



Manchester Literature Festival

Media Release: embargoed until 13 August 2024 at midday

MANCHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAMME FOR AUTUMN 2024

A season of literary inspiration and reimagining

Manchester Literature Festival returns this autumn **4 – 20 October 2024**, revealing a programme of events to inspire, move and challenge. The festival will bring new writers and more established names to the city, celebrating literature in all its forms.

The line-up this year includes **Neneh Cherry, Elif Shafak, David Peace, Rebecca F. Kuang, Rumaan Alam, Paula Hawkins, Matt Haig, Alan Hollinghurst, Andrew O'Hagan, Jackie Kay, Carol Ann Duffy, George Monbiot, Caroline Lucas, Harriet Walter** and **Thomas Heatherwick**.

In addition to the main festival there are also three “Bookend” events: **Taffy Brodesser-Akner** (29 October), **Greg Jenner** (3 November) and **Richard Powers** (8 November).

A vibrant city-wide event, the festival takes advantage of a variety of venues in Manchester with events planned at Central Library, Martin Harris Centre, John Rylands Library, Manchester Poetry Library, HOME and Contact.

Highlights of the 2024 programme:

The festival gets off to a bold start when singer-songwriter and artist **Neneh Cherry** (‘Buffalo Stance’, ‘Raw Like Sushi’) talks about her beautiful and deeply personal memoir *A Thousand Threads* with Booker Prize winner **Bernardine Evaristo**. Sponsored by Weightmans.

Manchester Literature Festival audience favourite **Elif Shafak** closes the festival with a special event discussing her superb and critically acclaimed new novel *There Are Rivers in the Sky*.

Caroline Lucas, former leader of the Green Party, looks at the elements that make us English – our beautiful countryside, literature, and a sense of solidarity and fairness – and if it's possible to tell a new, more nuanced story of who we are. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

British-Chinese journalist **Yuan Yang** tells the fascinating story of modern China through the lives of four ordinary women in *Private Revolutions: Coming of Age in a New China*.

Throughout her four decades as a foreign correspondent, **Lindsey Hilsum** has always carried a book of poetry with her as 'a vaccination against despair'. She will share some of her favourite poems and reflect on her career as a war reporter. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

Thomas Heatherwick, one of the world's most prolific designers, talks about his mission to end soulless, boring buildings and put human emotion back at the heart of building design. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

Rebecca F. Kuang will be in town to discuss her number one global sensation *Yellowface*, a provocative satire set in the cut-throat world of publishing seen through the eyes of failed writer June, the character you'll love to hate. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester. Sponsored by The Edwardian, Manchester.

Bestselling cook and food columnist **Meera Sodha** shares her passion for East and South Asian cuisine and reveals the dishes she creates when she wants to cook for herself, family and friends in her delicious new book *Dinner*. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester. Sponsored by Weightmans.

Broadcaster, curator and writer **Ekow Eshun** (Black Fantastic, The Time is Always Now) conjures the voices of five remarkable Black men: Ira Aldridge, Matthew Henson, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X and Justin Fashanu in *The Strangers*, tracing the development of Blackness and masculinity.

George Monbiot returns to the festival to illuminate how neoliberalism has become so pervasive we see it as an immutable law rather than the ideology at the root of our current crises in his passionately argued new book, *The Invisible Doctrine: The Secret History of Neoliberalism*.

Bestselling writer **Matt Haig** (*The Midnight Library*) returns with his sublime new novel *The Life Impossible*. Set in Ibiza, this tale of retired maths teacher Grace Winters, reveals the power of hope and life changing new beginnings. Hosted by radio broadcaster **Nihal Arthanayake**.

Legendary music producer **Joe Boyd** (*White Bicycle*) invites audiences to open their 'minds and ears to a wider, richer musical world' via his engrossing new book *And the Roots of Rhythm Remain: A Journey through Global Music*.

Dame **Harriet Walter**, one of Britain's most esteemed Shakespearean actors, imagines what Shakespeare's women were really thinking in her fascinating new book *She Speaks!*

David Peace (*The Damned United*) explores the grief, the heartbreak and the resurrection of a club (Manchester United), a city and a country in his compelling new book *Munichs*. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester. Sponsored by Weightmans.

