



Free the Word! 2009
A Heavenly Celebration of World Literature
16th-19th April 2009

Make a date to come and meet the great writers you know and the great writers you don't at *Free the Word!*, the UK's only festival of world literature, returning to London for its second year this spring for an exciting and explosive weekend of storytelling, discussion and debate.

Staged by International PEN, the worldwide writers' association, the festival, sponsored by Bloomberg and supported by Arts Council England, will take place at a variety of venues around London's Southbank and Bankside over one long weekend in mid April 2009 and will take the theme of *Heaven and Earth*.

Showcasing the best writing from around the globe, the festival will feature world renowned writers such as Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, Mexican journalist and human rights activist, Lydia Cacho, and Iranian novelist and academic Azar Nafisi, alongside emerging voices such as Petina Gappah, a remarkable new talent from Zimbabwe, Czech writer Tomáš Zmeškal and French literary sensation, Florian Zeller.

The festival also features a new strand of work, FELT PEN, with events for children and their families, and will present the first public performance of Malawian writer and poet, Jack Mapanje's, first play, *The President's Tobacco*.

"Free the Word! is International PEN in spirit and action – a four-day festival for authors and readers to make sparks across the divide between national literatures," says Sir Tom Stoppard, International PEN author advocate.

"*Free the Word!* is a celebration of the best in world literature," comments Caroline McCormick, Executive Director of International PEN, "and illustrates International PEN's commitment to removing barriers to engaging with literature; whether they be freedom of expression, or literature in translation."

Festival highlights include:

Beyond Faith and Reason – When cultures meet is it possible to find a place for understanding?

- Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, novelist, historian and political campaigner Tariq Ali, Palestinian writer Samir El-youssef and award-winning Bangladeshi author Tahmima Anam discuss their experiences of their own cultures, meeting places of religion and state, where belief and the law are intertwined.
- **Heavenly Pleasures** - Catherine Millet, author of the internationally best-selling memoir, *The Sexual Life of Catherine M*, Sudanese writer Leila Aboulela and French literary sensation, Florian Zeller, discuss representations of love across cultures with Lisa Appignanesi, award-winning author of *Freud's Women* and *Unholy Loves*.
- **International Futures** – Acclaimed author Kamila Shamsie talks with some of the brightest contemporary voices on the international literary scene; Tomáš Zmeškal (the Czech Republic), Petina Gappah (Zimbabwe) and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih (India).
- **Telling Secret Lives** - Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, former homeless crack cocaine addict turned writer, Lee Stringer and Chinese translator, Wen Huang explore what it means to be invisible in the realms of heaven and earth.
- **Hell on Earth** – Mexican writer Lydia Cacho, recipient of the 2007 Amnesty International Ginetta Sagan Award for Women and Children's Rights and the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2008, editor and war correspondent for German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, Carolin Emcke, and best-selling Danish author Christian Jungersen discuss a writer's role in a conflicting world and how it can literally be hell on earth.
- **The President's Tobacco** - Celebrated Malawian writer and poet, Jack Mapanje, unveils his first play, *The President's Tobacco*, for the first time in a rehearsed reading exclusively at *Free the Word!* 2009.
- **The Insulting Cabaret** - After its sell-out success in 2008, *The Insulting Cabaret* returns for more late night word play, vocal trickery, comic truths and some good old-fashioned fun.

Other writers taking part in *Free the Word!* 2009 include Karen King-Aribisala (Guyana/Nigeria), Sylvia van Ommen (The Netherlands), Peter Beaumont (UK), Amit Chaudhuri (India/UK) and Keith Waithe (Guyana/UK).

The festival will take place at Shakespeare's Globe, Southwark Playhouse and the Young Vic. In keeping with a festival format, there will be multiple events taking place during the day and evening.

International PEN is the worldwide writers association, which represents the conscience of world literature, defends freedom of expression and promotes the development of a community of writers across cultures and languages. It is committed to giving insight into other worlds through the power and value of literature and as such, *Free the Word!* aims to showcase the best in world literature, promote literature in translation, and give a platform to both eminent and emerging writers. From October 2009, the festival will become an international relay of events across world cities beginning with *Free the Word!* in Linz, Austria, staged by Austrian PEN in partnership with International PEN. It will then travel to up to 10 countries throughout 2010 including the third London festival. Each *Free the Word!* will be united every

year by a shared theme, promoting local and national writing as well as the best in world literature and literature in translation.

Further details of *Free the Word! 2009* can be found at www.internationalpen.org.uk and tickets can be booked direct with each venue.

