

Press release

Embargoed until 0000 6 October

Durham Book Festival 2017 begins!

The annual festival returns as over the next ten days a whole host of exciting names and events come to Durham.

Durham Book Festival 2017 kicks off on Friday 6th October with the first of three exclusive Harry Potter screenings in Durham Cathedral. Throughout the opening weekend 1500 people will be celebrating 20 years since *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was first published, in the atmospheric venue where some of the film was originally shot.

All three showings sold out in a festival-record-breaking 12 hours, but if you missed out don't worry – there's plenty more excitement to be found around the city.

Some famous faces will be spotted around Durham over the next 10 days, including Woman's Hour host **Dame Jenni Murray** who is appearing at Gala Theatre to talk about her new book *A History of Britain in 21 Women*. Also appearing at the Gala is comedian **Robert Webb**, who discusses his hilarious and heart-breaking memoir *How Not to Be a Boy*, and **Sir Tony Robinson** with *No Cunning Plan*, the definitive story of his stellar career.

Lionel Shriver and **Alexei Sayle** will be appearing together in **The News as a Novel** at Durham Town Hall, where, alongside Benjamin Myers, they will present original commissions in response to the extraordinary news cycle of 2017.

There's plenty for families at Durham Book Festival this year, including a performance of the touring theatre production *Do Not Enter the Monster Zoo*, based on the picture-book by Amy Sparkes and illustrated by Sarah Ogilvie. Author of *Fish Boy* **Chloe Daykin** is running book-making workshops for children over 7, while younger children can join a story time at Clayport Library with **Jen Campbell** and *Franklin's Flying Bookshop*. There's also a **Family Silent Book Disco** that's sure to get all of the family reading and dancing together.

Fiction is particularly strong at this year's festival with two Booker Prize winners, **Roddy Doyle** and **Alan Hollinghurst**, talking about their much-anticipated new novels. Leading novelists **Lissa Evans**, **Rachel Joyce**, **Kamila Shamsie** and **Tracy Chevalier** also appear.

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As ever the festival covers a wide range of social and political issues. Broadcaster **June Sarpong MBE** will be talking about her new book *Diversify*, a fierce and empowering guide to overcoming social division and prejudice, whilst ex SAS war hero and best-selling author **Chris Ryan** presents his newest non-fiction title *SAFE* a manual for protecting yourself in an increasingly uncertain and dangerous world. **Peter Snow** returns to Durham Book Festival, alongside wife and fellow broadcaster **Ann Macmillan**, to present *War Stories*, true accounts throughout history of ordinary people swept up in the turbulence of war, and this year's Big Read author, Carnegie medal winning **David Almond**, appears at the Gala for an evening of **The Books That Made Me**, reflecting upon the stories that have been most important throughout his life.

The anticipated announcement of the **Gordon Burn Prize** will take place Thursday 12 October in Durham Town Hall. Celebrating bold fiction and non-fiction, this is one of the UK's most exciting awards and this year's shortlist features books by **Kapka Kassabova**, **David Keenan**, **Denise Mina**, **Lara Pawson**, **Gwendoline Riley** and **Adelle Stripe**. Hosted by **Mark Lawson** the event sees the six shortlisted writers read from their work, before the £5,000 prize is awarded to the winner.

As always, the festival has a strong poetry element, with this year's Festival Laureate **Andrew McMillan** curating a Poetry Gala featuring eleven of the most exciting new voices in northern poetry. This performance will be recorded live with a special vinyl recording to be produced by crowd-funding publisher, Unbound.

Durham Book Festival is commissioned by Durham County Council and produced by New Writing North, with funding from Durham University and Arts Council England.

Cllr Ossie Johnson, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for tourism, culture, leisure and rural issues, said: "Durham Book Festival is always a much-loved feature of the city's cultural calendar, and we're particularly thrilled to be offering our support once again.

"As well as being popular with residents and tourists alike, the festival brings big name authors to the county and shines a spotlight on up-and-coming talent."

Claire Malcolm, chief executive of New Writing North said: "It's a bumper year for Durham Book Festival, with an amazing line-up, more events and a bigger audience than ever before. Through our Big Read project we have reached across the county this autumn to share a love of reading, and now we're

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excited to welcome everyone to the festival. We look forward to seeing you there!"

Durham Book Festival runs until 15 October. Tickets can be booked online at www.durhambookfestival.com, at Gala Theatre (tel: 03000 266 600), and at the event venue on the day.

For all media enquiries, including interview requests, review tickets and high res images, please contact Laura Fraine
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NOTES TO EDITORS

Durham Book Festival takes place in October 2017 at venues across County Durham with events for all ages. Durham Book Festival is a Durham County Council festival produced by New Writing North, which is made possible by support from partners Durham University and Arts Council England.

Durham Book Festival runs 7-15 October with a special pre-festival showing of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone on Friday 6 October.

New Writing North is the writing development agency for northern England, and opened in 1996. In 2012, New Writing North joined Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations and now works on projects across the greater North.

New Writing North works with writers to develop career opportunities, new commissions, projects, residencies, publications and live events. It works in partnership with a broad range of organisations, universities, local authorities, regional development agencies, sponsors and media producers to develop opportunities for writers in our region.

Notes on Gordon Burn Prize

The shortlist for the Gordon Burn Prize 2017 was announced on 21 July 2017 as:

- *Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile* by Adelle Stripe (Wrecking Ball Press)
- *Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe* by Kapka Kassabova (Granta Books)
- *First Love* by Gwendoline Riley (Granta Books)
- *The Long Drop* by Denise Mina (Harvill Secker)
- *This Is Memorial Device* by David Keenan (Faber & Faber)
- *This Is the Place to Be* by Lara Pawson (CB Editions)

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