



National Writers' Conference 2023

writingwestmidlands.org
@writingwestmids



Saturday 8 July 2023, 10am-4pm
(registration from 9.15am)

**Bramall Music Building,
University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT**

Presented in Partnership with University of Birmingham,
supported by the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society
and Arts Council England



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM





National Writers' Conference 2023: How the Writing World Works

Presented in partnership with University of Birmingham. Supported by the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society and Arts Council England.

Welcome to what we hope will be a useful and friendly series of presentations and panel discussions, focusing on how you can find the best way to develop your writing talents.

The writing world can look incredibly complicated from the outside, and so we are delighted to bring together a wonderful group of speakers who can share their experience of working within the sector. Our subjects this year are many and various, but they are linked by an understanding that talking to each other makes good things happen.

We welcome those from far and wide, but we are particularly delighted that this has

become the great 'day-out' for writers from the West Midlands. There will be catch-up conversations aplenty, but also new people to meet and new ideas to share.

So, please do join in. Ask questions in the sessions, and talk to those you bump into in the queue at the bookstall (our thanks to The Heath Bookshop for this opportunity to buy books). Make connections, exchange contact details, and keep in touch.

We are grateful for the support of the many individuals and organisations who have helped make this event happen: Arts Council England, Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society, BBC, Bookouture, HW Fisher Business Solutions, The Heath Bookshop, Hosking Houses Trust, Madeleine Milburn Agency, Pan Macmillan, Simon & Schuster, University of Birmingham (College of Arts & Law), Trustees of Writing West Midlands.

Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands

Timetable

All times are BST / GMT +1

09:15 - 10:00

Registration & refreshments

10:00 - 10:10

Welcome & Introduction

Jonathan Davidson and Dr Daniel Moore, University of Birmingham

10:10 - 10:30

Keynote Address

Maeve Clarke, writer

10:30 - 11:00

How Publishing Works

What you need to know about how publishing works

11:00 - 11:10

Comfort Break

11:10 - 11:40

Writing with Neurodivergence

Understanding what this means for writers

11:40 - 12:10

Keynote Interview

Jane Rogers, writer, in conversation with Jonathan Davidson

12:10 - 13:00

Lunch Break

13:00 - 13:30

A Room of One's Own

News from the Hosking Houses Trust 'Open House' residency programme

13:30 - 14:00

Writing for Theatre & Audio

How to approach writing for these industries

14:00 - 14:30

Digital & Self-Publishing

Advice on publishing digitally and doing it yourself

14:30 - 14:45

Comfort Break

14:45 - 15:15

Tax & Writers

Facts and advice from the UK's leading accountancy firm for writers

15:15 - 15:45

Publishing Non-Fiction

Advice on pitching your great ideas

15:45 - 16:00

Farewell Notes

Jonathan Davidson

Timetable

All times are BST

09:15 - 10:00

Registration & refreshments

10:00 - 10:10

Welcome & Introduction

Jonathan Davidson, Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands and **Dr Daniel Moore**, Head of School of English, Drama & Creative Studies, University of Birmingham

10:10 - 10:30

Imposter Syndrome & Procrastination

Maeve Clarke, writer

Writers at all stages of their careers come up against imposter syndrome. While we need to find ways around self-doubt, tackling it can also be a useful way of re-confirming that we are on the right track. Maeve Clarke offers us her thoughts on how to side-step imposter syndrome whilst also actually getting the writing done.

10:30 - 11:00

How Publishing Works

Hannah Todd, Literary Agent, Madeleine Milburn Agency; **Jessica Barratt**, Deputy Head of Publicity, Simon & Schuster; **Natalie Marlow**, writer; chaired by **Jonathan Davidson**, Writing West Midlands.

Publishing is constantly developing in order to find the best ways of getting books to readers. In this panel two industry experts are joined by a newly published writer to answer your questions on how publishing works.

11:00 - 11:10

Comfort Break

11:10 - 11:40

Writing with Neurodivergence

Vicky Morris, writer, workshop facilitator; **Pippa Hennessy**, writer, workshop facilitator; **George Bastow**, writer, workshop facilitator; chaired by **Emma Boniwell**, Writing West Midlands.

