

Cambridge Literary Festival

22–23 November
Winter 2025

Highlights include

Saabira Chaudhuri

John Cleese

Lyse Doucet

Natalie Haynes

Mick Herron

Larry Lamb

Ian McEwan

Katie Piper

Philippe Sands

Zadie Smith

Nicola Sturgeon

John Suchet

Irvine Welsh

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BOOKS

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Director's welcome



As world events get harder to watch it is important to focus on the many small pleasures available to us. Reading a good book is a regular pleasure for most of us, as is meeting with friends to discuss them. The icing on the cake is hearing from the authors themselves at our twice-yearly literary gatherings. Our Winter Festival is packed with conversations you won't want to miss and includes our relationship with Europe; Donald Trump's trade wars; a modern history of Afghanistan; embracing nuclear energy; and the bringing together of economics and ecology to save the natural world. This November we are happy to present literary heavyweights, stars of stage and screen, academics, journalists, crime writers plus a former First Minister of Scotland. My particular small pleasure this year marks the centenary of the publication of Virginia Woolf's much-loved novel *Mrs Dalloway*. Choose your small pleasure this November and join us for our twice-yearly celebration of the written word.

Cathy Moore
CEO & Artistic Director

Festival team

CEO & Artistic Director
Cathy Moore

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Diary Dates 2026

Spring Festival 22-26 April
Winter Festival 21-22 November

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Saturday 22 November

10–11.15am | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage | £17/£10

Philippe Sands & Juan Gabriel Vásquez *Light in Dark Places*

An unmissable conversation between two writers and friends, whose latest books explore the devastating forces that turned the world upside down and created the one we now inhabit. For Philippe Sands it's Augusto Pinochet in Chile, while Juan Gabriel Vásquez takes the reader through major upheavals including the guerrilla movements in 1960s Latin America. Together they address the question: can literature play a more profound role than a court in delivering justice?

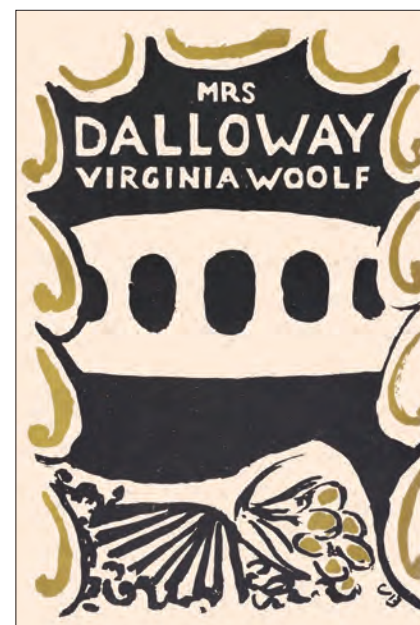
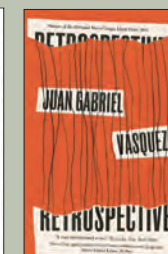
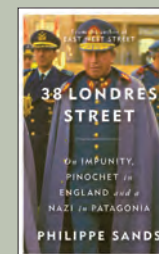
With thanks to PostScript Books



Philippe Sands



Juan Gabriel Vásquez



10am | Old Divinity School | £17/£10 Megan Hunter, Alex Clark & Tom Crewe *Mrs Dalloway 100*

This year marks the centenary of the publication of Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking novel *Mrs Dalloway*. Taking place during one day, Clarissa Dalloway prepares her house for a party and reflects on and re-examines the choices she has made over the course of her life. Join our panel of experts as they discuss and celebrate what is considered to be Woolf's greatest novel.

Chaired by Erica Wagner



Megan Hunter



Alex Clark



Tom Crewe

Saturday 22 November

12pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage
£17/£10

Zadie Smith *Dead and Alive*

Zadie Smith returns to the festival with her exhilarating new essay collection *Dead and Alive*, focusing her dazzling skills on the subjects that have recently captured her attention. From literary memorials for writers we've lost, to trips to the movies, Glastonbury and Kilburn High Road, this is a collection about everything that makes life fizz – love, loss, culture and politics. Come and share in Zadie's insightful and humane view of the world.

