



Reykjavík International Literature Festival Program

September 8th-11th, 2021

Events are in English, unless otherwise stated. Admission is open to all and admission to all events is free. All events are subject to registration in accordance with regulations. Wearing a mask under events is mandatory. Events are streamed on the Literature Festival's Facebook page.

Wednesday 8 September

The Nordic House

Children's Program: Read and write with the Moomins

The Moomin exhibition offers an interactive way to learn about the alphabet while embarking on a tour of the magical Moomin valley. Together, children and adults can learn about characters and stories from the Moomin valley and explore emotions such as disappointment, sadness and wanderlust.

Guided tours for preschool and school groups can be booked by sending an inquiry to hrafnhildur@nordichouse.is The exhibition is in collaboration with the Moomin Characters. Admission is free and everyone is welcome. The exhibition runs from 08.09.2021 to 30.01.2022.

16:00, The Nordic House

Read Hour: The Invisible Child

Most of us know the Moomins, the fairy tale characters who have delighted both children and adults for years. On the occasion of International Literacy Day on September 8, we invite you to a reading or ReadHour based on the Finnish model. Hosts will read from Tove Jansson's beautiful story about the Invisible Child. Together we follow the footsteps of the Moomins and meet the invisible Ninny, who with the help of the Moomins becomes visible again.

The program begins with a conversation between Gerður Kristný and Sophia Jansson about Tove Jansson and the Moomins, and after that a reading of Jansson's story will take place in various languages. The readers of *The Invisible Child* are Sophia Jansson, Gerður Kristný, Eliza Reid, Erling Kjærbo, Stein Olav Romslo Halla Nosøe Poulsen and Ann-Sofie Stude and they will read alternately in English, Icelandic, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Faroese.

The event is part of the Finnish Read Hour 2021 campaign. Information about the Read Hour can be found here: <https://www.nuori.fi/en/read-hour>. Share your reading experience and reading tips on social media under the hashtag #ReadHour!

In collaboration with the Moomin characters, a Moomin exhibition for children and adults will be up at the Nordic House library. There you can get to know the alphabet as you go on a tour of the magical Moomin valley. Further information about the exhibition can be found here: <https://nordichouse.is/>

19:00, Iðnó

Opening Address: Barbara Demick

The opening remarks of the Reykjavík Literary Festival will be presented by American writer and journalist Barbara Demick. She will address the subject of writers combating authoritarianism. Barbara Demick is an award-winning American journalist and writer who is known for her articles on human rights and economic and social unrest in Eastern Europe and Asia. She previously led the Beijing office of the Los Angeles Times.

19:30, Iðnó

The Role of Art in Modernity

Nina Wähä and Þórarinn Eldjárn. Moderator: Arnar Eggert Thoroddsen.

In this panel the meaning of art in a wide context is discussed. Authors Þórarinn Eldjárn and Nina Wähä about the role and meaning of art. Þórarinn has been an author for many years, he has written novels and short stories, poems and children's books as well as having translated literature of all kinds. Nina Wähä broke through with the book *Testamente*, a family story that takes place at Sweden's northernmost border. She is also a singer in the band Lacrosse. The moderator of the discussion is Arnar Eggert Thoroddsen.

20:30, Iðnó

Poetry Program

Gerður Kristný, Margrét Lóa, Bergþóra Snæbjörnsdóttir and Ingólfur Eiríksson. Host: Einar Kári Jóhannsson.

In the festival's poetry program, poets will read from their works and in addition read their favorite poem by another poet. The poets who take part in the poetry program are Gerður Kristný, Margrét Lóa, Bergþóra Snæbjörnsdóttir and Ingólfur Eiríksson. Presented by Einar Kári Jóhannsson.

21:30, Iðnó

Real/Surreal

Ingólfur Eiríksson, Kristof Magnússon and María Elísabet Bragadóttir. Moderator: Sigprúður Gunnarsdóttir.