Alan Hollinghurst (*The Line of Beauty*) will be in conversation with poet **Andrew McMillan** to talk about *Our Evenings*, a compelling, moving and darkly humorous portrait of modern England. Sponsored by The Midland Manchester

Asako Yuzuki visits Manchester for the first time to discuss her best-selling blockbuster *Butter*, the story of gourmet cook and serial killer Manako Kajii. Funny, feminist and absolutely mouth-watering, *Butter* is inspired by the real-life case of 'The Konkatsu Killer'. Presented in partnership with The Japan Foundation.

Paula Hawkins, author of blockbuster *The Girl on the Train*, discusses her thrilling new novel *The Blue Hour*.

Two critically acclaimed British-Nigerian authors **Abi Daré** (*The Girl with the Louding Voice*) and **Nikki May** (*Wahala*) share their captivating second novels about the power of women, friendship, love and escaping from the past.

In *Queen B*, the latest instalment in her bestselling fantasy series *Her Majesty's Royal Coven*, novelist and screenwriter **Juno Dawson** demonstrates the strength and sacrifice it takes to make a sisterhood. Hosted by **Andrew McMillan**.

Award-winning novelist **Susanna Clarke** (*Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, *Piranesi*) reveals how writing and reading have shaped her life, including the writers who've inspired her to become such a magical storyteller including Ursula Le Guin, Jorge Luis Borges, Charles Dickens and Kate Bush.

MLF and Comma Press launch *The Book of Manchester* in a very special event for 2024. Edited by **David Sue** and poet **Lemn Sissay**, the collection explores the transformation of the city from post-war, post-industrial decline to the aspirational 'Manctopia'. Featuring writers **Tom Benn** (*Oxblood*), **Sophie Parkes-Nield** (*Out of Human Sight*) and **Okechukwu Nzelu** (*Here Again Now*) alongside special guests.

André Aciman's (*Call Me By Your Name*) elegant, hilarious and insightful memoir *My Roman Year* chronicles his move as a teen from Alexandria to Rome to begin a new life, including the social and political forces that shaped him. He will also discuss his atmospheric new novel *The Gentleman from Peru*.

Two masters of folk horror reveal their chilling, atmospheric new books. *The Hotel* by **Daisy Johnson** (*Sisters*, *Everything Under*) takes place in a hotel built on a possessed plot of land, while *Barrowbeck* by **Andrew Michael Hurley** (*The Loney*) is set in a remote, hostile valley which resents human intrusion.

Over the years, Manchester Literature Festival has become well known for celebrating and showcasing **poetry**. This year's festival includes some of poetry's most inspiring performers:

Former Scottish Makar and firm festival favourite, **Jackie Kay** celebrates her new collection *May Day* in an event hosted by actor **Julie Hesmondhalgh**. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

The annual Rylands Poetry Reading is delivered this year by the former National Poet of Wales, **Gillian Clarke**. Gillian's sublime new collection *The Silence* explores a deep connection

with the Welsh landscape and childhood experience. Presented in partnership with the Centre for New Writing and Creative Manchester.

Founded by Bernardine Evaristo, Complete Works Poetry was a revolutionary initiative that transformed the UK poetry scene. This year the festival presents a night of electric poetry celebrating the anthology *Mapping the Future*. Poets performing include **Malika Booker** (*Pepper Seed*), **Inua Ellams** (*The Barber Shop Chronicles*), **Ian Humphreys** (*Tormentil*), **Adam Lowe** (*Patterflash*) and **Eileen Pun**. Presented in partnership with Speaking Volumes and Manchester Poetry Library. This event will be BSL interpreted.

Imtiaz Dharker performs poems from her fascinating new collection *Shadow Reader* and **Romalyn Ante** presents her stunning second collection *AGIMAT* which moves between the Philippines and England. Presented in partnership with Manchester Poetry Library.

