

SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAM FOR 19–27 MAY 2025

The 2025 Sydney Writers' Festival (SWF) officially unveils its program today, delivering an engaging week of literary discussion across Sydney, 19–27 May 2025.

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Vital conversations will take place at 200+ events; with 40+ international guests and 100+ Australian authors participating. Of these authors, 34 will be releasing brand new books in 2025.

Artistic Director Ann Mossop said, "Sydney Writers' Festival is a place for brilliant writing and urgent conversations. Under the theme *In This Together*, the 2025 Festival highlights extraordinary novels, poetry and writing of all kinds—and thought-provoking discussions."

"Writing remains one of the most powerful tools to make sense of the world, to spark change and foster understanding. The 2025 Festival presents great writers discussing a range of important topics: from the future of artificial intelligence to feminism's next battleground; from monumental global power shifts to First Nations truth-telling. The SWF program brings readers and writers together and challenges us to think, feel, and imagine what lies ahead," said Mossop.

FESTIVAL HEADLINE GUESTS

International best-sellers, literary icons and genre defining authors join this year's Festival lineup, alongside rising stars from across the globe.



2024 Booker Prize winner Samantha Harvey (*Orbital*, 2024) offers an introspective novel set aboard an International Space Station. Jeanette Winterson (*Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, 1985) celebrates the 40th anniversary of her landmark novel, and in a second event, explores how artificial intelligence is changing our understanding of being human. And the first openly trans woman nominated for the Women's Prize for Fiction – Torrey Peters (*Stag Dance*, 2025) brings her latest novel to the Festival.

Colm Tóibín (*Long Island*, 2024) continues the story of Eilis Lacey in the highly anticipated sequel to *Brooklyn* (2009). 2004 Booker Prize winner Alan Hollinghurst (*Our Evenings*, 2024) follows a biracial gay actor as he navigates shifting cultural landscapes from the 1960s to today. And master of crime fiction Ian Rankin (*Midnight and Blue*, 2024) showcases the 25th instalment of his legendary Inspector Rebus series.

International best-seller Marian Keyes (*My Favourite Mistake*, 2024) blends humour and emotional depth in a story of midlife reinvention. David Nicholls (*You Are Here*, 2024) takes readers on a tender, mystery-infused hiking journey. And Yael van der Wouden (*The Safekeep*, 2024) uncovers buried secrets and a love triangle in 1961 rural Netherlands in her 2024 Booker Prize-shortlisted debut. Marking the 25th anniversary of her debut novel *After You'd Gone* (2000), Maggie O'Farrell (*Hamnet*, 2020) joins the Festival virtually to celebrate her body of work.

Sayaka Murata (*Vanishing World*, 2025) envisions a near-future Japan where reproduction is taboo, challenging the trajectory of human evolution in a tech-driven society. Kalliane Bradley (*The Ministry of Time*, 2024) redefines time-travel fiction with her debut novel, exploring the implications of time manipulation – co-presented by UNSW Sydney. And Rumaan Alam (*Entitlement*, 2024) sharply critiques privilege and power in contemporary New York.

For lovers of non-fiction, acclaimed historian Ben Macintyre (*The Siege*, 2024) delivers a gripping account of the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege in London, and philosopher A.C. Grayling (*Discriminations*, 2025) unpacks the history of cancel culture, advocating for reasoned debate in an era of polarising discourse.

2025 ESSENTIAL FESTIVAL EVENTS

Liane Moriarty and David Nicholls (21 May) reveal what happens when an author's everyday life stories become global sensations! They will be comparing experiences of seeing their novels turn into bestsellers, bingeable television series, and films.

Festival favourite – the SWF Great Debate (22 May), returns with the topic *True Friends Stab You in the Front*. Annabel Crabb and David Marr lead opposing teams in this hilarious and provocative showdown, interrogating Oscar Wilde's infamous aphorism on betrayal. Rhys Nicholson, Matilda Boseley, Justine Rogers and Jennifer Wong battle it out under the adjudication of Yumi Stynes, with pithy, personal, and razor-sharp exchanges.

Australian Indigenous leader Thomas Mayo, historian Clare Wright and Walkley award winning journalist Lorena Allam reflect on the history of Australian First Nations movements for change and discuss the path forward in *Past and Future of Indigenous Recognition* (22 May).

