

Cambridge Literary Festival

23–24 November
Winter 2024

Highlights include

Shami Chakrabarti

Mackenzie Crook

Helen Czerski

Rupert Everett

Patrick Grant

Kate Humble

Alan Hollinghurst

Hollie McNish

David Nicholls

Jason Okundaye

Zandra Rhodes

Michael Rosen

Guy Shrubsole

Ali Smith

Tim Spector

Harriet Walter

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Director's welcome



Welcome to our annual winter gathering of world class writers, thinkers and speakers, who come to our beautiful city and enjoy a very warm welcome from you, our enthusiastic and inquisitive audiences. You will meet stars of the stage and screen; hear from world class novelists, poets, campaigners, thinkers, academics and environmentalists; and expand your mind with our Cambridge Series, which this year delivers radical and refreshing takes on Motherhood and on AI.

We couldn't let the year pass without marking the centenary of the birth of writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin. And, of course, a new novel from Festival Honorary Patron, Ali Smith, is always a cause for celebration.

This has been a challenging year for literary festivals. I am cheered and grateful for the tireless concern, loyalty and support of the festival community – staff, volunteers, audience members and supporters. This year we turned 21 and, with your continued support, we will survive and thrive for many years to come.

On a sombre note, Daphne Warburg Astor, a loyal friend, and patron of the festival died of cancer on 14th July, aged 74. Her quiet, constant presence and support will be greatly missed as will her critical and constructive eye.

Cathy Moore
CEO & Artistic Director

Festival team

CEO & Artistic Director
Cathy Moore

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Angela Golby

Fundraising & Partnerships
Elizabeth Froy

Events Coordinator
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Miranda Smith (Company Secretary)
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Programme design
Mark Mniszko

Diary Dates 2025

Spring Festival 24-27 April
Winter Festival 22 & 23 November

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Saturday 23 November



10am | Cambridge Union | £17/£10

Shami Chakrabarti

Human Rights: The Case for the Defence

Lawyer, parliamentarian and leading British human rights defender Shami Chakrabarti joins us to present her indispensable guide to the law and logic underpinning human rights. In the contemporary world, human dignity and universal freedoms are being attacked by populist and authoritarian movements worldwide; as we are threatened by wars, inequality, new technologies and climate catastrophe, we need human rights now more than ever.

In conversation with Marina Wheeler KC



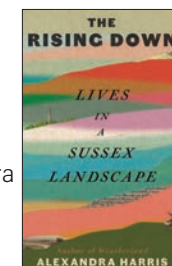
10am | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Alexandra Harris

The Rising Down: Lives in a Sussex Landscape

Join acclaimed cultural historian Alexandra Harris to explore *The Rising Down*, a luminous feat of time travel chronicling past lives from a Sussex landscape. Harris excavates archives and everyday objects to unearth hundreds of stories and voices from the area's past. From painter John Constable and modernist writer Ford Madox Ford to local women who left little trace, Harris focuses on one small patch of England and 'finds a world in a grain of sand'.

In conversation with Ruth Scurr



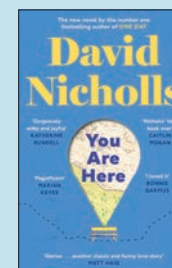
12pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10

David Nicholls

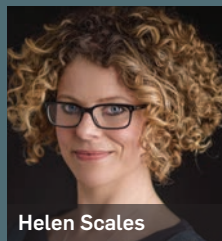
You Are Here

Discover the new novel from author of the global sensation *One Day*. David Nicholls is one of the UK's most-loved authors: a master storyteller who can be laugh-out-loud funny and devastatingly moving all on the same page. He will be chatting to writer and host of the 'In Writing Live Podcast', Hattie Crisell, on his thoughtful, heartwarming new love story, *You Are Here*.