Ukrainian poet **Oksana Maksymchuk** reads from and discusses her stunning new collection *Still City*, charting the invasion of her homeland. Hosted by poet **Charlotte Shevchenko Knight**. Presented in partnership with Manchester Poetry Library.

The Festival is delighted to present three of poetry's most exhilarating, contemporary voices: **Raymond Antrobus** (*The Perseverance*) introduces his beautiful new collection *Signs, Music*; **Caleb Femi** (*Poor*) brings his immersive collection *The Wickedest*, set over one night at a house party; and **Theresa Lola** (*In Search of Equilibrium*) performs poems from the exquisite *Ceremony for the Nameless* which explores naming and its power. Presented in partnership with Manchester Poetry Library. This event will be BSL Interpreted.

From John Clare to Lucille Clifton, from Gerard Manley Hopkins to Jorie Graham, the poets collected in **Carol Ann Duffy's** *Earth Prayers* discuss the eco-crisis and ask us to cherish the planet we live on. Carol Ann will perform poems from the collection, alongside some of her own sublime nature poems, accompanied by the musician John Sampson.

Legendary poet and musician **Gil Scott-Heron** is celebrated at **Cabaret for Freedom** with an evening featuring the sublime vocals of **Yemi Bolatiwa** supported by a string quartet from the **Untold Orchestra**, soul nourishing poetry from spoken word artist **Sukina Noor**, and the premiere of new work created especially for the occasion by members of **Young Identity**.

WORKSHOPS

This year the festival presents a series of intimate workshops where some of the UK's most brilliant and acclaimed poets share insights into the craft of poetry. Former National Poet of Wales **Gillian Clarke**, Nigerian poet and playwright **Inua Ellams** and award-winning poet **Raymond Antrobus** (*The Perseverance*) will lead these unique events where participants are encouraged to freely articulate and create in a supportive environment.

Bookends

MLF is delighted to present **Taffy Brodesser-Akner**, author of the hilarious, feminist bestseller *Fleishman Is in Trouble* to discuss her acerbic new novel and family saga, *Long Island Compromise*.

Pulitzer Prize winner **Richard Powers** (*The Overstory*) makes a rare visit to the UK in support of his compelling new novel. Longlisted for the 2024 Booker Prize, *Playground* interweaves themes of science, technology, nature, the environment and our shared humanity beautifully.

Events for Children and Families

Our special programme for children and families features inspiring authors, brilliant illustrators and acclaimed performers bringing books to life through immersive stories, crafts, drama and music. Highlights include:

At the **Skateboard Drawing Club with Ed Syder**, children can develop and design their own comic book character and then paint them onto a recycled skate deck.

International storyteller Jan Blake, djembe player Yahael Onono and musicians from the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra present an interactive performance of *Ananse and the Monkeys* at **Musical Storyland LIVE!** taking place at Rochdale Central Library and Oldham Library.

Joseph Coelho performs some of his *Spooky Poems Aloud.*, tickling funny bones and helping children to create poetry together and learn how to recite it loudly, softly, and even in ghostly whispers.

A delightful journey into the world of **Joseph Coelho's** wonderful picture book, *My Beautiful Voice*, guessing poetic riddles and learning how to find bravery through poetry.

A Morning with Rob Biddulph is a fun-packed family event where the award-winning author and illustrator introduces his new book *I Follow the Fox*. And encouraging all to join in with one of Rob's famous Draw-alongs!
Presented in partnership with Z-arts.

Former Horrible Histories historian and chart-topping podcaster **Greg Jenner** presents *Totally Chaotic History: Roman Britain Gets Rowdy* at this year's festival with myth-busting, quick-fire quizzes and mind-boggling truths about everything from Roman gods and emperors to life in a fort.
Presented in partnership with Manchester Histories.

