



Manchester  
Literature  
Festival

Press release  
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## MANCHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAMME FOR AUTUMN 2023

**7 – 22 October 2023**

Manchester Literature Festival has revealed a thought-provoking programme of events that celebrate imagination, creativity and ideas; offering new perspectives from which to view our fast-paced and shifting world.

Taking place across the city in an array of venues – from Manchester Art Gallery and International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Central Library to Contact, HOME and The Lowry - the line-up this year includes Zadie Smith, Jeanette Winterson, Deborah Levy, Max Porter, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Elif Shafak, Kate Mosse, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Simon Armitage, Natalie Haynes, Annie Macmanus, Afua Hirsch, George Monbiot, Gaia Vince, Jeremy Deller, Lisa Nandy and Yanis Varoufakis.

Preview and Bookend events include Arlo Parks (9 September), Lemn Sissay (16 September), Yanis Varoufakis (26 September), Thurston Moore (17 November), Doon Mackichan (20 November) and Naomi Alderman (29 November).

### **More on the main programme**

Internationally acclaimed author and founder of the Women's Prize for Fiction, **Kate Mosse** will hold a special 'How to Write Historical Fiction' Masterclass for the festival. Kate will share what drew her to the genre, the inspiration behind her bestselling novels like *Labyrinth*, *Sepulchre* and *The Burning Chambers*, how she evokes convincing historical details and how to balance factual research with compelling characters and storytelling.

Kate will also discuss her new novel, *The Ghost Ship*, and the real 18<sup>th</sup> century female pirates that inspired her in an In Conversation hosted by novelist **Beth Underdown** (*The Key in the Lock*).

Novelist and memoir writer **Deborah Levy** (*The Cost of Living*, *The Man Who Saw Everything*, *Hot Milk*) will be in conversation about her forthcoming novel, *August Blue*. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing & Creative Manchester.

Cult author **Max Porter** (*Grief is the Thing with Feathers*, *Lanny*) performs a dramatic abridged reading from his new novel *Shy* with a live electronic score by musician Roly Porter. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing & Creative Manchester.

Turkish-British novelist **Elif Shafak** returns to the festival to discuss some of the writers and poets that have influenced and inspired her, some of the books she returns to regularly for pleasure or guidance and her own life-long passion for reading, writing and storytelling.

New York Times bestselling author of four novels, **Lauren Groff** (*Matrix*, *Fates and Furies*) will be in conversation about her forthcoming novel, *The Vaster Wilds*, sisterhood, strong characters and writing historical fiction. Lauren was one of Granta's Best Young American Novelists in 2017.

A giant of contemporary literature, Norwegian novelist **Karl Ove Knausgaard** rocked the literary world with his *My Struggle* cycle of six autobiographical novels. He makes his debut at MLF to talk about his forthcoming novel, *The Wolves of Eternity*, an intimate journey into the experiences of a half-brother and half-sister in two different – yet deeply connected – lives.

Irish broadcaster, Changes podcast presenter and author **Annie Macmanus** (*Mother Mother*) talks about her new novel *The Mess We're In*, her passion for music and stories, and her journey from sharing other people's stories to writing her own. Sponsored by The Edwardian Manchester.

American author **Sandra Newman** (*The Heavens*, *The Country of Ice Cream Star*) makes her MLF debut to discuss her distinctive fiction and how dystopia mirrors the world around us. Sandra was chosen by the Orwell Estate to write *Julia*, a bold feminist retelling of George Orwell's *1984*.

Award-winning actor **Richard Armitage**, star of *Spooks*, *The Hobbit*, *Captain America* and *Oceans 8*, joins us to discuss his page-turning debut thriller, *Geneva*, and his journey from performing characters on stage and screen to writing them. Harlan Coben described *Geneva* as 'an outstanding debut – ingenious, fast-paced and unpredictable.' Sponsored by The Edwardian Manchester.

Two of the brightest new stars in fiction discuss their brilliant debuts, strong women characters and narrative voice. **Monica Heisey** is a Canadian television writer (*Schitt's Creek*) and the author of *Really Good, Actually*. **Sheena Patel** is a writer, assistant director for film and TV, and part of the 4 Brown Girls Who Write collective. Her brilliant, acerbic debut is *I'm A Fan*.