Four brilliant literary minds: Rumaan Alam, Samantha Harvey, Robbie Arnott and Torrey Peters, take a pulse check on the artform in *State of the Art: The Novel* (22 May), hosted by The Bookshelf radio presenter Kate Evans.

The lines between fact and fiction are uncovered by novelist Shankari Chandran, investigative journalist Kate McClymont, and Diamond Dagger Award winner Ian Rankin in discussing their gripping crime stories with host Matthew Condon in *Untrue Crime* (23 May).

The Moriarty Sisters (23 May)—Jaclyn, Liane, and Nicola—come together for a lively discussion on their careers, creative process, and the joys and challenges of sharing a literary family legacy.

Jewish authors Michael Gawenda and Philippe Sands reflect on rising antisemitism and xenophobia in *Holding Up the Mirror* (23 May) hosted by Samantha Selinger-Morris. Michael Gawenda will also discuss his autobiography *My Life as a Jew* (2023).

Queer trailblazers Torrey Peters, Rumaan Alam, Hasib Hourani, Daniel Nour and others champion the LGBTQIA+ community's culture and creativity one true story at a time in *Queerstories* (23 May).

Queens of Australian pastry Nadine Ingram, Natalie Paull and Kate Reid cook up a light, airy, heartwarming chat with host Jennifer Wong on the art and business of baking in *Bakers' Delight* (23 May).

Beloved Sydney institution Bankstown Poetry Slam (23 May) returns with headlining poet Plestia Alaqaad and host Bilal Hafda, bringing audiences together for a powerful night of poetry, performances and a shared passion for language.

In the wake of the Federal election, an award-winning panel: Waleed Aly, George Megalogenis, Amy Remeikis, and Niki Savva, dissect the key issues shaping the nation, the political landscape, and what lies ahead for Australian politics in *Barrie Cassidy and Friends: State of the Nation* (24 May), hosted by Barrie Cassidy.

Trumpocalypse Now (25 May) brings together the world's sharpest political minds, Nick Bryant, Emma Shortis, and Peter Beinart with host Barrie Cassidy, to examine what the next four years under the 45th President of the United States will mean—for America, for democracy, and for the world.

Esteemed authors Colm Tóibín and Charlotte Wood reflect on the turning points that shaped

their writing careers and how Ireland and Australia support and value their writers in *Making a Writer* (25 May), with *The Monthly* editor Michael Williams.

Spies, Lies and Secrets (25 May) uncovers the covert world of espionage with spy fiction author Jack Beaumont, acclaimed historian Ben MacIntyre and true-crime writer Matthew Condon in this conversation filled with intrigue and hidden truths for your ears only.

In Stories of Palestine (25 May) writers Sara Haddad, Hasib Hourani, and Samah Sabawi share their personal experiences as part of the Palestinian and Lebanese diaspora, exploring how literature connects past and present, hosted by Micaela Sahhar.

And Festival hit, *Your Favourites' Favourite* (22–25 May) returns, bringing a behind-the-scenes look into which authors Hannah Kent, Benjamin Law, Annabel Crabb, and Michael Robotham are currently adoring.

OPENING AND CLOSING NIGHTS

The 28th Sydney Writers' Festival opens 20 May with an evening of readings and performances that bring this year's theme, *In This Together*, to the stage. The event stars Torres Strait Islander writer and activist Thomas Mayo, 2025 Festival Guest Curator, Yuwaalaraay writer and performer Nardi Simpson, *Sunday Times*–bestselling poet Lemn Sissay, and internationally acclaimed writer Jeanette Winterson.

The Festival closes on the 25 May with award-winning Australian writer Anna Funder, to share her perspective on writing in the age of AI, and how humans can resist becoming raw material for exploitation by technology in what is sure to be a formidable Closing Address.

OTHER INTERNATIONAL GUESTS – FICTION

A host of visionary fiction writers transport readers to bold new futures and alternate pasts. Catherine Chidgey (*The Book of Guilt*, 2025) crafts a dystopian society where guilt becomes a tradable commodity, while Neal Shusterman (*All Better Now*, 2024) explores a world where a virus erases negative emotions, forcing society to confront profound ethical dilemmas. Ferdia Lennon (*Glorious Exploits*, 2024) transports readers to ancient Sicily, where prisoners and locals form unexpected bonds through theatre. And beloved British actor Harriet Walter (*She Speaks!*, 2024) reclaims the voices of Shakespeare's female characters in a bold new interpretation.

