

## SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL 15-23 MAY 2010

## READ RETHINK RESPOND

**SWF Artistic Director Chip Rolley reveals his first Festival:**

*'This year's Sydney Writers' Festival is staged at a critical moment in history – a time when the world is emerging from global economic collapse and threatened by the prospect of catastrophic climate change. With this year's Sydney Writers' Festival I hope to encourage questioning and debate around some of the most pressing ideas of our time.'*

Our Opening Address will be delivered by one of the world's most prominent commentators on Iranian politics, the Iranian-American **Reza Aslan** who is a regular commentator about Iran in the US media. Our Address will be held on the eve of the first anniversary of Iran's stolen election: there is no one more qualified to shine a light on the fears and hopes of this nation in the grip of electrifying political change.

Never previously seen in the Southern Hemisphere, we are thrilled to be staging the spectacular **Nine Lives** at the Sydney Opera House. This performance of rarely seen South Asian devotional music and spiritual transformation will feature the **Bauls of Bengal**, the **Shah Jo Rag Fakirs**, **Theyyam dancers** and the hypnotic sounds of **Susheela Raman**, all presented by the writer **William Dalrymple**.

At the very heart of the Festival is a kaleidoscope of literary lights. This year we welcome **Colm Tóibín**, **Lionel Shriver**, **Yiyun Li**, **Hanan Al-Shaykh**, **Su Tong**, **Nada Awar Jarrar**, **Rupert Thomson**, **Willy Vlautin** and **David Vann**, in addition to events with acclaimed writers **Joe Meno** and **Dubravka Ugresic**. These talented writers will be seen next to a gifted roll call of Australian authors including **Alex Miller**, **Peter Goldsworthy**, **Cate Kennedy**, **Les Murray**, **Robert Adamson**, **Robert Gray** and **Peter Carey** in his first ever SWF appearance.

They will be presenting under the watchful eyes of book aficionado and raconteur **Rick Gekoski**, *Granta* editor and email anarchist **John Freeman**, and distinguished literary biographer and critic **John Carey**.

**Raj Patel** makes his radical and original voice heard in his acclaimed book *The Value of Nothing*. In a clear and concise manifesto, Patel lays out his guide to changing our market society and redefining democracy.

Long before the current financial crisis **John Ralston Saul** forewarned of the collapse of the global economy. At this year's Festival he will ask us to consider a brave re-imagining of globalism in an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of a quick fix. As the new President of International PEN, he reminds us that we need to speak out against those who suppress our right to freedom of speech.

**David Wessel** is one of the world's leading financial experts, a Pulitzer Prize winner (twice) and the *Wall Street Journal's* economics editor. His book *In Fed We Trust* is a gripping account of how the US Federal Reserve governor averted financial catastrophe. This is a singularly perceptive view of the global economy at one of the most decisive moments in history.

**Bill McKibben**, long time writer on climate issues and the founder of the landmark environmental organisation 350.org, has already demonstrated that nations can be united to campaign for change. Last year his organisation worked with 181 countries to engineer an international demonstration for action against climate change. **Rick Smith** and **Bruce Lourie** match McKibben's zeal for change. A pair of environmental campaigners who ingested and inhaled many everyday items, they reveal our shocking exposure to harmful pollutants in our day-to-day lives. Luckily for us, they have lived to share their findings.

We are honoured to be able to share in the intimate self-reflections of **Elizabeth Gilbert**, author of the bestselling *Eat, Pray, Love*. Her new book *Committed* explores how she came to terms with the once inconceivable notion of getting married.

With wit and brutal honesty, **Christopher Hitchens** is just as candid in his memoir *Hitch-22*. This legendary journalist, commentator and bon vivant will be sharing the wisdom and folly of sixty years of a life lived large.

**Catherine Millet** is renowned for her extremely frank 2002 memoir *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.* In her latest book *Jealousy* she shares her pain at discovering that her husband, too, was having affairs.

The Festival moves from the dark corners of the heart to some spiritual soul searching with **Eric Lax**, the biographer of Woody Allen, whose latest book *Faith, Interrupted* explores his relationship with belief. He joins **Reza Aslan** to discuss whether a belief in God is still relevant for today's society.

Donning a God Helmet to probe the neurological nature of religious experience was just one adventure undertaken by award-winning science writer and journalist **Lone Frank**. This fearless researcher tracked down the world's experts in brain science and bravely volunteered herself in the name of discovery.