What can be learned from writings about absurdity, are such writings a critique or a joke, or maybe neither? This panel will discuss writings about absurdity and reality and everything in between. Here answers will be sought as to whether one should read more into such writings than others. The authors who participate here have all written works where absurdity comes into play. Participating authors are Ingólfur Eiríksson, Kristof Magnússon and María Elísabet Bragadóttir. Moderator: Sigprúður Gunnarsdóttir.

21:00, Radisson Blu Saga Hotel, 8th floor

Off-Venue: Tungl Night N°XII

The moon is and will be the advocate of the night, the smallest among us and the dim light. The Tungl publishing house therefore welcomes the fact that the day is getting shorter and the night lengthening with the publication of two new original Moon Books. They come in 69 copies each. At Tunglkvöld (Moon nights), the books are read aloud, music is performed, performances are put on. The two books are for sale for the duration of the program, but what is unsold at midnight is set on fire and burned, in accordance with tradition, as Tungl Books only live for a moment.

The books will be published on Moon Night N ° XII:

- Pulsur náttúrunnar by Pál Ivan frá Eiðum
- Gluggar – Draumskrá by Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir

Thursday 9 September

11:00, The Nordic House

Writing Through Grief and Loss

Patrik Svensson and Halla Þórlaug Óskarsdóttir. Moderator: Björn Halldórsson.

Swedish writer and journalist Patrik Svensson broke through around the world with *The Gospel of the Eels*, which is both a scientific analysis of the eel but also a poetic and beautiful memoir about a unique relationship between father and son, and the author's way of coping with the loss of his father. Halla Þórlaug attracted a lot of attention for her book *The Quiet Game*, a fragmented story that deals in a candid way with love, grief, the loss of her mother and the role of motherhood. The moderator of the discussion is Björn Halldórsson, author of the book *Route One*, which was published earlier this year, and which deals specifically with grief and the loss of a father.

12:00, Nordic House

Home and Away

Khaled Khalifa and Mao Alheimsdóttir. Moderator: Gauti Kristmannsson.

Here, the meaning of the term home will be discussed. The subject is becoming more and more complex, as never in history have more people been away from their home. Or are they? What does it mean to be at home? Is home a specific place? And what happens when the place you call your home changes, and becomes completely different from what you have known?

Mao Alheimsdóttir is of Polish origin but lives and works in Iceland, here she has chosen her home. She received a new voices grant for her book *Weather Reports and Funerals*, soon to be published. Khaled Khalifa lives and works in Syria. He has decided to stay in his home in Damascus, despite the fact that the city and the whole country are far from being the home where he grew up. Moderator: Gauti Kristmannsson.

13:00, The Nordic House

The Boundaries of Fiction and Reality

Saša Stanišić and Vigdis Hjorth. Moderator: Fríða Ísberg.

Where is the line between fiction and reality? What is the author's position towards the blurred boundaries of imagination and truth, fantasy and facts? The novel *Will and Testament* is probably Vigdis Hjorth's best known work and has been translated into many languages. The books' protagonist is a woman in dispute with her family, and takes on the violence of her childhood. The book is widely regarded to be autobiographical at least in parts, although the extent of this is unclear.

Saša Stanišić attracted a lot of attention for his novel approach, original use of language and lively storytelling. Among other things, he has written about his own experience in his novels, the experience of a young boy from the Bosnian war who seeks refuge in stories and narratives. Fríða Ísberg moderates the discussions.

15:30, The Nordic House

Sagenhaftes Island: Panel on Icelandic literature abroad

Christopher MacLehose, Juergen Boos, Regina Kammerer, Halldór Guðmundsson and Tina Flecken. Moderator: Thomas Böhm. Host: Stella Soffía Jóhannesdóttir.

