

# Festival of Dreams: Scottish International Storytelling Festival 2016



Storytellers Mio Shapley (correct) and David Campbell find inspiration in the stars at Edinburgh's Royal Observatory, ahead of the Scottish International Storytelling Festival, which started on 21st October 2016).

'Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today' (*Robert McKee*).

'Great stories well told have the ability to evoke indelible images in the mind of the listener'


We are often told that something is 'just a story'; unimportant, an amusement to pass the time – something 'not real'. But if we think about the things we have learned in our lives, many of them will have come to us not through textbooks but through stories – narratives that caught our imagination, inspired us to go beyond what we knew and freed our minds to think 'out of the box'. It is this liberating power of the imagination that informs the


**2016 Scottish International Storytelling Festival – the Festival of Dreams.**



This year's festival is bringing together storytellers from Spain, Finland, Central and South America – and of course Scotland. From **Matt Hopwood** (founder of *A Human Love Story*)'s 1,500 mile pilgrimage across the UK, sharing stories with



those he met along the way, to Spanish duo **David and Monma's** humorous guide to **Don Quixote de la Mancha**, and **Amina Blackwood's** evening of Caribbean tales, audiences will discover countless new ways of looking at the world.



The Peruvian landscape is one of the world's great sources  of myth and folklore; **Wayqui César Villegas Astete** will bring them to life in an intimate evening of ancient tales. **Daniel Serridge, Lauren Biachi** and **Dougie Mackay's *Stories from the Shadows*** will visit the dark and disturbing world of Chilean folklore in stories, puppetry and song, and Marion and John Kenny will honour one of the greatest storytellers of them all with an oral rendition of ***Macbeth*** (complete with music from the Deskford Carnyx). Want to hear 'a voice like chocolate'? – in ***From Borges to Bugs***, **Giles Abbott** will lead you from **Jorge Luis Borges'** fiction to Magical Realism and Amerindian folk story.

 Getting tired of all that sitting down, cosy as it may be? The festival programme features not only storytelling sessions but also talks, workshops, walking tours, family events and exhibitions. ***Dreams and Nightmares*** is **Mercat Tours'** walking tour of 'closes and courtyards where dreams were made and nightmares unfolded' – it starts from the **Mercat Cross** at 6pm on Saturday and Sunday (29th & 30th October). Mercat's tours are always enlightening; whether you're new to Edinburgh or have lived here all your life you'll learn something new from the excellent guides.

 Children love stories; on Saturday (29th October) families can enjoy ***A Spooky Time*** at the **Museum of Childhood** and a ***Family Samhuinn*** with fun activities including art, crafts, dancing and drumming at the **Storytelling Centre**. Sunday brings ***The Sound of Stuff*** – young children are invited to the **Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art** to explore the secret life of materials inspired by **Karla Black** and **Kishio Suga's *A New Order***. And here's an added bonus for parents – all three of these events are *free*. (Image © Martin McCarthy for Beltane

Fire Society).

At the festival's launch on Friday, Director **Donald Smith**  said 'This is the people's storytelling centre'. Playwright, actor, artist and 'all-round provocateur' (*The Economist*) **Dario Fo** had a vision of storytelling as 'the people's art', and although he sadly died on 13th October at  the age of 90, the festival's exhibition ***Dario Fo: Artist, activist, inspiration***, which includes works featured in Fo's last book ***New Tricks of the Trade***, conveys the fantasy, radicalism and love of storytelling that characterise his writing. The exhibition can be seen at the Storytelling Centre until Sunday 30th October. Maps can be the stuff of dreams – dreams of journeys made and unmade, of lands and peoples known and unknown; ***You Are Here: A Journey through Maps***, at the **National Library of Scotland** until 3rd April 2017, challenges us by posing questions of how maps are made and how we understand them. The National Library is also hosting storytelling sessions and workshops throughout the festival.

It's no coincidence that the festival's Finale Weekend  concludes with All Hallows' Eve, or Hallowe'en. ***Guid Crack at Hallowe'en*** – the storytelling club's regular Friday night session at the **Circus Café**, St Mary Street – welcomes guest storyteller **Mara Menzies**, Sunday's ***Guisers Galore*** invites children aged 5+ to the Storytelling Centre to learn a song, a poem and a dance before following the **Old Town Guisers**  parade (NB: children must be accompanied), and on Monday (31st) adults can thrill to the six winning tales from the **Mary Shelley anniversary competition**. Come and hear the stories told live by some of Scotland's most accomplished storytellers – warm up (or should that be chill out?) before ***Samhainn***, the **Beltane Fire Society's** annual celebration of the **Celtic New Year**, which starts in the Old Town at 9pm; the torch-lit procession includes acrobats, fireworks and lots more (not recommended for children under 10). (Samhuinn image © Mark Taylor; Beltane image © Neil Hodgins.)

'After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world' (*Philip Pullman*)

**Festival of Dreams** offers food (the Storytelling Centre's lovely café is open throughout), shelter (with welcoming venues across the city), companionship (storytellers are a friendly lot!) – but most of all it offers stories and the chance to dream.

☒ The 2016 International Storytelling Festival is on until Monday 31st October. The full festival programme can be seen on the Scottish Storytelling Centre's website [here](#), or pick up a copy of the brochure from any venue and from libraries throughout the city. Tickets for Storytelling Centre events may be purchased from the Box Office in person, online or by calling 0131 556 9579; tickets for other events are available from the host venues.

*Main photo courtesy of Colin Hattersley Photography – [colinhattersley@btinternet.com](mailto:colinhattersley@btinternet.com) – [www.colinhattersley.com](http://www.colinhattersley.com) – 07974 957 388*