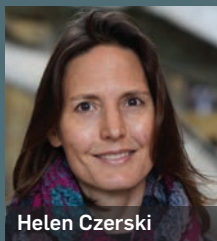
With thanks to Sustainable Tech 4 Good



Saturday 23 November



Helen Scales

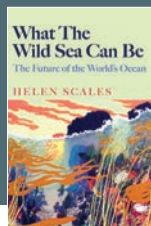


Helen Czerski

12pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Helen Scales & Helen Czerski
The Future of the Ocean

Earth is home to a huge story that is rarely told – that of our ocean. Marine biologist Helen Scales and physicist Helen Czerski dive into a discussion on the ocean: what it does, why it works, and the many ways it has influenced ecosystems and animals. In an age of climate emergency, join these two thinkers in considering a more just, thriving future for the ocean.

In conversation with Megan Kenyon

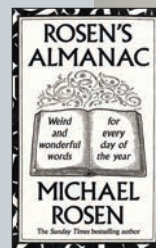


2pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10
Zandra Rhodes
Iconic

Legendary fashion designer Dame Zandra Rhodes presents her insightful memoir, *Iconic*. Renowned for colourful designs, Zandra has dressed everyone from rock stars to royalty. She has spent her life rallying against what was expected of her, both as a designer and a woman. Expect poignant reflections on her personal triumphs and tragedies, as well as the fears and sacrifices that come with being an era-defining designer.

In conversation with Lotte Jeffs

With thanks to Sew Knit Craft



4pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10
Michael Rosen
A Life In Writing

Michael Rosen is one of the nation's favourite wordsmiths. The iconic author of *We're Going On A Bear Hunt* joins us to reflect on his extraordinary life in writing: the literary highs and lows of grief and illness. Michael will also introduce his latest book, *Rosen's Almanac*: a joyful journey through a year of fantastically weird words and phrases, taking us on a tour of Britain and its vernacular idiosyncrasies.

In conversation with Alex Clark

With thanks to Mills & Reeve



4pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Laura Cumming
Thunderclap: A Memoir of Art and Life & Sudden Death

From the author of the best-selling *On Chapel Sands* comes her latest book, *Thunderclap*. In 1654, a dramatic explosion in the Netherlands killed painter Carel Fabritius, known for his magnificent painting, *The Goldfinch*. Bestselling author and art critic Laura Cumming uses this tragedy as a route into profound meditations on Dutch art and culture, alongside her relationship with her father, the Scottish artist James Cumming. Prepare to look unflinchingly at some beautiful paintings and consider the precarious nature of human life.

With thanks to St. Mary's School



2pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Jason Okundaye, Alex Clark & Colin Grant
The Life, Writing & Legacy of James Baldwin

2024 marks the centenary of the birth of writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin, one of the best and most passionate writers of our time. 26 years after his death his novels and essays remain as relevant as ever occupying an intersectional space, exploring masculinity, race, class and sexuality. To discuss his life, writing and legacy are writers Jason Okundaye, Colin Grant, and Alex Clark.

Chaired by Erica Wagner



4pm | Union Library | £14/£10
Sarah Clegg
The Demons, Witches & Ghosts of Christmas

The perfect event for midwinter – join Sarah Clegg with her book *The Dead of Winter*. Sarah will take us on a journey through Europe in midwinter to explore the darker side of the festive season, uncovering the folk tales and arcane traditions that still haunt Europe's coldest months.

In conversation with Anna Millward



Saturday 23 November

6pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10

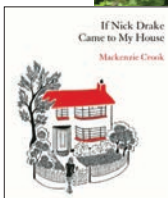
Book and Ticket £32

Mackenzie Crook

If Nick Drake Came to My House

Award-winning actor, writer and creator of *Detectorists* and *Worzel Gummidge*, Mackenzie Crook shares his book *If Nick Drake Came to My House*, a love letter to his musical hero. Crook explores the power of art through an imagined visit from the late, great Nick Drake, who signed with Island Records at twenty while still a Cambridge student. Marking the 50th anniversary of Drake's death, this book is both a celebration of his memory and a heart-warming reminder of the impact a person can have on others.

