



Manchester Literature Festival

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MANCHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES MLF DIGITAL, ITS 2021 ONLINE FESTIVAL

Monday 1 – Sunday 14 November 2021

Manchester Literature Festival Digital returns for the second year presenting a new line up of major and award-winning international writers including **Elizabeth Strout**, **Tishani Doshi**, **Rebecca Solnit**, **Dara McAnulty**, **Bryan Washington**, **C Pam Zhang** and **Curtis Sittenfeld**, plus a selection of highlights from this year's Manchester Literature Festival LIVE.

Last year's festival, featuring over 70 writers was a huge success, reaching a worldwide audience including literature fans from a total of 51 countries including the USA, Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Chile, Mexico, Nigeria, and Russia.

Manchester Literature Festival will also be rewarding all their supporters and lovers of literature with eight extra events available to access free of charge.

Additionally, there will be a chance to join specially chosen authors appearing in the Durham Book Festival and Ilkley Literature Festival online.

New events available in Manchester Literature Festival Digital:

One of America's finest writers, **Elizabeth Strout** returns to the world of her much-loved character Lucy Barton with her new novel *Oh William!* This superb eighth novel follows her previous bestsellers *Olive Kitteridge*, *The Burgess Boys*, and *My Name is Lucy Barton*.

In *Orwell's Roses*, prolific US author, flâneur and feminist, **Rebecca Solnit** reconsiders the work of George Orwell in light of the rosebushes he planted in 1936 in the garden of his cottage in Wallingdon. The originator of the term 'mansplaining' returns to the Festival for a not to be missed in conversation with MLF Patron **Kamila Shamsie**, author of The Women's Prize winner *Home Fire*.

CWEN: Prize-winning author of *Empires of the Indus* and *Leela's Book*, **Alice Albinia** discusses her novel *Cwen* with Mancunian actor and activist **Maxine Peake**. Over the past seven years Albinia has travelled around the edges of Britain, from Orkney to Anglesey, piecing together ancient, medieval and modern tales of islands ruled by women. Her non-fiction book *The Britannias* will be published in 2023.

The authors of two beautifully told stories about home, family and belonging will be in conversation with **Okechukwu Nzelu**. **C Pam Zhang's** novel *How Much of These Hills is Gold* was chosen by Barack Obama as one of his books of 2020 and is currently being adapted for television while **Bryan Washington** will talk about his lauded novel, *Memorial*. His short story collection *Lot* won the 2020 International Dylan Thomas Prize. Presented by Manchester Literature Festival in partnership with Durham Book Festival and Ilkley Literature Festival.

Novel Voices: Caleb Azumah Nelson & Brandon Taylor. These young novelists discuss their sensational debuts, *Open Water* and *Real Life*, novels which consider male vulnerability, trauma, grief, love and tenderness and question where writing by and about Black men fits in a canon of predominantly white literature. Presented in partnership with Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester and hosted by **Ellah P. Wakatama**.

Partnership events online:

Curtis Sittenfeld & Maggie Shipstead, Friday 1 October 2021, 7pm. Renowned US authors Curtis Sittenfeld and Maggie Shipstead share what inspires them to tell the stories of determined, powerful and pioneering women through their fiction, with author and critic **Erica Wagner**. Presented by Ilkley Literature Festival in partnership with Durham Book Festival and Manchester Literature Festival. Available on demand until 31 October.

Leïla Slimani: The Country of Others, Monday 11 October, 7pm. Award-winning author Leïla Slimani discusses her highly anticipated new novel *The Country of Others*. Leïla Slimani is the first Moroccan woman to win France's most prestigious literary prize, the Prix Goncourt for *Lullaby*, which became an international bestseller. This event is chaired by **Alex Clark** and has been produced by Durham Book Festival in partnership with Ilkley Literature Festival and Manchester Literature Festival.

Free digital events and New Commissions:

Clare Shaw performs new poems inspired by her time as Carbon Landscape Poet in Residence for Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Manchester Literature Festival earlier this year. She reads her work on location, followed by a conversation with fellow poet **Helen Mort** about the main themes illuminated through her poetry, including the healing of post-industrial landscapes, and their own recent experiences of finding solace and recovery in green spaces. Presented in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust.

