



## SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL 18-24 MAY 2009

### A WEEK OF MOVING WORDS

Sydney Writers' Festival returns with a program of inspirational speakers and stimulating events for 2009. The Festival features over 340 events with more than 400 writers, featuring the finest international and Australian talent. From Walsh Bay to the Blue Mountains, Newcastle to Wollongong, Sydney and its surrounds will be alive with discussion and debate prompted by this week long festival of literature and ideas.

**SWF Artistic Director Wendy Were** reveals her ambitions for this year's Festival:

*'2008 was the first year of the Rudd Government, and the year Obama triumphed. October brought us the global financial crisis and a world irrevocably changed. This Festival provides the space for writers and readers from all over the world to gather at a time of social turmoil, but also of great hope and potential.'*

The Opening Address will be presented by one of the most applauded new voices in fiction, **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**. Best-known for her epic novel about the Biafran war, *Half of a Yellow Sun* – winner of the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction – Adichie illuminates the complexities of human experience in works inspired by events in her native Nigeria. Chinua Achebe has joined a chorus of praise, calling Adichie 'a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers'.

International literary fiction is well represented with a renowned line up of esteemed and award winning international writers including **Monica Ali, Tash Aw, Mohammad Hanif, David Ebershoff, Kirsty Gunn, Nava Semel, Andrew Davidson**, much hyped newcomer **Philipp Meyer** and off-tipped contender for the Nobel Prize, **Cees Nooteboom**.

As always, the Festival boasts an exceptional guestlist of more than 300 iconic Australian writers and brand new talent, among them **Richard Flanagan, Kate Grenville, Louis Nowra, Sonya Hartnett** and **Robert Dessaix**.

The inclusion of *The New Yorker's* music critic **Alex Ross** will thrill music aficionados. *The New York Times* named *The Rest Is Noise* one of the 10 Best Books of 2007. The legendary **Kazuo Ishiguro** will prove that location is no obstacle as he joins us from London via video link to discuss his new collection *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall*. Australian music icons **Don Walker** and **Steven Cummings** will share their tales of lives lived in music, joined by the new guard of Australian songwriters, **Sarah Blasko**.

On the subject of words and rhythm, internationally renowned slam poet **Sonya Renee** demonstrates her own brand of activism through her electrifying performances of spoken word. **Emmanuel Jal** has won worldwide acclaim for his unique style of hip hop with its message of peace and reconciliation born out of his experiences as a child soldier in Sudan, rendered in his new memoir *War Child*.

The nonfiction list brings some of the world's greatest contemporary thinkers to Australia's shores. Foreign affairs analyst and forecaster **George Friedman**, frequently called upon to brief at the highest levels of Government, will outline his vision for the next one hundred years.

Former Bishop of Edinburgh, **Richard Holloway** recently described himself as an 'after-religionist' and is widely regarded as one of the most outspoken and controversial commentators on belief.

**Norman Doidge** has been instrumental in championing new developments within brain research. His book *The Brain that Changes Itself* was cited as 'Mind-bending, miracle making, reality busting stuff with implications for all human beings' New York Times.

Through his work with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), **James Maskalyk's** words from the frontline of the war against disease and decay in his memoir of volunteerism are a profound call to action.

**Stefan Aust**, ex-Editor-in-Chief of *Der Spiegel* will talk about his book and Oscar-nominated film *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*. Aust was a colleague of Ulrike Meinhof, who later went onto to found the infamous terrorist group, the Red Army Faction or Baader-Meinhof gang.

2009 is the International Year of Astronomy and the *New Scientist's* cosmological consultant **Marcus Chown** will reassure us that quantum theory cannot hurt us. For those who look beyond the stars for the meaning of life, philosopher **Mark Rowlands** re-evaluated his own attitude to the mysteries of the universe with the aid of his pet wolf Brenin; he will share his lupine influenced insights.

Controversial expat **Germaine Greer** will talk about how Blighty's politics have been influenced by Australia and Canada's **Christian Lander** skewers the conventional wisdom of the liberal upper class in *Stuff White People Like*. Lander is joined by **Tom Gleeson, Julia Morris, Dominic Knight** and **Mark Dapin** who lend some light relief and sharp satire to the program.

Crime both fact and fiction are well represented with appearances from Baltimore's finest, **Laura Lippman** who has a mantelpiece groaning with crime writing awards, and winner of the Samuel Johnson prize, **Kate Summerscale**, for her spectacular rendering of the Victorian true crime story that captured the minds of nation and inspired Dickens and Wilkie Collins. They are joined by the legendary **Peter Corris**, the 'father' of Australian crime fiction; and the murky minds of *Underbelly* writers, **Greg Haddrick** and **Peter Gawler**.