The heroic journalist **Lydia Cacho** has survived incarceration and torture for her revelations of high-level businessmen and politicians involved in the prostitution of young girls in Mexico. Like Cacho, **Barbara Demick** shines a spotlight on the abuse of human rights in her examination of life under the most totalitarian regime in the world today, North Korea. **Josh Neufeld** turned his skills as a graphic artist and writer to depict the devastation and life changing consequences wrought by the arrival of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Words in all their non-traditional glory will be celebrated with slam poets **Miles Merrill**, **Charlie Dark** and *Australian Poetry Slam 09* winner and retiree **Sarah Taylor**. **Robert Forster**, in his first solo concert in Sydney in 10 years, will be delving into his *Go-Betweens* back catalogue to delight fans in an SWF-exclusive event. **Josh Pyke**, **Katie Noonan** and a galaxy of musical talent appear in *Songs for Stories*, an Indigenous Literacy Project Benefit Concert.

In addition to headline evening events across Sydney, there is a series of intimate happenings in venues at Circular Quay and the Walsh Bay Precinct. In a Festival first we will be showcasing talent in the **Festival Club** our new cabaret venue. Across the water, Sydney Dance Café will be hosting poetic musings with **Love at the Bar** and we celebrate the return of the ever popular evenings of poetry at **Late Nights at Number One**.

A Festival for all the family, there are plenty of events for children and young adults. Our biggest ever **SCHOOL DAYS** program will be running from 17-21 May at venues in Sydney, Parramatta and Penrith with a free Primary School Day for Priority Funded Schools at Sydney Town Hall. A full day of free events for the **family** will be held on Sunday 23 May.

Aspiring writers will have plenty of opportunity to hone their craft at **workshops** conducted by leading writers and illustrators throughout the week at the State Library of New South Wales.

A full day of **publishing industry events** will take place on Thurs 20 May covering topics as varied as book design to the challenges of the digital age.

The Festival will be hosting several exhibitions including **The Book of Water**, a collection of new video poetry, **The Material Poem**, an anthology of Australian inter-media and experimental writing and **The Painted Chairs**, a Sydney PEN initiative where a group of Sydney's top artists have painted chairs in a bid to recognise the plight of detained writers.

Many events will take place in the Festival precinct at Walsh Bay, in varied **venues** including Pier 4/5, the Sydney Theatre and Pier 2/3 (referred to as the Heritage Pier during Festival Week). In addition, there will be events across NSW, from Gosford to Wollongong, with a concentration of events in Sydney's west and in The Blue Mountains.

As always, more than half of the programmed events are presented **free of charge**. Full details of all sessions will be published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday 10 April and on the Festival website [www.swf.org.au](http://www.swf.org.au). Author biographies, venue details, ticket information and opportunities for audiences to create a personal Festival schedule are also available on the website. The website will be available in a mobile friendly version to view on your phone.

**Many thanks to our partners without whom this Festival would not be possible:**

**Core funding partners:** City of Sydney, Arts NSW and the Australia Council for the Arts.

**Airline partner:** Singapore Airlines.

**Legal partner:** Middletons.

**Major partners:** Man Investments, Westpac, Deutsche Bank, Plain English Foundation, Sydney Morning Herald, Price Waterhouse Coopers and SBS.

**Partners:** Madfish, PKF, Saatchi Design, Macquarie Group, Audi, Sydney Community Foundation, Sebel Pier One, Aesop, Bilsons Number One, Café Sydney, Cloth and University of New South Wales.

**Media partners:** ABC Radio National, 702 ABC Sydney, ABC Big Ideas, Slow TV and FBi Radio.

**Cultural Partners:** British Council, Canada Council for the Arts, State Library of NSW, Australia-India Council, Australia- China Council, Culture Ireland, Copyright Agency Limited, Danish Arts Council, Historic Houses Trust Sydney Opera House, Sherman Contemporary Arts Foundation and Parramatta City Council.

**Gleebooks** are the Festival's official bookseller.

**To arrange an interview with Artistic Director Chip Rolley, please call the Festival Publicist.**

## EVENTS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS:

### **Too Late To Save?**

Sat 22 May, 1-2pm, Sydney Dance Company, Studio 2/3

Our financial system, our food, our climate. **Bill McKibben, Raj Patel, and Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie** ask the most critical question of our time.

### **Mindfield**

Sun 23 May, 11:30 am-12:30 pm, Sydney Theatre Company, Wharf 1

Danish journalist and author **Lone Frank** talks to **Natasha Mitchell** about how neuroscience will revolutionise our understanding of morality, religion, empathy and happiness.

### **David Wessel, Meet Paul Keating**

Fri 21 May 4-5pm City Recital Hall

The economics editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and author of *In FED We Trust* speaks to the former prime minister and treasurer. The world's problems might actually get solved in this meeting of dazzling minds.

### **An Evening with Colm Tóibín**

Fri 21 May 8-9pm, City Recital Hall

The great Irish writer, author of many beautiful works including *The Master* for which he won the 2004 IMPAC prize and, most recently, *Brooklyn*, is in conversation with **Caroline Baum** in this very special event.