A prolific and inspiring storyteller, **Jeanette Winterson** (*FRANKISSSTEIN*, *Why Be Happy When You Can Be Normal?*) returns to MLF to launch her new book, *Night Side of the River: Ghost Stories*. She will read a new short story and share some of her real-life encounters with the occult. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

## Culture

Greek author and economist, **Yanis Varoufakis**, joins us to talk about his boldest book yet, *Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism*. Drawing on stories from Greek myths to pop culture, from Homer to Mad Men, Yanis will guide us through the game-changing transformation and how it holds the key to understanding our times.

Master storyteller **Michael Lewis** (*Moneyball*, *The Big Short*, *Flash Boys*) launches his highly anticipated new book, *Going Infinite: The Rise and Fall of a New Tycoon* which chronicles the high-octane story of Sam Bankman-Fried, the young billionaire at the heart of one of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's most spectacular financial collapses via crypto currency. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing & Creative Manchester. Sponsored by Weightmans and Investec Wealth & Investment.

One of our most fearless voices on nature, climate change and the environment, **George Monbiot** returns to MLF to discuss his latest book, *Regenesi: Feeding the World Without Devouring the Planet*. In a special in conversation hosted by Sarah Bridle, Professor of Food, Climate and Society at the University of York, George will consider how we can grow more food with less farming and transform our relationship with the Earth. Presented in partnership with Manchester Lit & Phil.

Award-winning science writer and broadcaster **Gaia Vince** discusses two of the most urgent issues of the day: climate crisis and migration. For *Adventures in The Anthropocene*, Gaia spent 2 ½ years travelling to over 50 countries to map the ways humans are changing the planet forever. In her latest book, *Nomad Century: How to Survive the Climate Upheaval*, Gaia suggests planned and extensive migration is the key to surviving the climate crisis. Presented in partnership with Manchester Museum and hosted by Museum Director **Esme Ward**.

One of the most respected voices in frontline politics, **Lisa Nandy** is MP for Wigan and the Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Her book *All In: How We Build A Country That Works* looks at the crises happening in Britain from political division and economic turmoil to underinvestment, and suggests how we can build a better, fairer country for everyone.

Award-winning broadcaster, journalist and author **Afua Hirsch** (*Brit(ish)*) returns to the festival to talk about her new book, *Decolonising My Body* with host **Jackie Kay**. A radical exploration of rituals and beauty, the book looks at how notions of beauty are constructed and stripped away, empowering people to reconnect with their own ancestral heritage and heal their minds and bodies.

Friends and fellow authors **Christie Watson** (*Quilt on Fire*, *The Language of Kindness*) and **Lorraine Candy** (*What's Wrong With Me?*) make smart, funny, relatable contributions to the growing conversation about women and midlife. How do women navigate perimenopause, parents and friendships with brain fog, sleepless nights and changing brains and bodies? Audiences will hear these fabulous women share their experiences and feel less alone in navigating a momentous change in life.

Playful and original, artist **Jeremy Deller** won the 2004 Turner Prize and represented Britain in the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. He created an inflatable Stonehenge for Glasgow International and collaborated with Manchester International Festival and the public on *Procession* and *What Is The City But The People?* He comes to the festival to talk about the power of imagination, creativity, collaboration and his joyful book *Art is Magic*.

**Poetry is always an important component of the Festival and this year includes some special events alongside a new commission.**

Singer, songwriter and poet **Arlo Parks** (*My Soft Machine, Collapsed in Sunbeams*) joins us for an intimate event to launch her poetry collection *The Magic Border*. The Mercury Music Prize winner will read and discuss some of the poems she's been quietly writing for years. Sponsored by The Midland Manchester.

Award-winning writer, poet and playwright **Lemn Sissay** launches his latest poetry collection *Let the Light Pour In*. A collection that celebrates his morning practice of beginning every day by writing a short poem.

Pioneering Jamaican reggae poet, performer and activist **Linton Kwesi Johnson** will perform a short set from his extraordinary collection *Selected Poems*. Then he will discuss his considerable contribution to Black British culture and the artists and activists who have inspired and nurtured him with host **Jackie Kay**. Presented in partnership with Manchester Poetry Library.

