

New Zealand’s most-anticipated festival of ideas unveils 2023 programme – a triumphant return of international literary giants and 160 in-person events

The Auckland Writers Festival tonight unveiled the full programme for its 23rd Festival, with 160 live events in Auckland over six days, 16 – 21 May 2023.

Every year the Auckland Writers Festival Waituhi O Tāmaki sets the cultural agenda in Aotearoa, as the world’s best writers and thinkers arrive in Auckland for one week only, in a series of public events to inspire, entertain and challenge the status quo.

This year’s festival marks the first time in over three years that international authors will return in an all-live programme on-stage in central Auckland. The week-long celebration of books, authors and ideas will include ticketed and free events in the Aotea Centre and select venues across the city.

Festivalgoers will hear from outstanding fiction and non-fiction authors, musicians, scientists, artists, historians, innovators, and food and art critics from New Zealand and around the world. They’ll experience exclusive insights and debate on significant global issues – from climate change to gender identity, wild food foraging, Indigenous perspectives, the downsides of social media, breaking female sport stereotypes, and whether writers can be replaced by chatbots.

This year, double-Pulitzer Prize winning author **Colson Whitehead** will join us from New York City, alongside three Booker Prize winners, **Eleanor Catton**, **Bernardine Evaristo**, and the latest winner, **Shehan Karunatilaka**. The current TS Eliot prize winner and acclaimed London-based musician **Anthony Joseph** will round out this star studded literary collective.

From Los Angeles, the most talked about novelist of the year, **Gabrielle Zevin** will make her New Zealand debut with her mega-bestseller *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, alongside Việt Nam’s most prolific and award-winning writer Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, and *New York Times* bestseller **Pip Williams**.

The brightest minds on the latest current affairs include Hong Kong expert and author of the award-winning *Indelible City* **Louisa Lim**, leading cultural commentator **Jenny Odell** on the attention economy, Artificial Intelligence expert **Toby Walsh**, and Australia’s top broadcaster and acclaimed historian **Richard Fidler**.

For the first time in the festival’s history, indigenous writers from Canada, Australia and Aotearoa will join in a meaningful exchange about storytelling, language and experiences in the **First Nations** series.

Four talented guest Curators, **Matariki Bennett and Michael Bennett** (Māori), **Dahlia Malaeulu** (Pasifika), and **Chris Tse** (Asia), have programmed highly creative voices and culturally rich sessions exploring everything from composing a waiata to ‘yellow peril’ racism and storytelling through tapa.



Remarking on the jam-packed programme, 2023 Artistic Curator Bridget van der Zijpp says, “It’s beyond exciting to once again be able to bring in a whole range of distinguished international authors to appear live alongside our local talent. After what has been a hard start to the year this is an unmissable chance to think, to laugh, to distract yourself, to engage your brain, to be surprised, to have your borders expanded, to be confronted by the new and to celebrate the familiar.”

As part of the main line up, the Festival’s Chief Executive Kathleen Drumm has programmed a series of events for foodies, including British culinary legend and Restaurant Critic for *The Telegraph*, **William Sitwell**, who headlines an array of leading local and international food writers.

Popular returning events include the beloved **Festival Gala Night**, featuring eight writers sharing a true and personal tale around the theme ‘In Real Life’. **STREETSIDE: Britomart** is held on the Festival’s Friday night, providing a literary takeover of venues around the Britomart Precinct with poets, writers and musicians in live performances and storytelling. Free children’s programme **Pukapuka Adventures** will run on Saturday and Sunday of Festival weekend, providing even the littlest bookworms with a chance to have fun and explore their creativity.

More than 25 international literary luminaries sit alongside 200 New Zealand writers, thinkers, and panellists in the 2023 Festival. This is just a small snapshot of the full programme available at writersfestival.co.nz.

Public tickets are on sale from **9am, Friday 24th March** via Ticketmaster or by calling 0800 111 999 or 09 970 9700. For regular updates, follow us on Twitter & Instagram @aklwritersfest, on Facebook @akwrfest and by signing up to our weekly newsletter via the website.

Notes for Editors

About the Auckland Writers Festival Waituhi O Tāmaki

The inaugural Auckland Writers Festival was held in 1999. Founded by award-winning Kiwi novelist, poet and playwright Stephanie Johnson and the late filmmaker and historian Peter Wells, it delivered a programme of 40 events to 5,200 people. The Festival has grown to become one of the most highly anticipated cultural events in the New Zealand landscape, and one of the best attended writer’s festivals, per capita, in the world.

Festival Sponsors: Auckland Writers Festival | Waituhi o Tāmaki is enormously grateful to our dedicated partners and sponsors. Gold: Barfoot & Thompson; Creative NZ; Freemasons Foundation; Ockham Residential. Silver: Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono; British Council; Craigs Investment Partners; Foundation North; The Potter Masonic Trust; Royal Society Te Apārangi; Tātaki Auckland Unlimited; Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori Māori Language Commission; University of Auckland Faculty of Arts. Bronze: Bateman Books; Britomart Group; Deadly Ponies; Hawkins & Co; Heart of the City; HUIA Publishers; Penguin Random House NZ; Te Herenga Waka University Press. Major Partners include Auckland Council; Auckland Live; Australia Council for the Arts; Embassy of the United States of America; High Commission of Canada; Nielsen Book Data; SOHO Wines; Stout Trust; The Friends of the Turnbull Library; The NZ Contemporary Trust and Waitemata Local Board. Auckland Writers Festival | Waituhi o Tāmaki would also like to acknowledge the generosity of our valued Patrons.