Ten years ago, this fall, Iceland was Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse. The project was named *Sagenhaftes Island* and got much attention, both in Germany and at the fair. We will use the occasion to look back on it: what did we learn, and how useful was it for Icelandic literature abroad? Furthermore, we will discuss the concept of the Guest of Honour and the future perspectives of the book-fair, and of course the importance of literary translations.

Opening remarks: Christopher MacLehose, publisher at Mountain Leopard Press. Panel discussion with Juergen Boos, director of Frankfurter Buchmesse, Regina Kammerer, publisher at btb and Luchterhand, Tina Flecken, translator of Icelandic literature and Halldór Guðmundsson, project manager of *Sagenhaftes Island*, moderated by Thomas Böhm. Host: Stella Soffía Jóhannesdóttir.

17:00, Iðnó

Reykjavík Poetics

On the occasion of the 10 year anniversary of Reykjavík as a UNESCO City of Literature, 14 local authors wrote essays that focus on the creative process and writing. These vastly different essays are collected in one volume, published by Benedikt Publishing in cooperation with Reykjavík UNESCO City of Literature. The launch of the book is celebrated with a publishing event during the Reykjavík International Literary Festival.

Talks by Alexandra Briem, President of Reykjavík City Council and writer Mazen Maarouf. Authors: Alexander Dan, Angela Rawlings, Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir, Bergrún Íris Sævarsdóttir, Bergsveinn Birgisson, Elías Knörr, Gerður Kristný, Hallgrímur Helgason, Hildur Knútsdóttir, Margrét Bjarnadóttir, Mazen Maarouf, Steinar Bragi, Steinunn Sigurðardóttir, Yrsa Sigurðardóttir. Edited by Kjartan Már Ómarsson.

19:00, Iðnó

War and Peace

Saša Stanišić and Barbara Demick. Host: Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir.

In this panel the concepts of war and peace in fiction and academic writings will be discussed. Authors Saša Stanišić and Barbara Demick have both written about Sarajevo and Bosnia in their works. Stanišić fled his homeland at the age of fourteen and has since lived in Germany but has covered the Bosnian war in his novels. Demick wrote her first book, *Logavina Street: Life and Death in a Sarajevo Neighborhood*, in 1996. The book is about families of various religions who lived in harmony until the war broke out.

Barbara Demick and Saša Stanišić come together at the Reykjavík Literature Festival to discuss war and peace, closed societies, authoritarianism and flight. Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir moderates.

20:00, Iðnó

Stranger Than Fiction

Khaled Khalifa, Margrét Lóa and Alexander Dan. Host: York Underwood.

Sometimes reality is weirder than the most bizarre fiction. Does fiction, however, always have to have something to do with reality? How far can you go in pure fabrication? Or does such a thing even exist? Here, moderator York Underwood talks to three authors about truth and lies, fiction, reality and the gray areas in between. Interviewees are the Syrian author Khaled Khalifa, the poet Margrét Lóa and sci-fi author Alexander Dan.

21:00, Iðnó

Heart of Darkness

Helene Flood, Monika Fagerholm and Gerður Kristný. Moderator: Ivan Wadeson.

Here we talk to three women authors who have all written about violence and acts of darkness in their books, but on different grounds. Where does the inspiration come from and where does the sympathy lie in the works? What's so exciting about darkness? Helene Flood has released a psychological thriller about murder, Monika Fagerholm wrote about sexual violence and its consequences and Gerður Kristný has, among other things, published an powerful collection of poems about victims of violence. Ivan Wadeson from the City of Literature Manchester moderates the discussion.

Friday 10 September

11:00, Norræna húsið

Closed Communities: Barbara Demick in conversation with Þóra Arnórsdóttir

Barbara Demick is an award-winning American journalist and writer best known for her work on human rights and economic and social unrest in Eastern Europe and Asia. Demick has written three novels that deal in one way or another with ideas about war and closed societies. Demick's first novel, *Logavina Street: Life and Death in a Sarajevo Neighborhood*, was published in 1996 and deals with the Bosnian war and how it divided the people of Logavina Street in Sarajevo, where for centuries families of different religions had lived in harmony. In her second novel, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* (2009), the stories of the fates of six North Korean refugees are intertwined, telling of daily life and the cruel fate of this most isolated country in the

world. That book attracted a lot of attention and went on a triumphant journey around the world.