In conversation with Tom Gatti

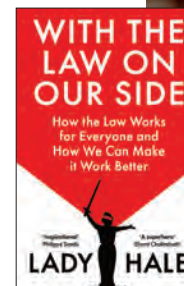


2pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage
£17/£10

Lady Brenda Hale *With the Law on Our Side*

The law is the foundation of the state. Yet so many of us remain in the dark as to how it really works. Brenda Hale's new book *With the Law on Our Side* demystifies all aspects of the justice system. The iconic former President of the Supreme Court is the perfect guide. Come and hear more about the law, how it works and most importantly why we should all care about it.

With thanks to Mills & Reeve



Tom McTague



Marina Wheeler

12pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10 Tom McTague & Marina Wheeler *Europe – past and future*

2026 will mark 10 years since the UK left the EU. Acclaimed political writer and Editor-in-Chief of the *New Statesman*, Tom McTague's new book *Between the Waves* tells the riveting story of the clashing ideals that have consumed Britain's politics for more than seven decades. In *A More Perfect Union*, human rights barrister Marina Wheeler proposes a roadmap towards a meaningful rapprochement between the UK and Europe. Join the conversation on how the lessons from the past can help us create the relationship with Europe that we need for the future.

Chaired by Andrew Marr

Cambridge Series



2pm | Old Divinity School
£17/£10

Bonnie Lander Johnson *Vanishing Landscapes*

Once, we knew the landscape and the plants around us as well as we knew ourselves. In *Vanishing Landscapes*, Bonnie Lander Johnson, Fellow and Associate Professor at Downing College, Cambridge, tells the story – through our changing relationship with seven plants, including saffron, wheat and woad – of how disconnected from nature we've become. Join Bonnie to learn more about a world we still long for, and to discover a path back to some of what we've lost.



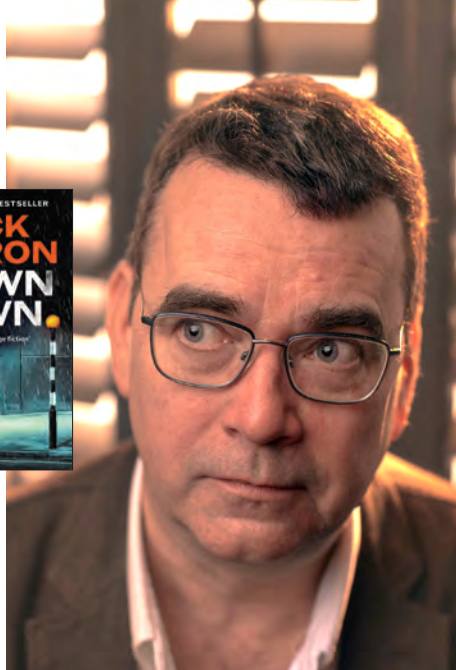
Saturday 22 November

4pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage
£17/£10

Mick Herron *The Slow Horses are Back!*

Prepare to be thrilled. Best-selling and critically acclaimed author, Mick Herron brings us the latest instalment in his spy series *Slough House* – the inspiration for hit TV show *Slow Horses*. Hotly anticipated, *Clown Town* is full of Mick's exhilarating plotting and scabrous dialogue – intelligence and entertainment combined. Grab your tickets for an insight into one of the decade's biggest page and screen successes.