-Ends -

For further information including full festival listings and press tickets for events, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About International PEN:

- Originally founded in 1921 to promote literature, today International PEN has 144 Centres in 102 countries across the globe, of which there are four in the UK; English PEN - our founding Centre, Scottish PEN, African Writers Abroad and Writers in Exile, London branch.
- Our primary goal is to engage with, and empower, societies and communities across cultures and languages, through reading and writing. It recognises that literature is essential to understanding and engaging with other worlds; if you can't hear the voice of another culture how can you understand it?
- We believe that writers can play a crucial role in changing and developing civil society through the promotion of literature, international campaigning on issues such as freedom of expression and translation, and challenging and breaking down barriers and access to literature through publishing and distribution at international, regional and national levels.
- Its membership is open to all published writers who subscribe to the PEN Charter regardless of nationality, language, race, colour or religion.
- International PEN is a non-political organisation and has special consultative status at UNESCO and the United Nations.

Tickets and Booking

Tickets can be booked directly with the venues:

Shakespeare's Globe

020 7401 9919

www.shakespeares-globe.org

Southwark Playhouse

020 7407 0234

www.southwarkplayhouse.co.uk

Young Vic

020 7922 2922

www.youngvic.org

Event Listings Information

Thursday 16th April

Beyond Faith and Reason

Thursday 16th April at 7.30pm

Shakespeare's Globe (main stage)

Nadine Gordimer, Tariq Ali, Samir El-youssef and Tahmima Anam

Tickets: £12, £9, £5

When cultures meet is it possible to find a place for understanding? The opening event of *Free the Word!* gives space for conversation and debate about what makes our world such a rich and varied place of opposites. With Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, novelist, historian and political campaigner Tariq Ali, Palestinian writer Samir El-youssef and 2008 Commonwealth Prize winner for Best First Book, Tahmima Anam from Bangladesh. The writers will read from their work and discuss their experiences of their own cultures; meeting places of religion and state, where belief and the law are intertwined. The event is chaired by Boyd Tonkin, Literary Editor of *The Independent*.

Friday 17th April

Telling Secret Lives

Friday 17th April at 7.30pm

Shakespeare's Globe – The Underglobe

Azar Nafisi, Lee Stringer and Wen Huang

Tickets: £5

From the secret lives of women in Iran to the story of one man's crack cocaine years on the streets of New York and an account of a village teacher in China, the extraordinary is often hidden behind the everyday. Azar Nafisi, author of the international bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, is joined by New Yorker Lee Stringer and Wen Huang, the translator of one of China's most well-known writer's, Liao Yiwu, as they explore what it means to be invisible in the realms of heaven and earth. The writers will be in conversation with acclaimed writer and musician Amit Chaudhuri.

The Insulting Cabaret

Friday 17th April at 10pm

Southwark Playhouse

In association with the hub

Catherine Millet, Karen King-Aribisala, Christian Jungersen, Lee Stringer and many more!

Tickets: £6

Under the watchful night sky, join us for the *Insulting Cabaret*; it's a secret world somewhere between heaven and earth. The strangest things will be banned and pre conceptions will be blurred. After its sell-out success last year, the *Free the Word!* cabaret returns for more late night word play, vocal trickery, comic truths and some good old-fashioned fun. A perfect end to a day's festival-going or the perfect start to a night out where anything could happen ...

Saturday 18th April

Around the Globe

Saturday 18th April at 12pm

Shakespeare's Globe – Watkins Rooms

Tickets: £5 Ages 4 – 6

From the weird to the wonderful, storyteller Deborah Newbold comes armed with a bucketful of traditional and original tales and spellbinding songs from all over the world. Help her tell these stories by sharing them with your family, whispering them to your neighbour or just shouting them right across the Thames. This event is part of FELT PEN.

Dream Journeys

Saturday 18th April at 2pm

Shakespeare's Globe – Watkins Rooms

Tickets: £5 Ages 3 – 6

Interweaving storytelling with Ghanaian song, Cora and dreamy Guyanese flute melodies, celebrate the connections between heaven and earth, between what we see and touch and our own dream journeys.. With Keith Waithe, Sandra Agard and Jo Jo Yates. This event is part of FELT PEN.

Sweets

Saturday 18th April at 3.45pm

Shakespeare's Globe – Watkins Rooms

Tickets: £5 Ages 6+

Do they have sweets in heaven? Joris and Oscar think so.

Dutch illustrator, writer and animator, Sylvia van Ommen reads *Sweets*, a story about a cat and a rabbit and their thoughts about heaven and earth. Come and create your own animated animal characters and talk about what sweets you would like to eat in heaven. This event is part of FELT PEN.