Cathy Bolton & Sarah-Jane Roberts, Co-Directors of Manchester Literature Festival said:
"Reimagining is at the heart of this year's Manchester Literature Festival. Caroline Lucas asks us to reimagine a greener, more inclusive England. George Monbiot encourages us to reimagine the end of neoliberalism. David Peace reimagines the grief, heartbreak and resurrection of Manchester United after the 1958 Munich air disaster. Curator Ekow Eshun revisits and reimagines the lives of five extraordinary Black men in *The Strangers* and actor Harriet Walter reimagines what Shakespeare's leading women were really thinking in *She Speaks!* Elsewhere in the programme, Jackie Kay celebrates a life in poetry and protest; Carol Ann Duffy and Gillian Clarke pay homage to mother earth and master storytellers Elif Shafak and Richard Powers explore how water connects us. We also welcome a multitude of other brilliant novelists, poets and artists to the city."

Kaye Mitchell, Director at the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester said:
"Every year the Manchester Literature Festival offers up a rich feast of readings, culture and conversation. In 2024, this feels especially vital: to provide a space for joy, beauty and connection, but also for urgent discussions about who we are or might be; the earth we inhabit; our fraught histories and possible futures – and even what we eat. This showcasing of contemporary creativity is at the heart of the Centre for New Writing's mission, and we are delighted to be the Festival's Higher Education Partner once again."

Councillor Garry Bridges, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Culture, Manchester City Council, said:

"MLF has done it again! Another packed programme full of top literary talent and the chance to see and hear from some of the best and most creative writers and thinkers around. As a UNESCO City of Literature, we couldn't be more excited about the amazing line-up that will be right here on our own doorstep and can't wait to welcome writers and readers alike to Manchester this autumn."

Jen Cleary, Director North West, Arts Council England said:

"Manchester Literature Festival is a cornerstone in the autumn's cultural programme and its line up never fails to inspire. This year is no exception with an extraordinary range of writers, poets, journalists, artists and politicians tackling important themes and sharing their work in venues across the city. We're proud to support the festival as one of our National Portfolio Organisations and look forward to this October's events which we know will excite and engage both local and visiting audiences."

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

The full programme will be on sale for MLF Get Closer Members from midday on Tuesday 13 August 2024 and on general sale on Thursday 15 August 2024. Membership starts at £20 per annum and includes Priority Booking.

Book on manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

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; and our Festival Friends: law firm Weightmans and Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

Join the conversation: #MLF24 @McrLitFest

ENDS

For press enquiries and review tickets please contact:

Catharine Braithwaite cat@we-r-lethal.com 07947 644 110

Shelagh Bourke she@we-r-lethal.com 07971 819 016

Notes to editors

Now in its 19th 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, Observer critic Rachel Cooke, poet Jackie Kay, broadcaster Dame Jenni Murray, poet and publisher Michael Schmidt, acclaimed novelist Kamila Shamsie 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, Kate Atkinson, Margaret Atwood, Malorie Blackman, Jung Chang, Kit de Waal, Kwame Dawes, Jeremy Deller, Roddy Doyle, Margaret Drabble, Jennifer Egan, Anne Enright, Bernardine Evaristo, Percival Everett, Neil Gaiman, Guy

Garvey, Natalie Haynes, Seamus Heaney, A.M. Homes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Howard Jacobson, Alan Johnson, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Barbara Kingsolver, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Hanif Kureishi, Deborah Levy, Olivia Laing, Valeria Luiselli, Johnny Marr, Paul Mason, Armistead Maupin, Val McDermid, David Mitchell, Paul Morley, Michael Morpurgo, Walter Mosley, Kate Mosse, Andrew Motion, Jo Nesbo, Maggie O'Farrell, Ben Okri, David Olusoga, Max Porter, Ian Rankin, Kamila Shamsie, Will Self, Lemn Sissay, Zadie Smith, Elizabeth Strout, Douglas Stuart, Kae Tempest, Neil Tennant, Colm Toibín, Rose Tremain, Sarah Waters, Colson Whitehead, Jeanette Winterson and Xinran.

The Festival has also welcomed prominent activists, campaigners and disruptors including Patrisse Cullors (co-founder of Black Lives Matter), Angela Davis, Reni Eddo-Lodge, Edward Enninful, Afua Hirsch, Caroline Criado Perez, George Monbiot, Arundhati Roy, Rebecca Solnit, Gloria Steinem, Senator Bernie Sanders, Yanis Varoufakis 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