With thanks to Urban & Civic



4pm | Union Library | £12/£10 Olia Hercules *A Ukrainian Family Story*

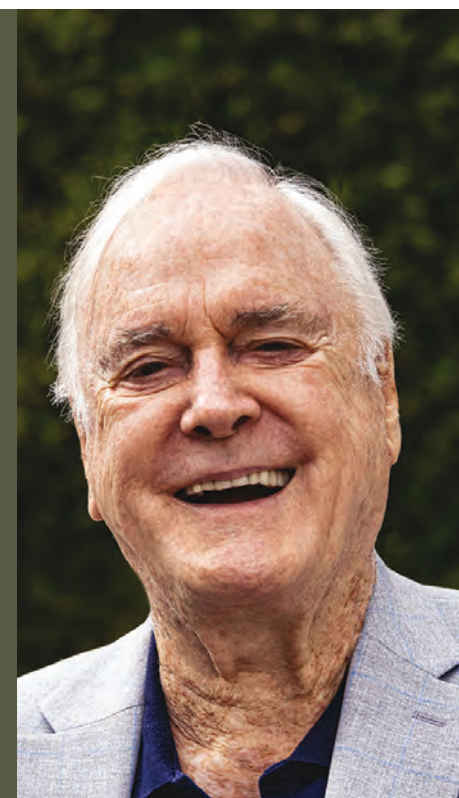
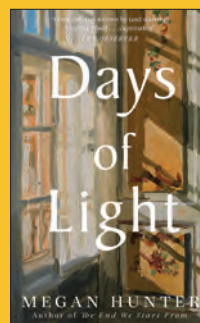
When Russia launched its most recent invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukrainian chef Olia Hercules decided it was finally time to tell her story. *Strong Roots* is an account of resilience in the hardest of circumstances – war, peace, invasion and exile – and an ode to home, belonging and recipes passed down the generations. It is an uplifting reminder of how much the human spirit can endure. Sure to be an event brimming with hope.



4pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10 Megan Hunter *Days of Light*

Not every debut writer gets a movie deal for their first novel. Megan Hunter, prizewinning author of *The End We Start From*, achieved just this. Her highly acclaimed third novel *Days of Light*, inspired by the Bloomsbury Group, takes place across six days over six decades. Join Megan on this radiant journey, exploring the intersections of art and ambition, faith and desire in this queer love story of life-affirming, hope-restoring power.

In conversation
with Erica Wagner

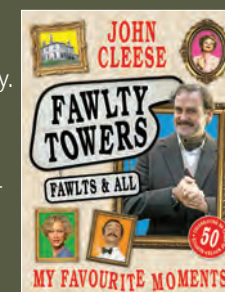


6pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage £17/£10 John Cleese *Fawlty Towers: Fawlt's and All*

Oh Basil, *Fawlty Towers* is 50! A dose of nostalgia for vintage TV fans with Basil Fawlty himself. Now, for the first time, John Cleese shares his favourite behind-the-scenes moments from the sit-com that is regularly voted the best in British TV history. Come and explore the how and the why of creating great comedy with the star and writer of this classic show. An unmissable event!

In conversation with
Alex Clark

With thanks to Rathbones



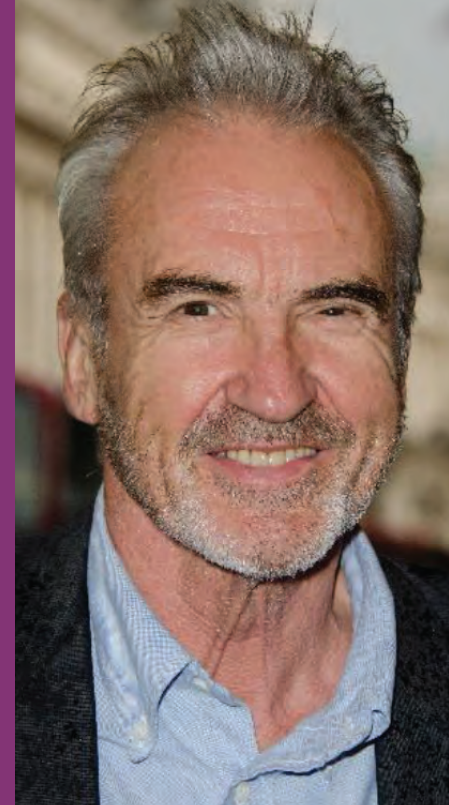
Saturday 22 November

6pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Philip Coggan

Mr Trump's Trade Wars

As President Trump uses tariffs and trade wars to Make America Great Again, what will become of our global economy? Former *Economist* and *Financial Times* journalist Philip Coggan lifts the lid on Trump's economic gamble and why it's such a threat. How can we make sense of this new 'age of chaos'? Come and discover more about the dramatic changes to geopolitics and economics that we all need to understand.



8pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage
£17/£10

Larry Lamb

From Stage to Page

From a lifetime appearing on stage and screen, Larry Lamb is best known for his roles in *EastEnders* and *Gavin & Stacey*. His career spanning 40 years as an actor and presenter makes him perfectly placed to pen his first novel which is an irresistible homage to the unsung heroes of filmmaking. Come and hear this champion raconteur as he gives us an inside look at the trials, tribulations and success of producing great cinema and the experience of writing his debut novel, *All Wrapped Up*.



In conversation with Jo Browning Wroe



Kate Rhodes



Alison Stockham



6pm | Union Library | £12/£10

Kate Rhodes & Alison Stockham

Thrillers to Chill Us

A woman's body is found in *deadman's pool* in this breathtaking new instalment of Kate Rhodes's *Isles of Scilly Mysteries*, whilst a woman is missing in Alison Stockham's latest page-turner *Let Her Go*. How do Cambridge crime writers Kate and Alison plot such twisty addictive tales that keep us reading late into the night? Come along to solve this and other writing mysteries.

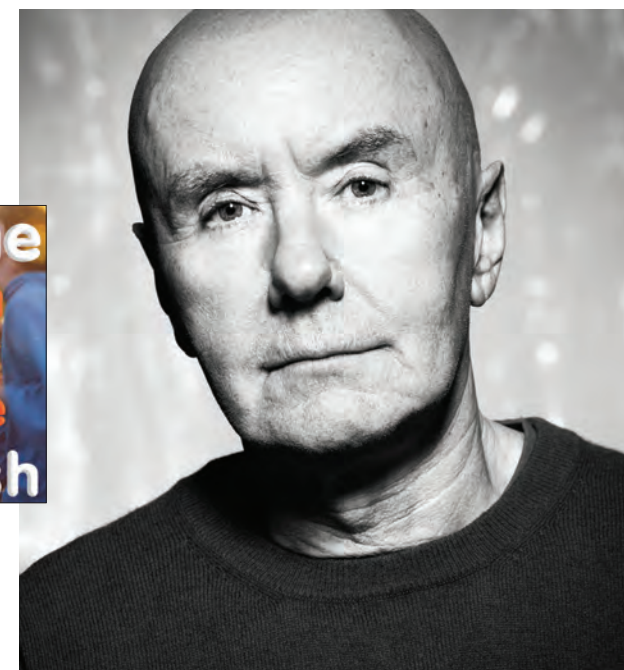
8pm | Old Divinity School
£17/£10

Irvine Welsh

Men in Love

Irvine Welsh's iconic bestseller *Trainspotting* made a huge cultural impact when it was published in 1993 and now, more than 30 years on, its immediate sequel has arrived. *Men in Love*, tells a story of riotous adventures, wild new passions, and young men determined to get the most out of life. Is love the answer, or just another doomed quest? Come and hear Welsh discuss his blazing new novel.

In conversation with Tom Gatti



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Sunday 23 November

10am | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage | £17/£10

Lyse Doucet

A People's History of Afghanistan

When the Inter-Continental Kabul opened in 1969, Afghanistan's first luxury hotel symbolised a dream of a modernising country connected to the world. Lyse Doucet, the BBC's Chief International Correspondent, has been checking into the hotel since 1988, becoming close friends with many of its staff and fellow guests. In *The Finest Hotel in Kabul*, Lyse now shares their stories to craft a richly immersive history of modern Afghanistan. Come and hear how the people of Afghanistan have survived half a century of destruction and disruption, heartbreak and hope.