In conversation with Tom Gatti



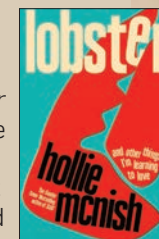
8pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10

Hollie McNish

Lobster: An Evening of Poetry

After a run of sold out shows across the UK, bestselling poet Hollie McNish returns with a brand-new book, *Lobster and other things I'm learning to love*. Her live readings are unmissable: expect strong language and adult content gift-wrapped in gorgeously crafted poetry. Hollie brings her much-loved style to questions of friendship, flags, newborns, clocks, cocks and volvos, shining a poetic lens upon all those things we have been taught to hate, and which we might just learn to love again.

In conversation with Jo Browning Wroe



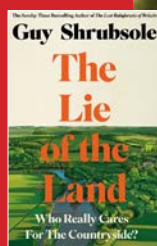
6pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Guy Shrubsole

The Lie of the Land

Just 1% of the population owns half the land in England. Environmental campaigner Guy Shrubsole exposes how this tiny landowning elite's apathy has damaged our land, and meets communities fighting back: the river guardians, small farmers and trespassing activists restoring lost wildlife. Full of rage and hope, he presents a bold vision for our nation's wild places, and how we can attend to them with the awe they deserve.

In conversation with Craig Bennett



8pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Torsten Bell

Great Britain?

Things haven't been going well for Britain. With wages flatlining and public services collapsing, it's no surprise our children can't afford to buy homes, our parents aren't receiving acceptable social care, and our neighbours rely on foodbanks. Chief Executive of the Resolution Foundation and Labour MP Torsten Bell offers lucid analysis of Britain's decline and a hopeful vision for an alternative, striving towards a future worth fighting for.

In conversation with Melissa Benn



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Sunday 24 November



10am | Cambridge Union | £17/£10
Patrick Grant *Less*

Join fashion designer, *The Great British Sewing Bee* judge and founder of the social enterprise Community Clothing, Patrick Grant, to hear his powerful case against the global fashion industry. Loving clothes but despairing of a broken global system, Patrick considers the crisis of consumption and quality in fashion, and how we might make ourselves happier by rediscovering the joy of living with fewer, better-quality things. In conversation with Alex Clark



Cambridge Series

10am | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Helen Charman
Mother State: A Political History of Motherhood

Motherhood is a political state. Cambridge University English Fellow Helen Charman makes a radical and illuminating case for what liberated mothering could be in her new book *Mother State*. Beginning with Women's Liberation and ending with austerity, Charman challenges us to imagine a world where motherhood is not a restrictive identity but a state of possibility.

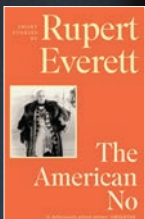
In conversation with Helen McCarthy



12pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10
Rupert Everett
The American No

Beloved actor and author Rupert Everett joins us to discuss his engrossing collection of autobiographical stories, *The American No*. Come along to hear him discuss his brilliantly witty, funny and tender tales of love and loss, drama and glamour, hope and rejection that draw inspiration from the world of film and TV and ideas he created over the course of his career.

In conversation with Hadley Freeman



Sunday 24 November

12pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Kate Humble *Home Made*

Welcome Kate Humble! Much-loved TV presenter of a myriad of nature programmes, including *Escape to the Farm* and *Springwatch*, now presents her latest book, *Home Made: Recipes from the Countryside*, which celebrates the farm-to-table journey and the people who make it possible. If you love eating sustainably and deliciously, join Kate in conversation with podcaster and writer Catherine Carr.



2pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Alan Hollinghurst *Our Evenings*

Booker Prize winner Alan Hollinghurst joins us with his latest book, *Our Evenings*: a story of race, class, theatre, sexuality, love and violence. From one of the finest writers of our age, *Our Evenings* unfolds over half a century, following Dave Win's life as a boarding school scholar through to adulthood, alongside the story of his widowed mother, whose life takes an unexpected turn after her son leaves home.