Hell on Earth

Saturday 18th April at 6pm

Shakespeare's Globe – The Underglobe

Lydia Cacho, Christian Jungersen and Carolin Emcke

Tickets: £5

A writer's role in a conflicting world, whether it is real or imagined, can take unheard and untold stories and experiences, and re-tell them with a powerful honesty so that there is no choice but to listen. Yet it can literally be hell on earth.

Mexican author Lydia Cacho, recipient of the 2007 Amnesty International Ginetta Sagan Award for Women and Children's Rights and the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2008, was arrested, extradited and jailed for her book *Los Demonios del Edén* (Demons of Eden) in which she accuses high profile politicians of being involved in a ring of child pornography and prostitution. As an editor and war correspondent for German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, Carolin Emcke has reported on human-rights violations and war crimes in places such as Lebanon, Colombia, Afghanistan and Iraq. Christian Jungersen is a Danish author of two prize-winning and bestselling novels, his latest being *The Exception*, a work which takes place in a small fictitious organisation, The Danish Centre for Genocide Information.

This event is chaired by Peter Beaumont, Foreign Affairs Editor at the Observer whose new book *The Secret Life of War* is available in May.

International Futures

Saturday 18th April at 7.45pm

Shakespeare's Globe – The Underglobe

In association with *PEN International Magazine*

Kamila Shamsie, Tomáš Zmeškal, Petina Gappah and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih

Tickets: £5

A sold-out event last year, *International Futures* is back to celebrate the eminent writers of tomorrow. Kamila Shamsie, the acclaimed author of numerous novels including her latest, *Burnt Shadows*, talks with some of the brightest contemporary international voices whose work already heralds stellar international futures: Tomáš Zmeškal (the Czech Republic), Petina Gappah (Zimbabwe) and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih (India).

Sunday 19th April

13 Secrets of Poetry: A cabaret for children based on the poems of Adrian Mitchell

Sunday 19th April at 11am

By Adrian Mitchell with Sasha Mitchell

Young Vic Maria Theatre

Tickets: £5 Ages 8 – 11

If you have ever wanted to write a poem but couldn't get started, this is the show for you. Using music and poetry, the performers reveal thirteen helpful secrets of poetry. Some poems are scary, some are sad, some are downright daft! Enjoy a musical and poetic cabaret that ranges from classical music to rap, that celebrates a variety of lyrical poetic styles but, most of all that shows everyone how much fun poetry can be. Performed by Sasha Mitchell and Nick Pyall. This event is part of FELT PEN.

Literary Lunch

Sunday 19th April at 1pm

Festival Highlights

Young Vic, The Cut Bar

Free but tickets must be reserved

The great British tradition of the long Sunday lunch meets the best in world literature. Treat yourself to some of the delights on offer from The Cut Bar, while you chew on the words of some of the writers at this year's festival. With Jack Mapanje paying tribute to Harold Pinter, Pulitzer Prize shortlisted author Suketu Mehta, Chinese poet Han Dong, tributes to Adrian Mitchell, and Lydia Cacho, Leila Aboulela and Moris Farhi all reading from and discussing their work. Plus many more surprise extras!

The President's Tobacco In association with Bilimankhwe Arts

Sunday 19th April at 3.30pm

Young Vic Maria Theatre

A rehearsed reading and Q&A with Jack Mapanje

Tickets: £5

In a fictional African country, ordinary farmers are competing to grow and sell tobacco against the big people in the Party and Government. One small farmer, Mtema, appears to be able to run a profitable farm and pay his men well. But when competition escalates, he is imprisoned for embezzling the president's tobacco leaving Mrs Mtema to face an uncertain and dangerous future ...

Celebrated Malawian writer and poet, Jack Mapanje, unveils a rehearsed reading of his first play, *The President's Tobacco*, for the first time exclusively for *Free the Word!*

Heavenly Pleasures

Sunday 19th April at 7.30pm

Shakespeare's Globe – The Underglobe

Catherine Millet, Florian Zeller and Leila Aboulela

Tickets £5

Heavenly Pleasures explores representations of love across cultures: from East to West, from the physical to the spiritual. Featuring French writer Catherine Millet, whose internationally best-selling memoir, *The Sexual Life of Catherine M*, was dubbed '... a manifesto of our times', and Florian Zeller who explores the relationship between the West and Islam from the point of view of a young man on a quest for pleasure in his novel, *Fascination of Evil*. Joining them is Leila Aboulela, a Sudanese writer whose celebrated novel *The Translator* looks at the difficulty of loving someone of another faith. This event is chaired by Lisa Appignanesi, award-winning author of *Freud's Women* and *Unholy Loves* and President of English PEN.

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