In conversation with Sian Kevill

With thanks to Sustainable Tech 4 Good



12pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage

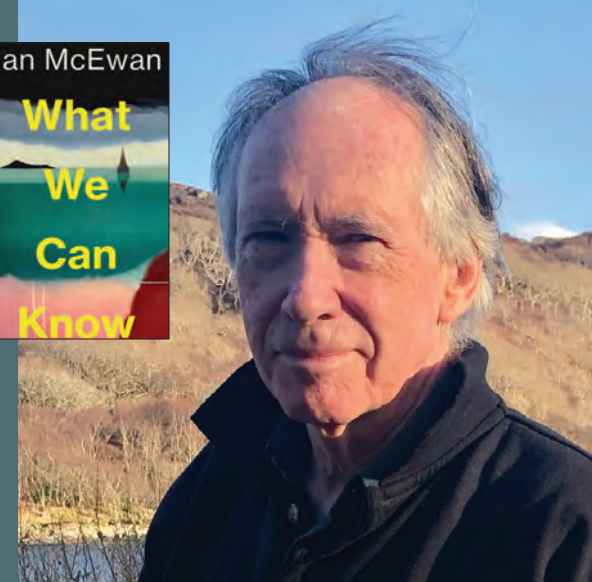
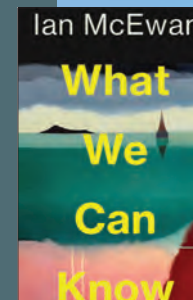
£17/£10

Ian McEwan

What We Can Know

A new novel from one of our greatest writers is cause for celebration and Ian McEwan's latest is no exception. In *What We Can Know* he applauds the extraordinary tenacity of the human spirit to deal with the looming catastrophe of a climate-ravaged future where all is not quite lost. Don't miss what promises to be a riveting conversation to explore love, loss, survival, the life of the artist and the power of literature in the face of climate breakdown.

In conversation with Alex Clark



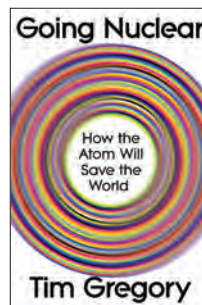
10am | Old Divinity School

£17/£10

Tim Gregory

Going Nuclear

What if the climate crisis isn't an environmental challenge but an energy challenge? This is the provocative question posed by Dr Tim Gregory, nuclear chemist at the National Nuclear Laboratory, in his visionary new book *Going Nuclear*. Come join the discussion about this bold and groundbreaking call to rethink the path to net zero by not simply replacing fossil fuels with renewables, but by fully embracing another zero CO₂ energy source: nuclear power.



12pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Bee Wilson

Love, Loss and Kitchen Objects

Look around your kitchen. Which implements and objects keep the past alive, holding your history and the hidden stories of people you love? Home cook, journalist and writer Bee Wilson has done just this in *The Heart-Shaped Tin*. From her own kitchen in Cambridge and across different continents, cultures and civilisations, Bee investigates the full scope of what objects and gifts can mean. Join us for what is sure to be a thoughtful, tender and moving event.

With thanks to Bird & Blend



2pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage

£17/£10

John Suchet

An Ode to the Joy of Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven has been a life-long obsession of television journalist and newscaster John Suchet. Beethoven's sublime music has accompanied John through the best and worst of times: from life as an adventurous music-loving teenager to his work as a foreign correspondent entering Beirut in the grip of civil war. John shares his new book *In Search of Beethoven* and takes us on a journey that demonstrates the life-changing power of great music.

Sunday 23 November

2pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Katie Piper

Still Beautiful: On Age, Beauty & Owning Your Space

When a life-threatening acid attack left Katie Piper physically and visibly scarred at just 24, her approach to ageing was irrevocably changed. Now Katie is an author, broadcaster and founder of a charity for people with life-altering burns and is in her early 40s – an age she wasn't sure she'd reach. In her new book *Still Beautiful*, Katie reflects on what it means for a woman to age 'well', championing ageing as synonymous with learning, connection, creativity and freedom. Come and be empowered to reimagine beauty for yourself.

