



BUDLEIGH SALTERTON LITERARY FESTIVAL

PRESS RELEASE

July 2020

BUDLEIGH LITERARY FESTIVAL GOES DIGITAL WITH A SPARKLING ONLINE LOCAL FESTIVAL

Determined to deliver a Festival this year despite distancing guidelines, Budleigh Literary Festival has embraced technology with a superb line-up for its 2020 festival.

Between 16th and 20th September, audiences will be able to access free of charge an extensive programme of events from home, on the road, or wherever they are on holiday, and listen to and interact with acclaimed authors, and engage in challenging topics and lively panel discussions.

Despite its very wide reach, the Festival will remain steeped in the unique location that makes it so special. Audiences will have a real sense of Budleigh Salterton and the stunning Jurassic coastal setting, with extra local content available to add to the sense of place, with a few events filmed in Budleigh and in front of an audience if restrictions allow.

Headline speakers include Festival President **Dame Hilary Mantel** who will be talking in person to BBC special correspondent, **James Naughtie**, in her first face-to-face interview since lockdown about *The Mirror and the Light*, her hugely-acclaimed finale to the Booker prize-winning Cromwell trilogy. She'll also be sharing details of her new book of reflective essays, *Mantel Pieces*, for the first time.

On the same day, Naughtie will be delivering the annual **Susan Ward Lecture** about his book *On the Road*, reflecting on a career spent reporting on the United States, and considering the state of a country reeling from a disastrous Covid-19 response and widespread Black Lives Matter protests ahead of November's Presidential elections.

Writer, QI presenter and former Great British Bake Off compère **Sandi Toksvig** will be taking us along the Number 12 bus route and musing about life, thoughts shared so brilliantly in her memoir *Between the Stops*. Samuel Johnson and Costa Book of the Year prize-winner **Helen Macdonald**, author of *H is for Hawk*, will be sharing her views on our place in the natural world from her much anticipated new book, *Vesper Flights*.

International highlights include former US Ambassador **Sir Kim Darroch**, speaking for the first time about his explosive book, *Collateral Damage*, on the realities of working with The White House. Acclaimed investigative journalist **Luke Harding** will be with us again to talk about his revealing new exploration of Russia's global influence today and, in a time of diplomatic conflict, broadcaster and documentary maker, **Michael Wood**, takes us to China to explain its history and influence today.

Closer to home, we join the Poet Laureate, **Simon Armitage**, with an exclusive reading from his shed in the Pennines, and we welcome back multi best-selling author, **Raynor Winn**, who will be bringing us her new book, *The Wild Silence*, about life after *The Salt Path*. Nature broadcaster, **Kate Humble**, will be looking at the concept of happiness after a year lived simply in the Herefordshire countryside, and the author of the acclaimed *The Last Act of Love*, **Cathy Retzenbrink**, will ask us to reveal the books that have influenced our lives. Local writers **Graham Hurley** and **Mark Diacono**, winner of the Guild of Food Writers Award, will join us to give an insight to their work and their love of East Devon.

More great writing comes in the form of literary fiction with **Sarah Moss** and **Salley Vickers**, who will be sharing their approaches to writing the dramas of everyday life, and *Sunday Times* best-sellers, **Peter James** and **Mark Billingham**, who will be celebrating their stellar careers in crime writing. *Midsomer Murder* creator **Anthony Horowitz** will reveal the twists and turns in his latest crime novel, *Moonflower Murders*.

The Festival will confront head-on the issues of identity and racism with speakers **Pragya Agarwal**, who questions our unconscious biases in her book *Sway*, and influential Chief Prosecutor **Nazir Afzal**, who will talk about growing up in England and facing racist violence. *Masterchef* winner, **Irini Tzortzoglou**, and cookery writer and restaurateur **Ravinder Bhogal** will share recipes that they cherish from their own cultural roots.

Other events will look at our digital footprint that remains even after we die, epic cycle journeys, the reach of soft power, and the legacy and impact of caring for those you love.

Though unable to visit schools with authors, the Festival will continue its valuable charitable education outreach work by delivering bespoke free-of-charge virtual events for young people of all ages to enjoy. Authors recording special talks for the Virtual Festival include award-winners **Onjali Q. Raúf**, **Juno Dawson**, and Crongton series author **Alex Wheatle OBE**. New York rapper **Devon Glover** will be taking Shakespeare's sonnets into a new dimension, and **Emma Carroll** will be reading chapters from *The Somerset Tsunami*. *Horrible Histories* illustrator **Martin Brown** will bring his *Lesser Spotted Animals* to life with readings and draw-alongs, and **Matt Oldfield** and twice winner of the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal, **Emily Gravett**, will delight younger children with stories and drawings.

'Despite restrictions, it was unthinkable not to hold the Festival when it is such an important part of the town's calendar,' says Artistic Director, Annie Ashworth. 'We intend the Festival to have a strong sense of its location, so we'll be hanging out the bunting and banners as always and bringing some superb headline writers to our local audience, as well as welcoming people online who might never have discovered this beautiful corner of Devon. We aim to be flexible and to open up the Festival as much as possible depending on

guidelines, but of course the safety of our team and audiences will be paramount. We are so grateful to our sponsors and supporters for enabling the Festival to happen this year - we can't wait for September and to bringing the pleasure of the Festival to Budleigh.'

Events run from 16th – 20th September, and it is free to register to watch the events online at www.budlitfest.org.uk. Audiences will be asked to make a donation to support the Festival's costs and outreach work, and the Festival will also be donating to the Society of Authors Emergency Fund to support writers whose livelihoods have been affected by the pandemic.

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For more information, please contact:

Arianne Smart at KOR Communications (regional PR) on 01392 466733 or

Arianne.Smart@korcommunications.co.uk

Tamsin Williams at Wigwam PR (national PR) on 01483 563562/07939 651252 or

tamsin@wigwampr.com -

Notes to editors:

- Getting interactive: Audiences will be asked to submit questions by 12th September for the chair to ask each speaker, and then the authors will be on Twitter when the event is released so that audiences can interact with them. Most virtual events will remain available on the Festival website until 30th September.
- The Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival was founded in 2008 with the aim of attracting acclaimed authors, playwrights and poets, whilst retaining accessible ticket prices and a friendly atmosphere.
- Festival sponsors and supporters include: Audify, Black Tor Brewery, Rathbones, David Rhys Estate Agents, Hawksmoor Investment Management, Sampson's Butchers and Deli, Topsy Merchant, Starfish Accommodation, Home Instead Senior Care, Jurassic Kitchens and Living Spaces, Budleigh Salterton Arts Society, The Norman Family Trust, Lord Clinton Charitable Trust, Michael and Valerie Jackaman and Festival Friends.
- The Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival is a registered charity no. 1127885 and a Limited Company by Guarantee no. 6758203.
- To find out more, visit www.budlitfest.org.uk.