In conversation with Alex Clark



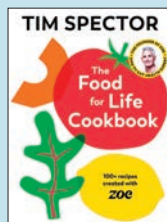
2pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10

Tim Spector *The Food for Life Cookbook*

Find out how to improve your overall health with bestselling author of *The Diet Myth*, Tim Spector, as he shares recipes built on the ground-breaking new science of eating well by focusing on nutrition and your microbiome. In over 100 delicious and achievable recipes created in collaboration with ZOE, Tim shows just how simple and enjoyable it can be to adapt to a gut-friendly way of eating.

In conversation with Bee Wilson

With thanks to Well:o dental wellness



4pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10

Ali Smith *Gliff*

Raise the flags! Festival favourite, Ali Smith, returns with her latest novel, *Gliff*, the first of two novels which belong together but can be read independently. *Gliff* explores how we make meaning and how we are made meaningless, nodding to dystopian fiction, the Kafkaesque, and a new take on the notion of classic. An electrifying read and an event not to be missed.

In conversation with Sarah Wood





4pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Jonathan Freedland
A Story About a Story

Best known for his insightful journalism and as a writer of thrillers under the pen name Sam Bourne, Jonathan Freedland discusses the poignant backstory that led him to write a magical picturebook for children. The book is inspired by an unpublished story by Ulrich Alexander Boschwitz, author of *The Passenger*, written while he was interned on the Isle of Man during the Second World War. In conversation with Hadley Freeman, Jonathan will reflect on how he approached writing for children, and what he hopes children and parents will take from this story.

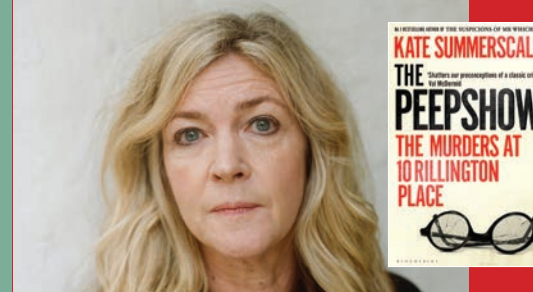
Cambridge Series



6pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Neil Lawrence
Understanding Ourselves in the Age of AI

Join Neil Lawrence, world expert on AI, to discover how and why our fears of being displaced by it might be misplaced. Contrasting our evolved, embodied intelligence with the technical origins and limitations of AI systems, he shows instead how they can and should be wielded, not just by experts but by ordinary people.

In conversation with Gina Neff
With thanks to Cambridge Innovation Capital



8pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10
Kate Summerscale
The Peepshow: The Murders at 10 Rillington Place

Kate Summerscale presents another tour de force of historical re-creation in her true story of murder, sensation and miscarriages of justice in 1950s Britain. Author of the bestselling *The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher*, Summerscale began writing *The Peepshow* in the spring of 2021, soon after the abduction and murder of Sarah Everard. She hoped that a case from the past might help her understand why a man might choose to kill women. The result is a shocking story of murder and misogyny. In conversation with Alex Clark



8pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10
Led By Donkeys
Adventures in Art, Activism and Accountability

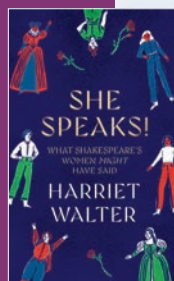
Led By Donkeys are back! Speaking truth to power, they'll remind us of the corruption and incompetence of the previous government over the last five years, and how it led to their epic loss at the general election. Their new book, *Adventures in Art, Activism and Accountability*, demonstrates how these campaigners hold the powerful to account and provides a vital reminder of the importance of direct action in turbulent times.



6pm | Cambridge Union | £17/£10
Harriet Walter
She Speaks! What Shakespeare's Women Might Have Said

We're delighted to be welcoming one of the UK's most esteemed Shakespearean actors, multi award-winning British actress Dame Harriet Walter, whose credits range from the Royal Shakespeare Company to *Star Wars* and *Succession*. She'll be presenting her fascinating book *She Speaks!*, which explores between the lines of Shakespearean plays to let us hear what she imagines – sometimes playfully and sometimes searchingly – these women were really thinking.