In her latest work, the novel *Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town* (2020), Barbara Demick sheds light on a culture that has long been romanticized by Westerners as spiritual and peaceful. It shows what it really means to be a modern-day Tibetan, trying to preserve their culture, religion and language.

12:00, The Nordic House

History, Psychology, Sci-fi

Sigrún Pálsdóttir, Helene Flood and Alexander Dan. Moderator: Árni Matthíasson.

How do ideas come to life? Does the form control the story or vice versa? In this panel, various forms of fiction and narrative writing will be discussed, what the forms have in common and what separates them. What are the characteristics of these authors' writings and where are the boundaries between fiction and reality? Sigrún Pálsdóttir has written both fiction and non-fiction, as well as books that straddle the border. Helene Flood broke through all over the world with the novel *The Therapist* where the methods of psychology are tested and Alexander Dan creates new worlds and realities in his books. The moderator of the discussion is Árni Matthíasson.

14:00, Grand Hall, University Cinema

Keynote Speech: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *We Should All Be Feminists* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, will give a keynote talk in the Large Hall of Háskólabíó / University Cinema on Friday 10 September at 14.00. The lecture is a part of The Reykjavík International Literary Festival programme and is organized in collaboration with RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and GRÓ-GEST. Irma Erlingsdóttir moderates.

16:00 - 17:30, The Nordic House

Short Stories of the World: An International Literary Festival in Five Volumes

The short stories of the world were published in five volumes between 2016 and 2020, edited by Kristín Guðrún Jónsdóttir, Jón Karl Helgason and Rúnar Helgi Vignisson. The volumes contain 94 stories from 75 countries and cover six continents of the world, with the exception of Antarctica: Europe, Africa, Asia & Asia, Latin America and North America. This is one of the largest translation projects in recent years in Iceland, where 45 translators worked together and translated stories from sixteen languages. Program in Icelandic.

18:00, Off-Venue: Gröndalshús

Impostor Poets in Gröndalshús

A literary apéritif with poetry collective Svikaskáld. Read and toast with Svikaskáld in Gröndalshús.

19:00, Iðnó

Environment and Conscience

Patrek Svensson, Egill Bjarnason and Sverrir Norland. Moderator: Þorvaldur Sigurbjörn Helgason.

The climate threat looms large and is intertwined with man's conscience. Catastrophic man-made warming calls for a swift and strong response. How can you write about the impending threat that all the inhabitants of the earth have to face? Here the environment and our conscience will be discussed. Patrik Svensson is a Swedish journalist and author of the book *The Gospel of the Eels*, but like many other species, the eel is threatened by changes in the marine environment. Egill Bjarnason is a journalist and author and has covered Iceland in the media around the world. Recently, he published the book *How Iceland Changed the World: The Big History of a Small Island*. Earlier this year, Sverrir Norland published the book *War and Noise*, where technology, creativity and climate change are discussed. Moderated by Þorvaldur Sigurbjörn Helgason.

20:00, Iðnó

Humor in Fiction

María Elísabet Bragadóttir, Þórarinn Eldjárn and Joachim Schmidt. Moderator: Kamilla Einarsdóttir.

Humor manifests itself differently in fiction. It can be dark, light, icy and creepy. Last year, María Elísabet Bragadóttir published the short story collection *Room in Another World*, which was very well received. A thread of dark humour runs through the collection. Þórarinn Eldjárn is known for his varied publishings of poems, short stories and novels, but in many of his works humor is dominant. Joachim Schmidt is from Switzerland but has lived in Iceland for fourteen years, and has published novels and short stories. His latest book is called *Kalmann* and is a funny, but dark crime story. Moderated by Kamilla Einarsdóttir.

