



**TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF AUTHORS
STARTS A NEW CHAPTER WITH VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING
FOR 41ST EDITION**

**Margaret Atwood, Richard Ford, Khaled Hosseini, Desmond Cole, Maaza
Mengiste, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Billy-Ray Belcourt,
Val McDermid, Ian Rankin and more participating in 2020 Festival**

TORONTO, September 22, 2020 – The Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA), Canada’s largest and longest-running festival of words and ideas, is thrilled to announce its stellar lineup of guests, events and activities for the 41st edition. Bringing a new world into focus, the Festival will offer an expanded array of **free virtual** programming, celebrating stories, connecting communities and diving into important discussions relevant to the current state of the world. TIFA will bring audiences together to meet authors, artists, musicians, performers, and thinkers through live-streamed conversations, video readings, podcasts, interactive apps, workshops and more. TIFA will take place **October 22 to November 1, 2020**. Registration opens on **Tuesday, September 29** at FestivalofAuthors.ca.

Several new programmes are introduced this year, including TIFA Kids!, multi-lingual events, original writing commissions, a Critical Conversations series on the events shaping our world today, creative writing masterclasses and an innovative range of digital apps and virtual performances. The Festival will offer something for everyone with over 200 storytellers from Canada and across the globe, including Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Italy, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, Japan, UK and USA. Bringing together some of the best names and brightest new voices in fiction, non-fiction, memoir, poetry, graphic novels, science, politics and more.

“We turn to books for understanding, solace, inspiration and entertainment, and even more so in these challenging times across the world,” said **Roland Gulliver, Toronto International Festival of Authors Director**. “In my first Festival, I am proud that we have achieved our ambitions and created an incredible 11-day programme. We will share the sheer joy of stories, the power of the written word and spark meaningful conversations to question the profound moments of 2020. We bring together an international, multilingual programme alongside the greatest and freshest voices from across Canada; our need to come together and share stories has never been more immediate.”



Conversations and Readings

The Festival is pleased to welcome an incredible group of new and notable authors. TIFA will kick off its opening night with Canadian literary icon **Margaret Atwood** for an inspiring conversation and sneak peek into her new poetry collection, *Dearly*. Activist, journalist and author **Desmond Cole** participates in two events providing Canadian perspectives on Black racism and institutional oppression, with his book *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*; **Linwood Barclay** will chat with *New York Times* bestseller **Harlan Coben** about his newest book *The Boy From the Woods*; internationally acclaimed American novelist and short story writer **Richard Ford** will speak with TIFA director Roland Gulliver to discuss his latest collection of stories, *Sorry for Your Trouble*; one of the biggest names in crime writing, **Val McDermid**, will participate in a captivating conversation about her new crime fiction, *Still Life*; Edgar Award-winning Scottish crime writer **Ian Rankin** will discuss how he came to write the bestselling John Rebus series; and award-winning novelist **Marilynne Robinson** will chat about her contribution to contemporary American literature in her recent return to the world of Gilead with *Jack*, the fourth novel in the series.

There have been many discussions in 2020 around "the new normal" but literature proves there is no "normal." TIFA will feature conversations between authors including Driftpile Cree Nation poet and youngest winner of the Griffin Prize, **Billy-Ray Belcourt** (*A History of My Brief Body*), and Cree and Métis poet, **Tyler Pennock** (*Bones*) will share the screen to discuss their coming-of-age memoirs of hope and survival; Academy Award-nominee **Emma Donoghue** and 2020 Booker Prize shortlister **Maaza Mengiste** (*The Shadow King*) will discuss the role of women and mothers in times of global crises; and award-winning author and member of Norway House Cree Nation, **David A. Robertson** (*The Barren Grounds* and *Black Water*) and Métis-Cree writer **Jesse Thistle** (*From the Ashes*) will recount their remarkable stories detailed in their latest memoirs.