Postcards from Oxford Road: Hafsah Aneela Bashir, Andrew McMillan & Reshma Ruia
A co-commission from MLF and the Manchester Poetry Library, these three poets create new micro-commissions for the first Corridor of Light Festival revealing what Manchester's Oxford Road means to them.

Melbourne to Manchester: Alicia Sometimes The first Virtual Writer in Residence at The Portico for the inaugural #FestivalOfLibraries shares the poems she created during her residency and her experience of delving into the library's rich collection of books on time, light and astronomy. Presented in partnership with Manchester City of Literature and Festival of Libraries.

Iowa to Manchester: Anna Polonyi The first Virtual Writer in Residence at Central Library for the inaugural #FestivalOfLibraries reads the short story she created during her residency and shares her experience of devising *Find Me in the Fiction Section*, a secret book trail for Central Library using books by LGBTQ+ writers with links to Manchester and Iowa City. Presented in partnership with Manchester City of Literature and Festival of Libraries.

When is a job 'not quite right'? For **Colin Grant** it was when he encountered structural racism at the BBC; for **Kerry Hudson** when people questioned her working class credibility as she toured the UK talking about *Lowborn*; for **Johny Pitts** when he was rejected for TV projects in a 90s world that thought it was post-racial; for **Jethro Soutar** it was in an office where a bullying manager was dismissed as eccentric, and for **Fergal Harte's** narrator it's an editor who rejects the idea of police as villains. Presented in partnership with Speaking Volumes, this film marks their 10th anniversary and their new anthology *Not Quite Right For Us: Forty Writers Speak Volumes*.

Be The Change: Gina Martin, Jeremiah Emmanuel & Iman Amrani Inspirational young authors and activists in conversation with video journalist Iman Amrani, for a digital event to empower you with the tools and courage. Gina is an ambassador for UN Women UK and is joined by youth activist, public speaker and entrepreneur Jeremiah Emmanuel.

The Book of Reykjavik: Vera Júlíusdóttir with Auður Jónsdóttir, Björn Halldórsson and Friðja Ísberg From epic sagas of its mythic past to contemporary short stories, Iceland is home to more writers and more avid readers per head than anywhere in the world. Three writers treat us to extracts of their stories and discuss their favourite literary landmarks or places. In partnership with Comma Press and Icelandic Literature Center.

Youngest ever winner of a major literary prize, **Dara McAnulty**, (Book of the Year for Non-Narrative Non-Fiction at the British Book Awards 2021 and the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing 2020) discusses his love of nature, wildness and poetry, his commitment to activism and the environment and his debut, *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, with poet, climber and fellow nature lover, **Helen Mort**.

Mariana Enriquez and **Andrés Barba**, two Latin American purveyors of horror discuss their latest books both haunted by children with Mariana Casale. Mariana Enriquez's collection of short stories, *The Dangers of Smoking in Bed* was shortlisted for the International Man Booker Prize and Andrés Barba's latest work is *A Luminous Republic*. Presented in partnership with the Instituto Cervantes.

Award-winning Indian poet **Tishani Doshi** shares poems from her new collection *A God at the Door*, and talks to poet and Human Rights lawyer **Mona Arshi**. Presented in partnership with Ripples of Hope Festival, the event includes a short film of the commission Tishani wrote responding to Article 6: Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Events available to enjoy online recorded during **Manchester Literature Festival LIVE** include **An Evening with Bernardine Evaristo, Alan Johnson, Paul Morley in Conversation with LoneLady, Elif Shafak, Monique Roffey and Ingrid Persaud, Jeanette Winterson and Mark O'Connell**.

Join the conversation: #MLF21 @McrLitFest

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Notes to editors:

Full programme:

<https://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/pages/download-brochure-31>

or <https://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/events>

To buy tickets:

<https://www.quaytickets.com/mlf/> or call 0343 208 0500

Tickets are £7.50 (Partnership events with Durham & Ilkley are £5)

Free events can be accessed online from Monday 1 – Sunday 14 November 2021 on the [MLF Vimeo channel](#).

Partnership events:

Curtis Sittenfeld & Maggie Shipstead, Friday 1 October 2021, 7pm, available until 31 October

Tickets £5 www.ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk

Leïla Slimani: The Country of Others, Monday 11 October, 7pm

Tickets £5 <https://durhambookfestival.com>

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 Toibín, Rose Tremain, Sarah Waters, Vivienne Westwood, Colson Whitehead, Jeanette Winterson and Xinran.