### **Have We All Been Conned?: An Emergency Town Meeting**

Fri 21 May 6-7pm, Sydney Town Hall

Or are we still on our way to climatic catastrophe? **Bill McKibben, Ross Garnaut, Clive Hamilton and Tim Flannery** discuss the politics and science of climate change and how the world can save itself post-Copenhagen.

### **The Dissident Café: Tweeting from Tehran/Tiananmen**

Sat 22 2:30-4pm and Sun 23 May 11:30-1pm, Heritage Pier, Upstairs

The Festival Cafe is transformed into a cyber lounge where patrons can quiz dissident writers in countries where freedom of expression is otherwise curtailed.

### **Peter Carey**

**Sat 22 May, 1-2pm**

Peter Carey has now lived in New York for 20 years and has just published his first work to deal with the subject of the United States. He talks to *Granta* editor John Freeman about *Parrot and Olivier in America* and the ambitious scope of his work.

### **PEN Gives Voice Hosted by John Ralston Saul**

Fri 21 May, 6-7pm, City Recital Hall

An all-star reading of detained writers' work, hosted by **John Ralston Saul** and featuring **Colm Tóibín, Eric Lax, Yiyun Li, Thomas Keneally, Frank Moorhouse, Larissa Behrendt** and **Peter Carey**.

### **The Axis of Internet Censorship: China, Iran ... and Australia?**

Thu 20 May, 1-2pm, Heritage Pier, Upstairs

The Australian government has announced its intention to censor the Internet, joining repressive nations such as Iran and China in restricting their citizens' access to cyberspace. **Sara Haghdoosti, Barbara Demick, and Marcus Westbury** consider the consequences.

### **Les Murray**

Fri 21 May, 2:30-3:30pm, Sydney Theatre

One of the world's greatest contemporary poets writing in English, Les Murray also writes prose, most notably his account of the crippling depression that has befallen him. In this rare event Les Murray talks about the black dog and reads from his latest volume of poems, 'Taller When Prone'.

### **The Big Reading**

Sat 22 May, 5:30-7pm

Join **Hanan Al-Shaykh, Elizabeth Gilbert, Willy Vlautin, Dubravka Ugresic, and Rupert Thomson** reading from their work. Hosted by **Annette Shun Wah**.

### **Spoken Four**

Sat 22 May, 7-8pm, Heritage Pier, Upstairs

Rip up your notebooks, throw away the text, these spoken-wordsmiths from the UK and Australia will ignite your night. Featuring: **Charlie Dark, Sarah Taylor, Emilie Zoey Baker** and **Morganics**. Hosted by **Miles Merrill**.

### **We Need to Talk About America**

Sat 22 May, 5:30-7pm, Sydney Town Hall

Why is the "world's greatest democracy" struggling to lead? American writers **Lionel Shriver, Reza Aslan, Raj Patel, Josh Neufeld, and Michael Otterman** tell **Anne Summers** about the state of their union.

### **Who's Interviewing Who? Alan Ramsey Speaks to Senator John Faulkner**

Sat 22 May, 2:30-3:30pm, Sydney Theatre

The former *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist, **Alan Ramsey**, talks to **John Faulkner**, now the Federal Defence Minister, about the politics of yesterday and today.

### **Battlelines: Tony Abbott Talks to Annabel Crabb**

Sun 23 May 2:30-3:30pm, Sydney Theatre

Federal Opposition Leader **Tony Abbott** is laying out a new conservative creed as he takes on the Rudd government. What are his ideas, and what do they mean for the Liberal Party? He speaks to the ABC's **Annabel Crabb**.

## **SOME OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW:**

**Online book club:** 2010 Festival sees the launch of our new online bookclub, the **Man Book Club**. Inspired by the Man Booker Prize, the SWF Artistic Director will select a new book for the club to read, debate and discuss. There will be information, news, interviews and articles on the selected book. At every step, we will be asking to hear from the readers. Visit [www.swf.org.au/manbookclub](http://www.swf.org.au/manbookclub) for further info.

**Watch and listen again:** In an exciting new partnership, **ABC Radio** will be broadcasting exclusive behind-the-scenes coverage and extensive highlights from SWF 2010. *ABC Sydney Writers* will be available on digital radio and

300+ events \* Nearly 400 participants \* Events around NSW and Sydney \* SWF 2010

online at [abc.net.au/digitalradio](http://abc.net.au/digitalradio). This will augment coverage offered by existing media partners **Slow TV** and the rebranded **ABC Big Ideas**.

**Media room:** Once again a SWF branded space within the Festival Precinct at Walsh Bay will be available to book for media interviews. Please email [helen@swf.org.au](mailto:helen@swf.org.au) with any requests.

**Something to celebrate:** The National Biography Award, 58<sup>th</sup> Book Design Award, NSW Premier's Literary Award, Patrick White Playwrights' Award, *Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Australian Novelist Award, the Pascall Prize for the arts critic of the year and the Guy Morrison Journalism Prize will all be announced at the Festival.