Poet Laureate **Simon Armitage** has always been inspired by music as much as the written word and his new book *Never Good With Horses* collects a rich assembly of the lyrics he's written for film, theatre and his bands. He joins us to read some of his lyrics and discuss his love of language, his creativity and collaborations, and some of the songwriters and lyricists that have inspired him. Presented in partnership with Manchester Poetry Library.

MLF and Carcanet celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of influential poetry journal PN Review with a special event featuring poets **Anthony Vahni Capildeo**, **Sasha Dugdale** and **Will Harris**. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

### **New commissions**

To mark Manchester Art Gallery's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, MLF and the gallery have co-commissioned award-winning poet **Jason Allen-Paisant** (*Thinking with Trees, Self-Portrait as Othello*) to create a new trio of playful and sensual poems inspired by paintings and garments in the gallery's collection.

Icelandic novelist, poet and lyricist **Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir** (*Animal Life, Hotel Silence, Miss Iceland*) returns to the city to share new fiction inspired by her Writer's Residency in Manchester earlier this summer. Presented in partnership with Manchester UNESCO City of Literature, John Rylands Research Institute and Library and Creative Manchester.

Talented young writers from Manchester, Aalborg and Aarhus, **Billie Meredith**, **SAF-S2E**, **Cassandra Marie Geyti**, **Silas Toft**, **Marie Laurberg Nielsen** and **Selina Rom Andersen**, present new poetry inspired by explorations of each other's cities as part of the **Cities Untold** residency project.

### **Bookends**

**Thurston Moore**, guitarist, songwriter and one of the founding members of cult band Sonic Youth, comes to the city for a rare in conversation to talk about his eagerly awaited memoir, *Sonic Life*. He'll discuss his passion for music, his expedition from small-town Connecticut and New York's East Village to headlining Festivals, and his many decades of creation, experimentation and wonder. Sponsored by The Midland Manchester.

British actor, comedian and writer **Doon Mackichan** (*Two Doors Down, Brass Eye*) launches her memoir, *My Lady Parts: A Life Fighting Stereotypes*. The co-creator of Smack

the Pony, Doon studied drama at Manchester University and started her stand-up career in the city. She will be talking about her career on stage and screen and the feminism that has characterised her career and life. Sponsored by Weightmans and presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

Award-winning novelist, game writer and radio broadcaster **Naomi Alderman** launches her thrilling new novel *The Future* and discusses her fascination with speculative fiction and creating strong feminist characters on page and screen. Naomi's last novel *The Power* won the 2017 Women's Prize for Fiction and was adapted into an electrifying television series for Amazon Prime. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

### Events for Young Readers

Set in Manchester's unique skatepark, Projekts, participants will learn how to design their own comic book character with the help of illustrator and zine maker, **Ed Syder** (Thrasher Magazine, Santa Cruz, Emerica, Secret Curb Club) to then be painted onto individual recycled skate decks to take home.

Author **Nathan Bryon** and illustrator **Dapo Adeola**'s loveable character Rocket has already taught us about space, how to tackle ocean pollution and now, in *Speak Up,!* she's back to save her local library, which she is horrified to learn is closing for lack of funding. Hear how Dapo and Nathan created Rocket and what inspired her adventures in this action-packed event about speaking up for what you believe in.

Award-winning storyteller **Danyah Miller** brings best-selling children's author Michael Morpurgo's treasured story *I Believe in Unicorns* to life in a dazzling adaptation at Z-arts.

**Cathy Bolton & Sarah-Jane Roberts, Co-Directors of Manchester Literature Festival** said: "We can't wait to welcome all our inspirational guest writers, artists and thinkers to Manchester to share their words, passion and unique insights with audiences this autumn. From Kate Mosse's swashbuckling tale of eighteenth-century female pirates, *The Ghost Ship*, to Naomi Alderman's fast-paced, cataclysmic vision of *The Future*; and from George Monbiot and Gaia Vince's radical proposals for combatting the climate emergency to Thurston Moore and Jeremy Deller's reflections of decades devoted to art, creativity and collaborations, we're buckled up for some fun, literary adventures."

