



Strictly Embargoed until 6.30pm
Thursday 6 June

NEW STORIES FOR YOUNG READERS AT THE EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

Young people need stories as a way of making sense of their world, and this year's Baillie Gifford Children's Programme at the Edinburgh International Book Festival is jam packed with stories for all ages which engage, thrill, comfort and inform. From the joys of well-loved tales such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Elmer* or *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (all of which celebrate anniversaries in 2019) to a new generation of voices from diverse backgrounds which reflect the rapidly changing world, the Book Festival transforms Charlotte Square Gardens into a welcoming playground for families and young people to explore this August.

Janet Smyth, Children & Education Programme Director at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said; "This year's Festival aims to give a real sense of the exciting diversity, energy and innovation that currently exists in the world of children's publishing. Authors and illustrators both reflect and respond to the concerns, the activism and the thinking of today's children and young people with books about the environment, identity, gender and strong role models. With performances, arts and crafts, workshops and debates there is something for all ages and all interests."

For teenagers, American authors Kwame Alexander, Jason Reynolds and National Slam Poetry Award-winner Elizabeth Acevedo all present tales from the city in lyrical verse-form novels. Poet Dean Atta will discuss his debut novel *Black Flamingo* about a mixed-race, gay teenager finding himself as a drag-artist and Dutch illustrator Mylo Freeman celebrates the distinct nature of African hair in her picture book, *Hair, It's a Family Affair!* Other writers exploring identity include former Blue Peter presenter Konnie Huq and award-winning author Sita Brahmachari, while writers tackling topics including transgender, #MeToo, sexuality and mental health include Juno Dawson, Robert Muchamore, Alex Wheatle, Anthony McGowan and Irish Children's Laureate Sarah Crossan. Mel Darbon introduces *Rosie Loves Jack*, told from the perspective of a girl with Down's Syndrome.

For younger readers, the programme is packed with vikings and dragons, wizards, butterflies, bears, frogs and D-Day dogs. Cressida Cowell launches the next *Wizards of Once* adventure, Clare Balding brings *The Racehorse Who Learned to Dance*, John Boyne will explore transgender issues in *My Brother's Name is Jessica* and former Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman introduces *Crossfire*, the hotly-anticipated latest instalment in her ground-breaking *Noughts & Crosses* series. Julia Donaldson is joined by her illustrators Catherine Rayner for the *Go-Away Bird* and Axel Scheffler for the launch of *The Smeds and the Smoos*, a gloriously fun, inter-alien love story that champions diversity and inclusivity. Olympian Chris Hoy will be bringing Fergus, his magical bike-riding boy, over the finishing line one last time in *Flying Fergus 10: The Photo Finish!*

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT FRANCES SUTTON, PRESS MANAGER:

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The Edinburgh International Book Festival Ltd is a Scottish charity (SC010120) and a limited company (registered in Scotland no 79939) and has its registered office at 5A Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, EH2 4DR.

The popular Playing with Books strand has two events in the children's programme. Horrid Henry creator Francesca Simon is joined by composer Gavin Higgins and soprano Marta Fontanals-Simmons to discuss adapting her novel, *The Monstrous Child*, into an opera and leading Scottish company Visible Fictions Theatre share scenes from their latest tri-lingual adaptation of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*. Illustrator Kasia Matyjaszek creates a bilingual safari in Polish and English with storytelling, drawing and crafts, and there are Gaelic storytelling sessions and drop in activities in the Festival's Story Box.

This year's Illustrator in Residence, local artist Eilidh Muldoon, leads a series of events exploring wordless picture books, making books and picture books in translation. Author and illustrator David McKee comes to celebrate Elmer the Elephant's 30th birthday and Frann Preston-Gannon has illustrated a beautiful collection of 365 nature poems for every day of the year. Chris Mould has illustrated a stunning new edition of *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes - first published 50 years ago, the poet was already recognising our destruction of the natural world. Gill Lewis explores the fragility of the golden eagle community in the Scottish Highlands in her latest novel *Eagle Warrior* and is joined by international raptor expert Ruth Tingay. Marcus Sedgwick and C A Fletcher introduce ideas about civilisation and its impact on the planet.

The Baillie Gifford Children's Programme welcomes authors from all over the world in the most internationally diverse programme to date. Authors coming to Edinburgh for the first time include novelist Shakirah Bourne from Barbados, Imam Baksh from Guyana, illustrators Fifi Kuo from Taiwan and Gulnar Hajo from Kuwait, debut novelist Yasmin Rahman from El Salvador and Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara from Spain. Finland's Maria Turtchaninoff returns to conclude her thrilling *The Red Abbey Chronicles* series and Malta's Saviour Pirotta takes a historical tour around the globe.

Sam Pattman, Sponsorship Manager for Baillie Gifford, said "Baillie Gifford are pleased to be continuing their support of the Children & Families programme. It is an extremely important element of the Book Festival and we are delighted to not only be committing to a further 3 years, but to be increasing our support of it too. It is important for the Book Festival to continue to evolve and to encourage their younger visitors to engage with reading and to introduce them to the wonderful world of books. We know that with our support they can offer both children and teachers the best kind of educational festival experience.'

A new interactive children's area has been created with the support of Baillie Gifford and through funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery the Book Festival is committed to making the Gardens and events ever more accessible. A new free sensory storytelling session has been created for adults and children with severe or multiple learning disabilities. Other free events include Are You Sitting Comfortably morning stories and a wealth of activities for families in the drop-in Story Box that this year will mark the moon landings with fun inter-stellar crafts and the chance to create a giant Iron Man, a Phoenix, learn about butterflies and moths and become a little inventor. The Garden Bookshop includes Scotland's largest choice of children's titles and a reading area, entry to the Gardens and to George Street is free and there are highchairs, a buggy park, baby-changing facilities and toilets (including an accessible Changing Places toilet) on site.

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