In conversation with Alex Clark

With thanks to St Mary's School



4pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage | £17/£10

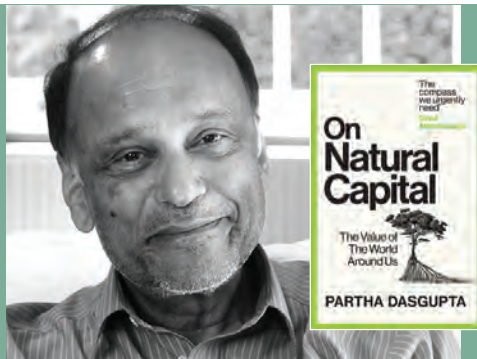
Wendy Cope

Collected Poems

Wendy Cope is that rarest of writers: a celebrated poet who is also a bestseller. She found a whole new generation of fans when her poem 'The Orange' went viral. Now, all her poems are collected in one beautiful volume. *Collected Poems* catalogues our desires and fears – love, disappointment and a hard-won capacity to find happiness. Come and celebrate a lifetime achievement with one of our most beloved poets.

In conversation with Alex Clark

Cambridge Series



4pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Partha Dasgupta

The Value of The World Around Us

Renowned economist Sir Partha Dasgupta is the Frank Ramsey Professor Emeritus of Economics at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. In *On Natural Capital*, Partha lays out a radical new approach, which brings together economics and ecology to save the natural world and thereby save ourselves. What if we were to put a value on nature? Could this, truly, change everything?

6pm | Old Divinity School | £17/£10

Saabira Chaudhuri

How We Got Hooked on Plastic

Like any addiction, our plastic habit has consequences. It is damaging our climate and biodiversity, and we are only beginning to understand its effect on our health. How did plastic take over our lives? And why haven't we been able to rein it in? Join *Consumed* author Saabira Chaudhuri (reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*) for a history of our addiction, and learn how we can demand better from the brands that got us hooked on plastic in the first place.

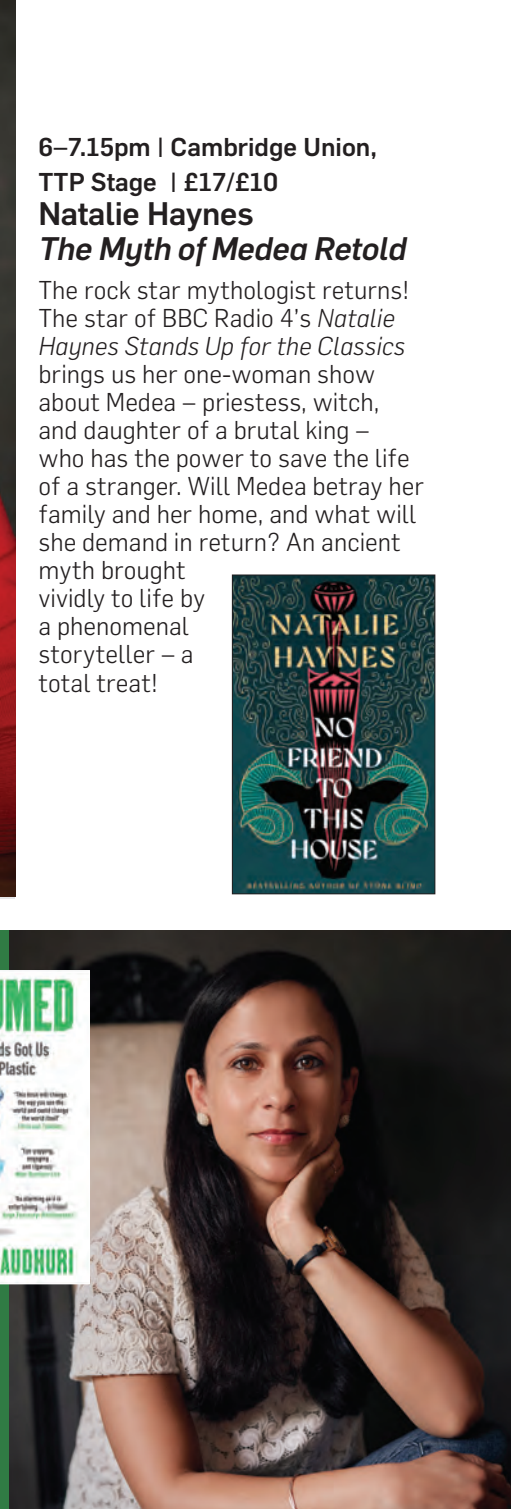


6–7.15pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage | £17/£10

Natalie Haynes

The Myth of Medea Retold

The rock star mythologist returns! The star of BBC Radio 4's *Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics* brings us her one-woman show about Medea – priestess, witch, and daughter of a brutal king – who has the power to save the life of a stranger. Will Medea betray her family and her home, and what will she demand in return? An ancient myth brought vividly to life by a phenomenal storyteller – a total treat!