21:00, Iðnó

The Erratic Nature of Memory

Halla Þórlaug Óskarsdóttir, Nadja Spiegelman and Leila Slimani. Moderator: Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir.

Memory is a tricky subject. Science tells us that every time we evoke a memory, we change it a little, create a new one, and it becomes a memory of a memory, rather than an event. The truth is difficult to find. It exists in the memory of those involved, or in the history books of those who get to write them. But what is an author's responsibility when their memories become works outside of them?

Halla Þórlaug Óskarsdóttir broke through with her book of poetry, *The Quiet Game*, a first-person narrative of a woman who tries to get a grip on memories of loss, fear and silence. Nadja Spiegelman is the author of the book *I'm supposed to protect you from all this*, which deals with memories and maternal relationships. In her book, *In the Country of Others*, Leila Slimani discusses family memories that are passed between generations. Moderated by Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir.

Saturday 11 September

11:00, The Nordic House

Children's program

Reading and writing with the Moomins. Readings in various languages.

12:00, Nordic House

Tales from the Border

Leila Slimani, Nina Wähä and Bergþóra Snæbjörnsdóttir. Moderator: York Underwood.

The stories that appear to us in everyday life are often rather homogeneous. The role of literature, however, must to some extent revolve around opening up the world further, centering voices on the fringe and creating understanding. Whose responsibility is it to write such books? Does the author herself need to be marginalized in order to discuss the subject, or is the requirement for marginalized groups to constantly explain themselves unfair? In this panel, stories from the fringes will be discussed. Leila Slimani, Nina Wähä and Bergþóra Snæbjörnsdóttir have all in one way or another discussed the people on the borders, whether it be geographically, socially or mentally. York Underwood moderates the panel.

13:00, The Nordic House

Children's program

Reading and writing with the Moomins. Readings in various languages.

13:00, The Nordic House

Icelanders' Self-image in Literature and a Different Perspective

Kristof Magnússon, Eliza Reid, Joachim Schmidt, Egill Bjarnason and Mao Alheimsdóttir discuss. Moderator: Halldór Guðmundsson.

The literary island of Iceland is examined and the rich part that literature has, or had, in the nation's identity. Is this beautification or self-delusion? How does this affect authors who come from elsewhere and who deal with Iceland, and how do they perceive the literary landscape here? Kristof Magnússon, Eliza Reid, Joachim Schmidt, Egill Bjarnason and Mao Alheimsdóttir discuss. Moderator: Halldór Guðmundsson.

14:00, The Nordic House

Children's program

Reading and writing with the Moomins. Readings in various languages.

14:00, The Nordic House

Orðstír Honorary Award: Translators and Authors

A translators program where the recipients of *Orðstír*, an honorary award for translators who translate Icelandic to other languages, talk with authors. Salka Guðmundsdóttir moderates the discussion. This event is in Icelandic.

14:00, Meistaravellir (KR)

Off-Venue - Publishers' and Writers' Football Match

The football match between publishers and authors is a Literary Festival tradition. A thrilling game between two notoriously sporty groups: authors and their publishers.

16:00, Veröld

Halldór Laxness International Literary Prize

The Prime Minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, awards the Halldór Laxness International Literary Prize for the second time. The prize is awarded to internationally recognized authors for contributing to a renewal of the narrative tradition, which were the grounds for awarding Laxness himself the Nobel Prize in 1955. Upon accepting the award, the author presents the Halldór Laxness lecture.

The selection committee for the awards included Ian McEwan, winner of the Halldór Laxness Literary Prize in 2019, First Lady Eliza Reid and Stella Soffía Jóhannesdóttir, director of the Reykjavík Literary Festival.

21:00, Iðnó

The Book Ball

The book ball is the festival's final event, not to be missed. Everyone is welcome!