Critical Conversations

One of many new programmes introduced this year is the **Critical Conversations** series, where authors, academics and activists will participate in live conversations reflecting on issues that matter most during these unprecedented times. Each day, speakers will address a range of contemporary subjects including: the impact of the forthcoming US Election, the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, dealing with the threat of virus and pandemics, protests and political change and the environmental emergency. Participating speakers include Black Lives Matter Toronto Co-Founder **Rodney Diverlus**, Canadian epidemiologist and writer **David Waltner-Toews**, author and physician **Daniel Kalla**, and **Ann Cavoukian**, former Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

Daily Performances

Each evening, the Festival will feature a performance from some of the world's greatest artists and creative storytellers. There will be special presentations in partnership with Canadian



Stage in celebration of **Khaled Hosseini's** bestseller *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; an evening of storytelling with music from 2020 Freedom to Read award winner **Ivan Coyote** and **Sarah MacDougall**; Toronto's former Poet Laureate **Anne Michaels** will present two events combining literature and music, celebrating the city's performance heritage; African-Jamaican dub poet **d'bi.young anitafrika** brings together a truly international night of music; and spoken word legends and musicians **The Last Poets** celebrate 50 years since the release of their debut album, performing from Harlem, New York City.

Special Activities

The Festival introduces several special activities, including **TIFA KIDS!** taking place over the final Festival weekend to connect young readers with some of their favourite authors and celebrate the winners of the **Canadian Children's Book Centre Book Awards**; **Poetry on the Front Lines**, a public video installation at Toronto's Union Station created with Toronto Writers Collective and curated by Toronto's 6th Poet Laureate **A.F. Moritz**; and **Skin Hunger**, a new writing commission featuring original works by ten internationally renowned writers, reflecting on the longing for human contact that many experienced through the isolation of the pandemic. In addition, there will also be **Choreo Chats**, conversations with choreographers exploring the relationship between dance and literature.

Festival-goers will also be able to experience the return of the **Toronto Poetry Slam**, Toronto's largest poetry showcase who pivoted with pinache into the online world; the launch for **Best Canadian Poetry of 2020**, with readings by some of the country's best poets; as well as the **FLUP Queer Slam** competition (in Portuguese with English subtitles) broadcast from Brazil, and an **International Poetry Slam**.

Multilingual Events

TIFA is proud to present a series of virtual events that responds to the linguistic diversity of Toronto and the potential of international digital audiences. Events will be presented in Bengali, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Authors include esteemed **Portuguese writer Gonçalo M. Tavares** who will discuss his latest work, *Plague Diary*, documenting the COVID-19 pandemic; **Mexican author Juan Pablo Villalobos** who will discuss his new gripping thriller, *I Don't Expect Anyone to Believe Me*; and a series of three conversations on **Bengali literature** in Canada and across the globe.

Festival on Demand: Digital Activities

In responding to our new virtual environment, TIFA has created and commissioned a number of digital apps and activities to enjoy at home or on-the-go, including the **Write in the Neighbourhood** podcast with Toronto-based authors guiding readers through the neighbourhoods that inspire them; **Between the Shorelines: Storying Indigenous Presence**



in Toronto, an audio walking tour of Toronto's Indigenous histories; **Comic Jam on the 'Gram**, where 11 of Toronto's best comic artists will collaborate on Instagram over the course of the Festival to produce a continuous story on a single theme; and **Swingin' Moonlight TIFA Sessions**, hosted by novelist and music critic **Sean Michaels**, a limited edition podcast featuring hybrid performances of readings set to original music. There will also be **Instagram Live** events with award-winning performer and writer **Christa Couture** and breakout fantasy author **Evan Winter**.

Visit FestivalofAuthors.ca to view the full programme lineup. Registration opens on **Tuesday, September 29**.

About Toronto International Festival of Authors

The Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA) is Canada's longest-running literary festival, a charitable, non-profit cultural organization. It creates literary festivals, programmes and events that bring together people of all ages to be inspired and empowered through a celebration of authors, books and stories. It generates diverse and exciting conversations across communities in the city, the nation and internationally, to foster new thinking about what it means to be living in today's world, and champions the best of Canadian and international publishing to audiences and industry. TIFA acknowledges that the land on which the organization conducts its work is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat and the Mississaugas of the Credit.

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