are joined in the Gardens by the project's writers-in-residence Claire Askew and Eleanor Thom to discuss their ideas. In addition, a series of events take inspiration from these community discussions welcoming Clare Hunter and Esther Rutter who explore the radically restorative powers of crafting, knitting and sewing; Iranian writer Dina Nayeri and journalist Nick Thorpe who share their stories of refugees and Kerry Hudson who joins American author Sarah Smarsh to discuss their experiences of working-class life.

Councillor Donald Wilson, Culture and Communities Convener, said: "For centuries Edinburgh has exported stories to the world, leading to its designation as the first ever UNESCO City of Literature. Since the International Book Festival launched, we have welcomed some of the greatest minds and most interesting writers on the planet to exchange ideas and share their stories. In line with our aspirations to expand the reach of festival activity beyond the city centre and into our communities, I'm delighted that through our PLACE programme partnership, we are able to support the Citizen programme which does exactly that."

Food fosters community, and the World on a Plate strand of events includes Afternoon Teas with Alissa Timoshkina, founder of the KinoVino film supper club, Palestinian chef Joudie Kalla and champagne expert Davy Zyw. Bake-Off finalist James Morton and his father Tom Morton reveal the delights of Shetlandic cuisine, and food writers Jack Monroe, Prue Leith and Scottish chef Gary Maclean all introduce new recipe books. The University of Cambridge geneticist Giles Yeo explores the science of obesity and the truth about diets, food historian Robyn Metcalfe introduces her new book examining the challenges of the food supply chain and also joins Helen Browning and Dieter Helm in the debate on Futureproofing Food.

The Book Festival's partnership with the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh returns for a third year with special one-off interpretations of three new cult classics: Miriam Toews' *Women Talking*, Charlotte Higgins' *Under Another Sky* and David Keenan's classic *This is Memorial Device*. The Playing with Books series continues with James Robertson and Aidan O'Rourke presenting 365, their ground-breaking project of words and music, and an extraordinary premiere performance of the late Tom Leonard's *Mother Courage* led by Scottish actor Tam Dean Burn. Francesca Simon is joined by composer Gavin Higgins to discuss adapting her novel, *The Monstrous Child*, into an opera and, in a very special one-off event to close the Festival, The Hebrides Ensemble and composers including Linda Buckley, James MacMillan and Pàdruig Morrison, respond musically to the Festival audience's favourite Last Lines.

A strong poetry strand includes readings from the newly appointed Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, the breathtaking talents of Rachel Long, Tania Nwachukwu and Hibaq Osman from the Octavia poetry collective and an astonishing line-up of international poetry in The Divan Sessions. Activists and poets Lemn Sissay and Benjamin Zephaniah discuss their lives and the issues that inspire their work and the legend of dub poetry Linton Kwesi Johnson discusses the work of his friend Michael Smith, whose life was cut short when he was

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killed at a political rally in Jamaica. Concert pianist Susan Tomes writes on the joys of playing piano, Jane Glover shares her passion for Handel, BBC Radio broadcaster Robert Philip demystifies orchestral music, Everything but the Girl's Tracey Thorn discusses her latest memoir and Glasgow Alt-folk musician Beerjacket performs songs and stories from his new album-book combination *Silver Chords*.

The University of Edinburgh's James Tait Black Prizes celebrate their centenary, with the winners of the 2019 Fiction and Biography prizes being announced on stage at the Festival. The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) developed by the University in partnership with the Book Festival, is now in its third year and participants are encouraged to attend events with some of this year's shortlisted fiction authors including Will Eaves, Jesse Greengrass, Olivia Laing and Nafissa Thompson-Spires.

With support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, the Book Festival is committed to making the Gardens and events ever more accessible. This year there are captioned and BSL interpreted events across the programme and infra-red hearing assistance in all theatres. A new free sensory storytelling session has been created for adults and children with severe or multiple learning disabilities and there is a range of free events across the programme from 10 @10 in the morning to Unbound with Edinburgh Gin at night. An expanded selection of events across the programme has been designated Pay What You Can. The Book Festival village is fully accessible, with disabled toilets in both George Street and Charlotte Square Gardens and offers one of only twelve Changing Places accessible toilets in the centre of Edinburgh. A new ramp will give easy access to Charlotte Square Gardens from street level.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival receives funding from Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council and this year welcomes over 900 participants from over 60 different countries to its tented village in Charlotte Square Gardens and on George Street. The Festival runs from Saturday 10 to Monday 26 August 2019.

Mairi Kidd, Head of Literature, Languages & Publishing at Creative Scotland commented: "The release of the Edinburgh International Book Festival programme is always a hotly anticipated event in the cultural calendar. For 2019 the team has curated an exceptional programme centred around books, stories and ideas that promises political engagement, experimentation, challenge, excitement and, of course, entertainment. Scottish artists, writers and thinkers are firmly centred in the programme alongside their international peers, presenting significant potential for creative exchange between home-grown voices and visitors. For audiences there is truly something for everyone, from the loyal festival crowd to - vitally - those who haven't yet discovered the joy of books."

Entrance to the Gardens is FREE and the gardens, cafés, bookshops and all venues are fully accessible. Full details of the programme can be found at [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk). Tickets to all events go on sale at 8.30am on Tuesday 25 June 2019, online at [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk), by phone on 0345 373 5888 or in person at the Box Office at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (on Tuesday 25 June only, thereafter at The Hub, Castlehill).

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