Sunday 23 November

8pm | Cambridge Union, TTP Stage | £17/£10

Nicola Sturgeon

The Person Behind the Politics

We couldn't be more excited to welcome Nicola Sturgeon for this conversation with Festival Honorary Patron Ali Smith. As Scotland's only female First Minister, Nicola had a ring-side seat at the key moments in 21st century Scottish history. Just as comfortable interviewing writers on stage at literary festivals, she is now the author, talking about her first book. In *Frankly* – a deeply intimate and revealing memoir that takes readers from her working-class roots in Ayrshire to the forefront of Scottish politics, Sturgeon shares personal achievements and regrets along the way. Candour, insight and warmth guaranteed.

In conversation with Ali Smith



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Events at Heffers

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Each book in the trilogy contains 365 images, one for every day of the year, hand-picked by the author and covering three distinct periods of the city's - and the photographer's - growth.

His images pull beauty from chance, conjure up novel relationships between uncooperative elements, emphasise the rhythms of existence, and invite us to enjoy the passing of time.

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 spare and witty to ponderous and reflective, from historically insightful to personal and anecdotal. His captions describe the routines and rituals, the joy and the humour, the quirkiness and the tenderness of human life on the streets of Cambridge.

The collection is a fervent and unflinching tribute to a changing city.

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THE ADDAMS FAMILY
Book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice
Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa
Join us this Halloween for an uplifting and hilarious musical tale of love, family and acceptance, with a touch of the macabre!
TUE 28 OCT - SAT 01 NOV 7.45PM
SAT 01 NOV 2.30PM

Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club and Cambridge Footlights Pantomime 2025
JACK AND THE BEANSTALK
By Martha Alexander and Flora Maxwell
Come and watch this year's unmissable festive delight featuring love, adventure and... beans!
WED 26 NOV - SAT 06 DEC 7.45PM
SAT 29 NOV & SAT 06 DEC 2.30PM / SUN 30 NOV 1PM

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A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE
By Tennessee Williams
In the sweltering streets of New Orleans, secrets stir, desire hangs heavy in the air, and decay lingers in every corner.
TUE 11 - SAT 15 NOV 7.30PM
SAT 15 NOV 2.30PM

Combined Actors of Cambridge
THE RAILWAY CHILDREN
By Edith Nesbit, adapted by Mike Kenny
When their father is falsely imprisoned, Roberta, Peter, Phyllis, and their mother are forced to move to a small cottage near a railway line in the north of England.
TUE 09 - SAT 13 DEC 7.45PM
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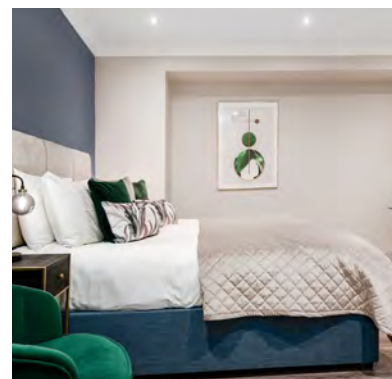
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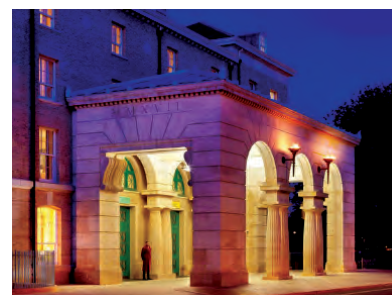


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University Arms and Parker's Tavern

Regent Street, Cambridge, CB2 1AD
01223 606066

enquiries@universityarms.com

www.universityarms.com

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The Gonville Hotel
 Gonville Place, Cambridge, CB1 1LY
 01223 366611
office@gonvillehotel.co.uk
www.gonvillehotel.co.uk
 Discover The Gonville Hotel – a boutique city retreat overlooking Cambridge's iconic Parker's Piece. Guests enjoy complimentary Bentley tours and bicycle hire to explore the city, luxurious treatments at Gresham House Wellness, and vibrant, seasonal dining at Gonville Kitchen. Unwind with live jazz every Friday and Saturday night in The Long Bar.