Writers who are neurodivergent bring a rewarding creativity to writing projects. Our panellists will discuss how to ensure that a positive environment is created for neurodivergent writers and those with whom they work.

11:40 - 12:10

Keynote Conversation

Jane Rogers, writer, and **Jonathan Davidson**, Writing West Midlands.

Jane Rogers is a novelist and short-story writer and has written original TV and radio drama, as well as adapting work for radio and TV. A recipient of many awards and prizes, she has also taught creative writing at universities and in other settings. In this conversation she will reflect on the challenges of sustaining a creative career across the decades.

12:10 - 13:00:

Lunch Break:

If your ticket includes lunch, this will be available on the Mezzanine. Please feel free to enjoy the venue and the outside space during lunch, and meet fellow writers.

13:00 - 13:30:

A Room of One's Own - A Writer in Residence Programme

José Sunshine-Okoro, writer; **Abda Khan**, writer; **Lorraine Mighty** writer; chaired by **Sarah Mullen**, Artistic Director, Open House project, Hosking Houses Trust.

Open House is a project of Hosking Houses Trust, who provide free writing residencies for talented women over 40 in a Grade 2 listed cottage just outside Stratford upon Avon in Warwickshire. Three of the writers who have recently completed their residencies discuss the value of an intensive period of time to finish a piece of writing.

13:30 - 14:00

Writing for Theatre & Audio

Lorna French, theatre writer; **Helen Cross**, writer & audio dramatist; **Mary Ward-Lowery**, radio producer, BBC; chaired by **Jonathan Davidson**, Writing West Midlands.

Writing for theatre is one of the most established literary forms while writing for audio – including for broadcast radio – has become increasingly important. Three very experienced practitioners discuss routes into the industry and the contrasting challenges of writing for a live audience and for distribution on a digital platform.

14:00 - 14:30:

Digital & Self-Publishing

Kim Nash, Digital Publicity Director, Bookouture; **Alison Jean Lester**, writer & self-published author; **Mark Edwards**, best-selling writer; chaired by **Shantel Edwards**, Writing West Midlands.

Self-publishing has always been an option for writers. The growth of digital platforms has considerably increased the potential for self-publishing, while commercial publishers are now developing digital only imprints. Our panellists discuss the opportunities for writers and how the publishing industry can support their work.

14:30 - 14:45: Comfort Break

14:45 - 15:15

Tax & Writers

Barry Kernon, Accounting & Tax Consultant, HW Fisher; introduced by **Jonathan Davidson**, Writing West Midlands.

For writers at all stages of development, keeping appropriate financial records and understanding the basics of tax and National Insurance are important. Barry Kernon has been offering expert advice to writers for many decades and here presents a short introduction to a vital part of the creative life.

15:15 - 15:45

Publishing Non-Fiction

Shahed Yousaf, writer; **Ian Marchant**, writer; **Mireille Harper**, Editorial Director, Bluebird & One Boat, Pan Macmillan; chaired by **Liv Chapman**, Writing West Midlands.

Non-fiction is an increasingly creative sector of publishing, allowing writers to use a flair for storytelling to share often important and complex subjects. This session will give advice on how to shape a non-fiction pitch along with an insight into what editors are looking for.

15:45 - 16:00

Farewell Notes

Jonathan Davidson, Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands

Chairs:



Jonathan Davidson:

Jonathan Davidson has worked for over thirty years in arts management and literature development. He is joint-founder of the Birmingham Literature Festival, Chief Executive of Writing West Midlands and Director of Midland Creative Projects Limited. He is on advisory panels for publisher The Poetry Business, the LGBTQ+ writer training initiative Out on the Page and the Muslim Arts & Culture Festival and on the Birmingham & Midland Institute's Governance Committee.



Emma Boniwell:

Emma has worked in arts administration since graduating from the Royal Welsh College of Music with a degree in music. Emma has worked with writers for over 20 years, including at Cheltenham Literature Festival, and she worked at the Society of Authors for over ten years.



Olivia Chapman:

Olivia (Liv) previously worked at New Writing North, Blake Friedmann Literary Agency and Puffin Children's Books. She is from London, where she did a BSc in International Relations at LSE before moving to North East England to do post-graduate studies in marketing and PR.



