



Manchester Literature Festival

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MANCHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAMME FOR ITS AUTUMN LIVE EVENT

9-17 October 2021

Manchester Literature Festival reveals its final roster of writers, a strong poetry strand and family friendly events, with many festival favourites returning to the city, such as Alan Johnson with his debut novel and journalist Anita Sethi with her first book. Elif Shafak and Colm Tóibín will discuss their latest novels while Lemn Sissay will be in conversation with Rachel Holmes about her biography of the natural born rebel, Sylvia Pankhurst. They will join award-winning writers and musicians including Paul Morley in conversation with LoneLady, Bobby Gillespie, Tracey Thorn, Andrew O'Hagan, and Bernardine Evaristo in an inspiring and thought-provoking live events programme.

Former Labour politician and Home Secretary **Alan Johnson** will be appearing at the festival to talk about his debut novel, *The Late Train to Gipsy Hill*. A masterful thriller, the novel focuses on a man that finds himself on the run from Russian secret agents, mobsters and the Metropolitan Police.

What does a life in resistance look like? Acclaimed biographer **Rachel Holmes** brings Sylvia Pankhurst out of the shadows and shows us her lifelong commitment to human rights and activism, her internationalism and her strong connections to Ethiopia. Lemn Sissay, poet, playwright and the author of the acclaimed memoir *My Name is Why* will be in conversation with Rachel about this incredible life. *In partnership with CFNW, Creative Manchester & Manchester Museum.*

Manchester writer and broadcaster **Anita Sethi** in conversation about her debut book, *I Belong Here: A Journey Along the Backbone of Britain*, the importance of walking as an act of defiance and hope, the devastating effects of racism, bullying and PTSD, and the role nature and wildness can play in well-being. *In partnership with Manchester Museum.*

Colm Tóibín, the internationally acclaimed Irish writer (*Brooklyn, Nora Webster*) will talk about his new novel, *The Magician*. Toibin who lives in Dublin and New York has written 10 novels,

several books of criticism and has been shortlisted for The Booker Prize three times. *In partnership with CFNW and Creative Manchester.*

Elif Shafak, the Turkish author, feminist and human rights activist will be in conversation about her new novel, *The Island of Missing Trees*, and the importance of love, nature, words and storytelling.

Monique Roffey and **Ingrid Persaud** are the authors of award-winning novels *The Mermaid of Black Conch* and *Love after Love* and will discuss their writing, determined women and stories from the Caribbean.

Celebrating a landmark new series curated by Booker Prize winning writer **Bernardine Evaristo**, **Black Britain Writing Back** re-introduces lost or hard-to-find books by Black writers who wrote about Black Britain and the diaspora across the **Twentieth Century**. Joining Bernardine on stage are **Jacqueline Roy** (*The Fat Lady Sings*), **Judith Bryan** (*Bernard and the Cloth Monkey*) and **Nicola Williams** (*Without Prejudice*).

Jeanette Winterson and **Mark O'Connell** discuss their latest books *12 Bytes* and *Notes from an Apocalypse*, exploring our relationship with AI and the alternative directions humanity may be heading. *In partnership with CFNW and Creative Manchester.*

To celebrate Granta's new decade defining anthology, *The Best of Young Spanish Language Novelists*, editor **Valerie Miles**, authors **Mateo García Elizondo** (Mexico) and **Cristina Morales** (Spain) discuss Spanish-language writing with host **Mariana Casale**.

Cabaret for Freedom is the annual celebration of poetry, spoken word and music presented in partnership with Young Identity and St John's Church. This year's event features live sets from brilliant poets **Tolu Agbelusi**, **Yomi Sode** and **Young Identity**.