The Clayton
 27-29 Station Rd, Cambridge, CB1 2FB
 01223 792 888
info.cambridge@claytonhotels.com
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Please visit our website to book tickets
www.cambridgeliteraryfestival.com

Refunds

Refunds will only be made where an event is sold out or cancelled. Contact: by email
hello@cambridgeliteraryfestival.com

Children

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

Concessions

U25s, unwaged and those feeling the pinch
 People with disabilities (carers go free, please contact us for a complimentary ticket).

Accessibility

All our venues are accessible, please contact us in advance if you require assistance.
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Members Room

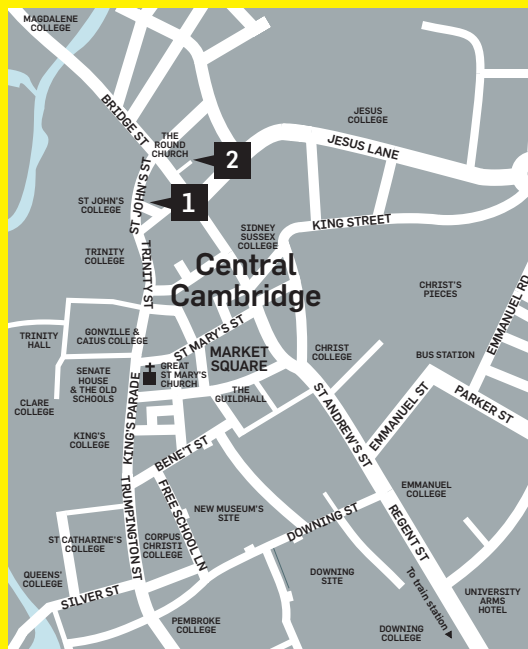
Located in the Dining Room at the Cambridge Union.

Box Office, Friends Desk

Open throughout the festival at ODS.

Festival telephone

01223 515335



Venues and walking time from Box Office

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

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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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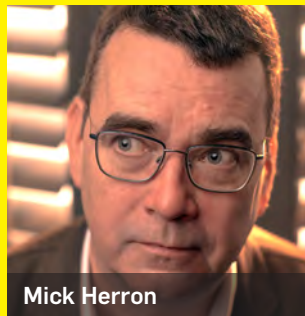
Festival highlights



Philippe Sands



Zadie Smith



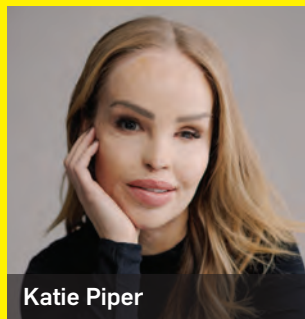
Mick Herron



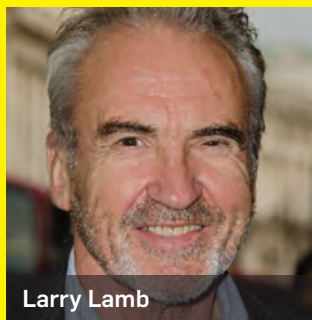
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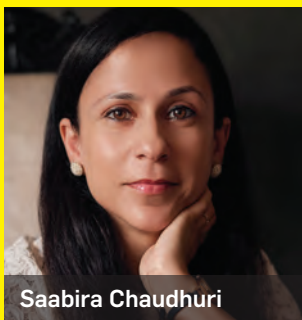
John Cleese



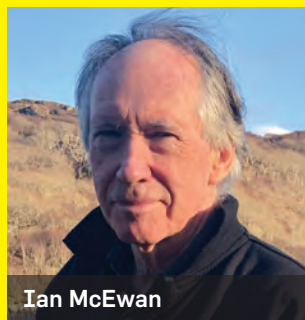
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