Shantel Edwards

Shantel has worked within the arts in higher education since 2013. In 2019, she completed her PhD at the University of Birmingham, focusing on contemporary British fiction and the marketing of race. She is an avid reader, native of Birmingham and passionate Birmingham Literature Festival attendee.

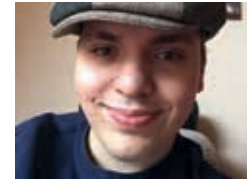
Speakers:



Jessica Barratt

Jess Barratt grew up in Birmingham and has worked in publishing for 13 years. As Deputy Head of Publicity at Simon & Schuster UK (Publisher of the Year 2022 and 2023), she manages PR campaigns for a wide range of authors across the adult list, from Bob Mortimer and Dave Grohl, to debut writers and commercial brands.

Twitter: @JessBarratt88



George Bastow

George is a writer, poet and hat connoisseur from North Warwickshire who just so happens to be a neurodivergent wheelchair-user. He has written for numerous online and print publications and regularly performs his poetry at various spoken word events including Yes, We Can't and Rebel Riot. George also facilitates creative writing workshops for young writers and neurodiverse adults.



Maeve Clarke

Maeve Clarke is from Birmingham and was the writer for the Opening Ceremony of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022. She is a novelist and playwright, and also writes adaptations of contemporary novels for English as a Foreign Language readers.

Twitter: @_MaeveClarke



Helen Cross

Helen Cross writes drama regularly for BBC Radio 4. She has written for BBC Radio for over a decade and also runs very successful short courses teaching radio drama writing skills. Her Afternoon Plays have previously won Awards in the BBC Audio Drama Awards.



Mark Edwards

Mark Edwards writes books in which scary things happen to ordinary people. His novels include *The Magpies*, *Here to Stay* and *Keep Her Secret*. He has sold 4 million copies of his books and topped the bestseller charts numerous times.

Facebook/Instagram: @MarkEdwardsAuthor
Twitter: @MrEdwards
Website: markedwardsauthor.com



Lorna French

Lorna French is developing her play, *Esther*, further and taking part in the Hosking Houses Trust Open House Programme. In 2022 her radio play, *Rise*, was broadcast as an Afternoon Drama on BBC Radio 4. In 2021 – 2022 Pentabus Theatre Company toured her play *Jacaranda* in rural locations in England. Lorna has worked as a playwright mentor in schools and elsewhere for the National Theatre since 2021.

Twitter: @LornaFr



Mireille Harper

Mireille Harper is editorial director at Bluebird & One Boat (Pan Macmillan) and a writer, sensitivity reader and communications consultant. Mireille is the author of *Timelines from Black History* and a contributor to *Timelines of Everyone*, *The Black History Book*, *Migrations and This Is How We Come Back Stronger*.

Twitter / Instagram: @Mireillecharper
Website: mireillecharper.carrd.co/



Pippa Hennessy

Pippa Hennessy is an autistic poet living in Nottingham. She is a lead writer on Writing East Midlands' Beyond the Spectrum project, First Story's Regional Programme Manager for the East Midlands, and a publisher at Five Leaves. She has published poetry inspired by quantum theory and is currently experimenting with digital poetry.

Website: serotone.co.uk
Twitter: @BattyPip



Barry Kernon

Barry is an accounting and tax consultant at HW Fisher, specialised in advising media clients in the creative industries. Barry brings many years of experience in handling various tax matters, such as VAT, inheritance tax, and corporation tax. Additionally, he holds the role of Honorary Treasurer at the Society of Authors.

Twitter: @HFWriters
Instagram: @hwfisheruk



Abda Khan

Abda Khan is an author and lawyer, and a passionate advocate for women's rights. She won the Noor Inayat Khan Muslim Woman of the Year Award 2019 and was highly commended in the 2017 NatWest Asian Women of Achievement Awards in the Arts & Culture category. Her first novel, *Stained*, was published in 2016, and her second novel *Razia* was published in 2019.

Twitter: @AbdaKhan5



Alison Jean Lester

Alison Jean Lester is primarily a novelist, but her most recent book is the memoir *Absolutely Delicious: A Chronicle of Extraordinary Dying*. Her other writing includes the novels *Lillian on Life* and *Yuki Means Happiness*, and the short-story collection *Locked Out: Stories Far from Home*.