Three of Vintage's contemporary poets **Leo Boix**, **Kayo Chingonyi** and **Andrew McMillan** read from their excellent new collections *Ballad of A Happy Immigrant*, *A Blood Condition* and *Pandemonium*. *In partnership with Manchester Poetry Library and CFNW.*

Malika Booker, **Jason Allen-Paisant** and **Vahni Capildeo** are three poets whose work engages with nature, silence, eco-poetics and identity. Malika will read new and recent poems whilst Jason and Vahni will read from their powerful collections, *Thinking With Trees* and *Like A Tree Walking*. *In partnership with CFNW and Creative Manchester.*

Mona Arshi, **Alycia Pirmohamed** and **Nidhi Zak / Aria Eipe** are three of the most exciting poets today. Alycia and Nidhi will perform work from *Hinge* and *Auguries of a Minor God*, their wonderful debut collections. Mona Arshi (*Dear Big Gods*) will read some recent poems and give a preview of her debut novel, *Somebody Loves You*. *In partnership with Manchester Poetry Library and Manchester Museum.*

A trio of Irish voices, **Vona Groarke**, **Victoria Kennefick** and **John McAuliffe** will read from their acclaimed new collections, *Link*, *Eat or We Both Starve* and *Selected Poems*. *In partnership with CFNW and Creative Manchester.*

Superheroes: Inspiring Stories of Secret Strength – Performance poet / author **Sophia Thakur** and illustrator **Denzell Dankwah** will run a lively workshop with children encouraged to draw-along and write about their own superheroes inspired by their new book curated by Stormzy and the #Merky Books team.

Little Reads Family Day with Chris Haughton – Author Chris Haughton shares his new picture book, *Maybe*, which will be translated as he reads into Mandarin Chinese by author & illustrator Daishu Ma. Followed by dance, drama & music workshops by acclaimed Manchester artists.

A digital festival is planned for November 2021 with full details announced shortly.

Join the conversation: #MLF21 @McrLitFest

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Notes to editors:

Manchester Literature Festival is constantly updating audience guidance in line with government guidance for performance venues. Capacity at events will be reduced and the wearing of masks and use of hand sanitiser will be encouraged. Information and updates are available on the website.

To buy tickets:

The events can all be viewed and booked at [manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/events](https://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/events)
<https://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/events>

Any ticket revenue received will help Manchester Literature Festival survive this challenging time and deliver its annual festival and events throughout the year.

Now in its 16th year, **Manchester Literature Festival** has been building on its previous success expanding audiences and creating new partnerships across the national and international literary world. Patrons of Manchester Literature Festival include former Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, award-winning journalist and Observer critic Rachel Cooke, poet and Scottish Makar Jackie Kay, broadcaster and former anchor of BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour Dame Jenni Murray, poet and publisher Michael Schmidt, acclaimed novelist Kamila Shamsie and author and broadcaster Erica Wagner.

The Festival has quadrupled in size from 2006 when it featured 30 events attracting an audience of 3,000 to the 2019 Festival which featured 75 events and attracted an audience of over 12,000.

In 2020 MLF delivered its first digital festival featuring 17 online events broadcast on Crowdcast over a long weekend. The Festival included 70 writers and four specially commissioned films, and the feedback from authors, audiences, publishers and partner organisations was overwhelmingly positive. #MLF20 also reached a much more geographically dispersed audience than usual with 18% of the audience joining the events from overseas. 10% of the audience were based in the US and the remaining international audience joined from a total of 51 countries including Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Chile, Mexico, Nigeria and Russia.

Over the past 15 years, the Festival has featured many of the biggest names in literary fiction and spoken word as well as prominent cultural figures from across the globe, including Martin Amis, Tori Amos, Simon Armitage, Margaret Atwood, Kate Atkinson, Malorie Blackman, William Boyd, Jung Chang, Angela Davis, Roddy Doyle, Margaret Drabble, Carol Ann Duffy, Jennifer Egan, Inua Ellams, Anne Enright, Neil Gaiman, Guy Garvey, Seamus Heaney, Alan Hollinghurst, Nick Hornby, Howard Jacobson, Barbara Kingsolver, Hanif Kureishi, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Deborah Levy, Armistead Maupin, Johnny Marr, Val McDermid, David Mitchell, Walter Mosley, Andrew Motion, Jo Nesbo, Patrick Ness, Audrey Niffenegger, Ben Okri, Arundhati Roy, Will Self, Lemn Sissay, Kamila Shamsie, Zadie Smith, Kae Tempest, Colm Tóibín, Rose Tremain, Sarah Waters, Vivienne Westwood, Colson Whitehead, Jeanette Winterson and Xinran.