In conversation with Alex Clark
With thanks to Rathbones



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Time & Space


With a photograph for each day of the year, Martin Bond's second book from his much-loved *Cambridge Diary* project, leads the reader towards and into the global pandemic. The book is a striking visual record of a historical era, with images that capture the desolate streets, alongside stories of people searching for normality and perspective during these lost years.

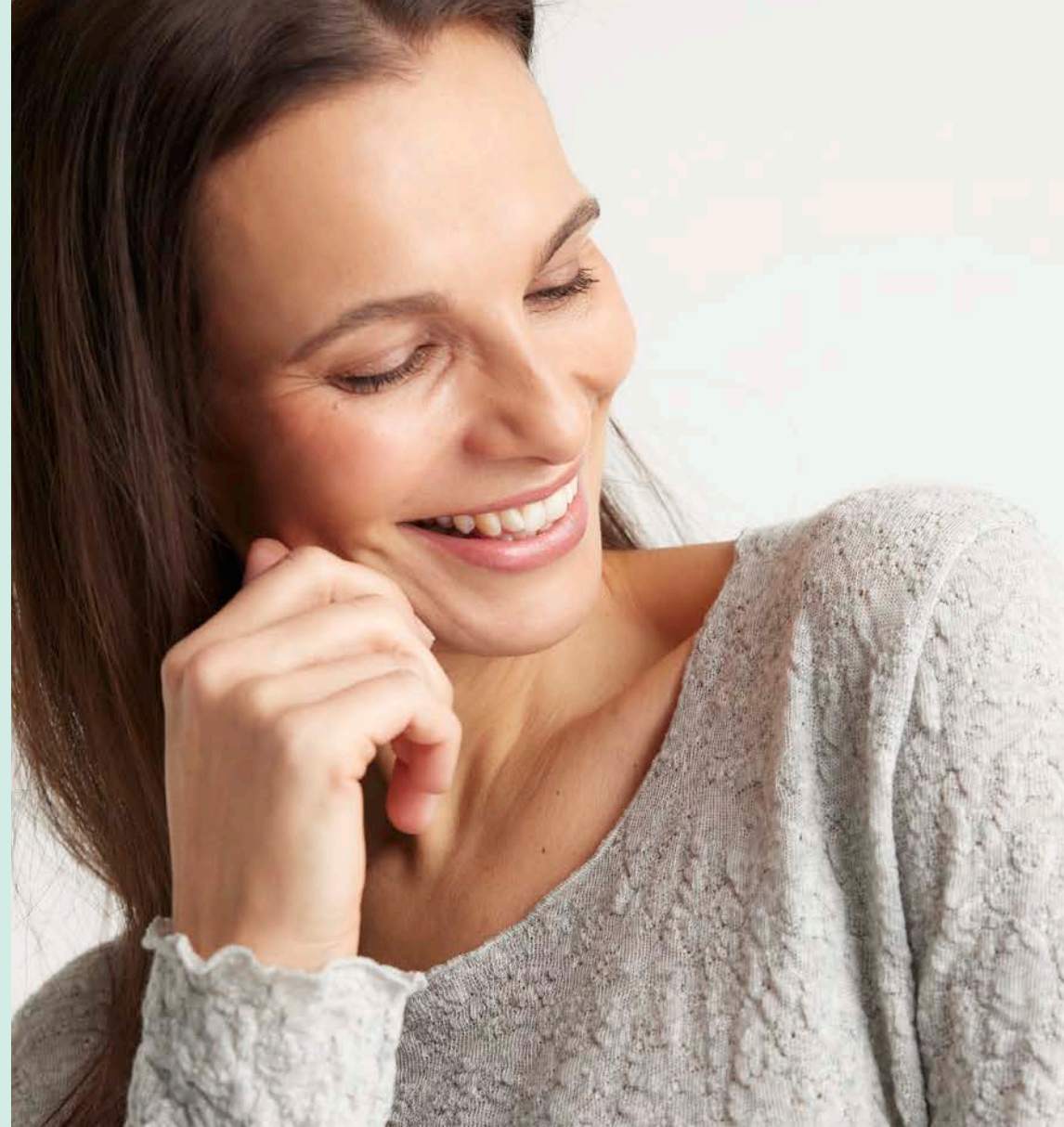
Bond's photographs are theatrical, dramatic, cosy, clever, fantastical, poignant, witty and romantic; everyday scenes made extraordinary by a shaft of light, an unexpected gesture or an odd juxtaposition.