Ian Marchant

Ian Marchant has written about the romance of the railways, the longest pub crawl in Britain, and the history of British hippiedom, *A Hero for High Times*. His latest book, *One Fine Day - A Journey Through English Time* was published by September in April 2023. He is a regular diarist for the Church Times, and an intermittent presenter on Radio Four's Open Country.

Instagram: @marchantip
Twitter: @ThatIanMarchant
Website: ianmarchant.com



Natalie Marlow

Natalie Marlow is an historical novelist with a fascination for the people and landscapes of the Midlands. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia and is part-way through a PhD at Birkbeck, University of London. *Needless Alley* is her first novel, and she is currently writing her second book featuring William Garrett.

Twitter: @NatalieMarlow2



Lorraine Mighty

Lorraine Mighty (she/her) is a writer, researcher, and organisational development consultant of Jamaican heritage. Her poetry has been published as part of the Youth Hostels Association Outside Voices project and within the anthology *Where We Find Ourselves* published by Arachne Press.

Twitter: @Mighty_Write



Vicky Morris

Vicky Morris is a British/Welsh poet, mentor and creative educator based in Sheffield. Her debut pamphlet *If All This Never Happened* was a winner of the Munster Fool for Poetry International Chapbook Competition 2021. Her poems have appeared widely including in The Rialto, Poetry Review, Poetry Wales, and The North. She is the founder of Hive Young Writers Network.

Website: vickymorris.co.uk
Twitter / Instagram: @VickyMWriter



Sarah Mullen

Sarah Mullen is a multiple award-winning Arts Producer and Director. Sarah is currently the freelance Artistic Director for Open House project run by Hosking Houses Trust. Sarah also founded and directs social enterprise Green Heart Books CIC which runs The Bookshop on the Green in Bourville, and which works to support both the community, and the wider regional Literature ecology, in a variety of ways.



Kim Nash

Kim Nash is an author of uplifting, funny, romantic, feel-good fiction, is Digital Publicity Director for publisher Bookouture (an imprint of Hachette UK) and is a book blogger at kimthebookworm.co.uk. She also runs a book club in Staffordshire and organises local and national reader/author events.

Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok: @KimTheBookworm
Website: kimthebookworm.co.uk



Jane Rogers

Jane Rogers has published ten novels, a collection of stories, original television and radio drama, and adapted work for radio. Her novels range from historical (*Mr Wroe's Virgins*, which she adapted into an award-winning BBC2 serial) through contemporary to science fiction (*The Testament of Jessie Lamb*, ManBooker longlisted, winner of the Arthur C Clarke Award). She teaches writing and is Professor Emerita of Writing at Sheffield Hallam.

Website: janerogers.info



José Sunshine-Okoro

José is a writer, visual artist, and curator with a background in museums and galleries, developing artists and organisations. José is currently developing her first novel, *They Eat Plums* and later this year will collaborate with Glasgow Women's Library for a visual-arts and writing project, *Looking for Sunshine*.



Hannah Todd

Hannah secured her first in-house publishing job at Bookouture and then went on to work at Canelo, Avon, One More Chapter and Head of Zeus, cultivating a specialism in digital publishing. Hannah joined the MM Agency in 2021.

Twitter: @PalindromeTodd



Mary Ward-Lowery

Mary Ward-Lowery won Best Director in the BBC Audio Drama Awards 2020 and Best Serial 2016 for *D for Dexter*. Her recent drama serial *English Rose* topped the Apple Podcast charts. Other work includes Natalie Haynes *Stands up for the Classics* and most recently, the serialisation of Salman Rushdie's *Victory City*.

Twitter: @MaryWL1



Shaded Yousaf

Dr Shaded Yousaf is a GP who works in prisons, with substance misuse and with the homeless community. Shaded is a Room 204-er, as a previous member of our 2019-20 cohort. Shaded's narrative non-fiction book *Stitched Up: Stories of Life and Death from a Prison Doctor* was published by Penguin Transworld books in July 2022. He has appeared at a number of literature festivals and on television, radio and podcasts.

Twitter: @BrownsNewBlack

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