**H. Gareth Gavin, Director of the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester** said: "Once again, the Manchester Literature Festival promises to deliver a compelling and captivating programme of events. As readers, writers, students, and teachers, we savour the opportunity to listen to such a rich and exciting range of authors read and discuss their work, and we look forward, too, to the ongoing conversations that the events spur. The Festival is a landmark chapter in Manchester's cultural calendar, and we're very proud to be continuing our partnership this year."

**Councillor Luthfur Rahman OBE, Deputy Leader, Manchester City Council**, said: "Manchester Literature Festival will once again be leading the way in bringing top literary talent to the city when it makes a welcome return this autumn. With a packed programme on offer of top literary talent that befits Manchester's standing as a UNESCO City of Literature, MLF has pulled out all the stops this year with an amazing and unmissable line-up and opportunities to see and hear from some of the best and most interesting writers around. We can't wait to welcome them and literature lovers new and old to the city - don't miss it!"

**Jen Cleary, Director North, Arts Council England** said, “Manchester Literature Festival is always a highlight of the city’s cultural calendar and we’re delighted to support it as one of our national portfolio organisations. And, in its 18th year, the programme looks as exciting and innovative as ever. I’m looking forward to experiencing some fantastic discussions and events this autumn.”

**Full programme:** <https://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/events>

The full programme will be on sale for MLF Get Closer Members on **Tuesday 15 August** and on general sale on **Thursday 17 August**. Membership starts at £20 per annum and includes Priority Booking.

Book on [manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk](http://manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk)

Some events offer both standard Tickets & Ticket & Book, please check the website for details.

**Manchester Literature Festival** gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our main funders **Arts Council England**, **Manchester City Council** and **the Greater Manchester Combined Authority**, our Higher Education Partner, **The University of Manchester**, our hotel partners **The Edwardian Manchester** and **The Midland Manchester**, family-run furniture and fabric company **Sofas & Stuff** who are supporting a programme of events at Central Library and providing the onstage furniture at this venue, and our Festival Friends: law firm **Weightmans, Investec Wealth & Investment** and **Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce**.

**Join the conversation: #MLF23 @McrLitFest**

**ENDS**

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### **Notes to editors**

Now in its 18<sup>th</sup> 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 former 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.

Over the past 18 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 Monica Ali, Martin Amis, Tori Amos, Simon Armitage, Nihal Arthanayake, Kate Atkinson, Margaret Atwood, Malorie Blackman, William Boyd, Jung Chang, Susanna Clarke, Kit de Waal, Roddy Doyle, Margaret Drabble, Carol Ann Duffy, Jennifer Egan, Inua Ellams, Anne Enright, Bernardine Evaristo, Neil Gaiman, Guy Garvey, Bobby Gillespie, Natalie Haynes, Seamus Heaney, Alan Hollinghurst, A.M Homes, Nick Hornby, Kazuo Ishiguro, Howard Jacobson, Alan Johnson, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Paterson Joseph, Barbara Kingsolver, Hanif Kureishi, Deborah Levy, Valeria Luiselli, Johnny Marr, Paul Mason, Armistead Maupin, Val McDermid, David Mitchell, Paul Morley, Walter Mosley, Andrew

Motion, Jo Nesbo, Patrick Ness, Audrey Niffenegger, Maggie O'Farrell, Ben Okri, David Olusoga, Ian Rankin, Kamila Shamsie, Will Self, Elif Shafak, Lemn Sissay, Zadie Smith, Elizabeth Strout, Douglas Stuart, Kae Tempest, Neil Tennant, Colm Tóibín, Rose Tremain, Sarah Waters, Colson Whitehead, Jeanette Winterson and Xinran.

The Festival has also welcomed prominent activists, campaigners and disruptors including Patsie Cullors (co-founder of Black Lives Matter), Angela Davis, Reni Eddo-Lodge, Edward Enninful, Caroline Criado Perez, George Monbiot, Arundhati Roy, Rebecca Solnit, Gloria Steinem and the late Vivienne Westwood.

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £440 million of public money from Government and an estimated £93 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19)