Again and again, Bond shows his gift for bringing a distinctive twist or an arresting angle to a familiar scene, making even those who live and work in this city question whether they really know it at all.

Bond's engaging writing style moves from short and snappy to ponderous and reflective, from historically insightful to personal and anecdotal. As the city adjusts to post-pandemic life, Bond is there to capture the return of the routines and rituals, the joy and the humour, the quirkiness and the tenderness of human life on the streets of Cambridge.

With a foreword by Sebastian Faulks



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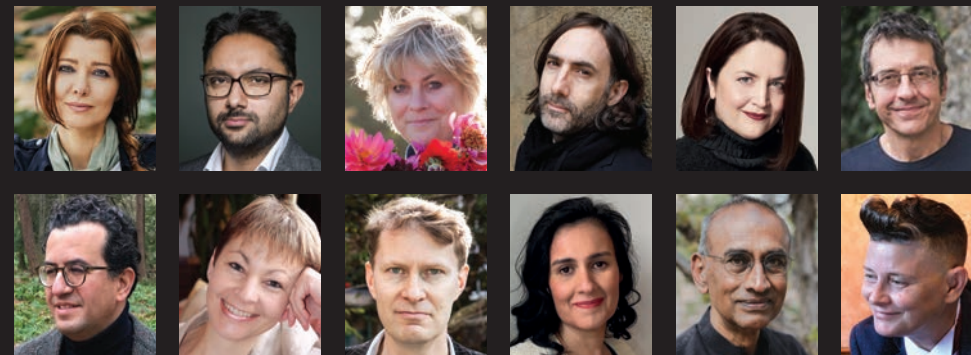
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Children under the age of 14 must always be accompanied by an adult. Adults will require their own ticket.

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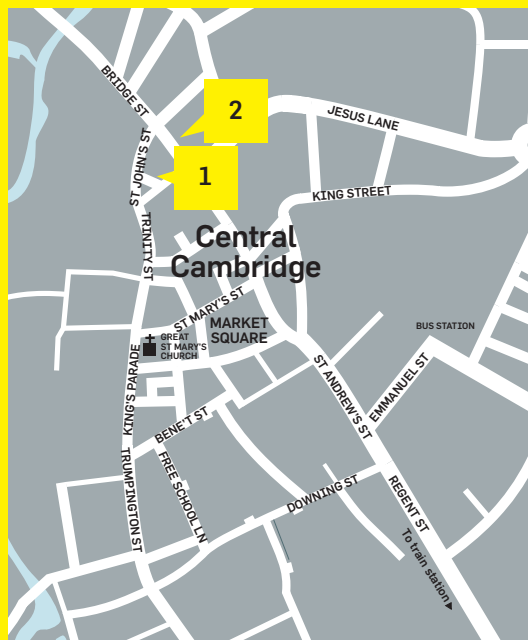
All our venues are accessible, please contact us in advance if you require assistance
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Box Office & Friends Desk

Will be open in the Old Divinity School over the festival weekend.

Festival telephone

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Venues and walking time from Box Office

1. Old Divinity School (0 mins)
2. Union Chamber, TTP Stage (5 mins)
 & Union Library (5 mins)

Join us

It is your kind support that allows us to do what we do. From as little as £30 a year, you can access priority booking and jump the queue, while enabling us to bring the best writers, speakers and thinkers to Cambridge.

There is a membership level to suit everyone. Come and find us at the Friends Desk in the Old Divinity School over the festival weekend, or have a look online for the full range of benefits.



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