For lovers of gripping crime fiction and psychological thrillers, Chris Whitaker (*All the Colors of the Dark*, 2024) presents a haunting coming-of-age crime novel set in 1970s Missouri. Asako Yuzuki (*Butter*, 2024) unpacks a real-life crime case, exploring media narratives, gender expectations, and public perception. And horror fiends will die for Mariana Enriquez (*A Sunny Place for Shady People*, 2024), continuing her mastery of Latin American gothic storytelling, blending the supernatural with social critique.

Poetry lovers can look forward to Afra Atiq (*Of Palm Trees and Skies*, 2024) weaving personal and

cultural narratives inspired by the Arabian Gulf, and Lemn Sissay (*Let the Light Pour In*, 2023) shares powerful meditations on identity, memory, and the ties that bind us across generations.

Young Readers

For young readers and those young at heart, adventure, resilience, and self-discovery await. International best-seller Jeff Kinney (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hot Mess*, 2024) brings the latest instalment of his iconic children's series. Terri Libenson (*Entirely Emmie*, 2025) explores the ups and downs of early school friendships in her illustrated Emmie & Friends series. Tricia Levenseller (*The Darkness Within Us*, 2024) crafts another thrilling fantasy for YA readers.

OTHER INTERNATIONAL GUESTS – NON-FICTION

This year's international non-fiction authors bring audiences deep insights into history, politics, philosophy, culture, and science.

Philippe Sands (*38 Londres Street*, 2025) uncovers hidden links between Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and a Nazi war criminal, meanwhile Edward Wong (*At the Edge of Empire*, 2024) blends investigative journalism with his family's lived experiences to reveal China's shifting political and social landscape. Peter Godwin (*Exit Wounds*, 2024) offers a moving family memoir partly set in post-colonial Africa. Marcel Dirsus (*How Tyrants Fall*, 2024) turns his attention to authoritarian regimes, analysing the political vulnerabilities that lead to their downfall.

Plestia Alaqad (*The Eyes of Gaza*, 2025) documents the resilience of those living through ongoing violence and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Peter Beinart (*Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza*, 2025) challenges readers to rethink history, belonging, and moral responsibility.

Ittay Flescher (*The Holy and the Broken*, 2025) urges audiences to envision a shared future for Israelis and Palestinians. And Raja Shehadeh (*Forgotten*, 2024) uncovers hidden Palestinian memorials. Both appear at the Festival digitally.

Rhodri Lewis (*Shakespeare's Tragic Art*, 2024) explores the enduring power of Shakespeare's tragedies, revealing how the playwright's vision of fate, morality, and human frailty continues to resonate in the modern world.

And 'the world's number one sleep expert', Matthew Walker (*Why We Sleep*, 2017) continues to influence global conversations on the critical role of rest, unlocking the mysteries of the brain and human behaviour.

The full Sydney Writers' Festival 2025 program can be found online at swf.org.au.

Sydney Writers' Festival runs from 19–27 May 2025. Tickets are on sale from 10am Saturday 15 March. Please call 02 9256 4200 or visit swf.org.au for more information or to book.

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[***Sydney Writers' Festival Press Pack and Images Available HERE](#)

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PREMIER PARTNER

UNSW SYDNEY is the Sydney Writers' Festivals Premier Partner and exclusive university sponsor. This year's Festival features UNSW academics and researchers on Sydney Writers' Festival stages. This partnership brings together a shared vision of creativity, curiosity and thought leadership, providing opportunities for the UNSW and Sydney Writer's Festival communities to foster unique collaborations and connect with like-minded and curious people.

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

From Monday 19 to Tuesday 27 May 2025, the 28th Sydney Writers' Festival brings together some of the world's most exciting literary voices for a week of insightful discussions, thought-provoking ideas, and unforgettable storytelling. The Festival features a dynamic program of in-person and livestreamed events, including author talks, panel discussions, workshops, and special events across Sydney.

For more information, visit [swf.org.au](https://www.swf.org.au).

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