Scriptwriting is well recognised this year, including a session with **Robert Harling** of *Steel Magnolias* fame.

The program is bursting with events from all genres, from poetry to prose, memoir and biography, philosophy, reportage and journalism and much more.

Some Festival highlights include:

### Classical Music in Popular Culture

May 24, 2:00pm-3:00pm Sydney Opera House, Drama Theatre

What is the place for classical music in the age of YouTube and the MP3? Is it dying, or is it

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in the midst of a surprising revival? *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross gives a talk on the present state of an ever-evolving artform.

### **George Friedman Business Breakfast**

May 21, 8:00am-9:30am Café Sydney

Geopolitics expert George Friedman discusses what we can expect around the world during the 21st century, including where and why future wars will erupt, which nations will gain and lose economic political power, and how our way of life will alter.

### **An Evening with Germaine Greer**

May 21, 8:30pm-9:30pm City Recital Hall

Germaine Greer presents a lecture on 'The Australian Way: The Influence of Australia and Australians on British Politics and Politicians' in which she traces the influence of the Australian example on British politics, first as the inspiration for Thatcherism and then as the rationale of New Labour. Supported by Overland.

### **NSW Premier's Literary Awards**

May 22, 6:00pm-7:00pm Sydney Theatre, Richard Wherrett Studio

Chloe Hooper, Louis Nowra, Rachel Perkins and Toby Riddle discuss their NSW Premier's Literary Awards shortlisted works with Caroline Baum, sharing the inspiration behind their writing. Presented with Arts NSW.

### **SMH Best Young Novelists**

May 24, 1:00pm-2:00pm Bangarra Theatre

Each year *The Sydney Morning Herald* names the authors they consider to be Australia's best young novelists. Susan Wyndham chairs a discussion and readings with the 2009 winners, announced in the *SMH* on 16 May. Sponsored by The Sydney Morning Herald

For those who appreciate food for the body along with the mind:

### **Fire: A World of Flavour with Christine Manfield** at Universal Restaurant

Join Christine Manfield over dinner and enjoy recipes from *Fire*, a book which took her across the globe in search of inspiration.

**Serendip: A Sri Lankan Journey** at Flying Fish with acclaimed Flying Fish chef Peter Kuruvita.

**Wine and Words** at Ottoman Cuisine with Christian Landers and Simon Marnie.

Supported by Richmond Grove.

**The Artist's Lunch at Lucio's** with photographer Sarah Rhodes, writer Alice McCormick and artists Wendy Sharpe, Anne Zahalka, Jason Benjamin, Nell, Luke Sciberras and Gria Shead.

**Sunday Afternoon Tea and Readings** at Hickson Road Bistro with host Geraldine Doogue and some of Australia's most revered writers: Robert Dessaix, Kate Grenville and Robert Drewe.

A Festival for all the family, there are plenty of events for children and young adults.

**SCHOOL DAYS** is back from 18-20 May at venues in Sydney, Parramatta and now at Penrith with an expanded events program for young people at Walsh Bay on Sunday 17 May.

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From book binding to book deals, aspiring writers will have plenty of opportunity to hone their craft at **workshops** throughout the week.

Thanks to the Australia Council for the Arts' **Visiting International Publishers program**, aspiring authors will be able to encounter some of the most influential people in the book industry in a comprehensive series of events based on the nuts and bolts of the craft and publishing.

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

As always, more than half of the program is presented free. Full details of all sessions will be published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday 28 March and on the Festival website [www.swf.org.au](http://www.swf.org.au). Extended author biographies, venue details, ticket information and opportunities to tailor make a personal Festival schedule are also available on the website.

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

Core funding partners: City of Sydney and Arts NSW (with special thanks to the Premier for an additional grant, allowing us to use Pier 2/3.)

Major partners: The Australia Council for the Arts, Macquarie Group, Westpac, Barclays Capital, Deutsche Bank, Man Investments, The Sydney Morning Herald, and SBS.

Major Sponsors: Plain English Foundation, Horizon Foundation, Saatchi Design, Sydney Community Foundation and the Sebel Pier One Hotel.

Gleebooks are the Festival's official bookseller.

To arrange an interview with Artistic Director Wendy Were, please do not hesitate to get in touch.