


Open Word – Open World: Scottish International Storytelling Festival 2017



‘There’s always room for a story that can transport people to another place.’ (*JK Rowling*)

This year the **Scottish International Storytelling Festival (SISF)** is opening its doors to the world.

The world’s largest celebration of live, traditional  storytelling was launched this afternoon at the Scottish Storytelling Centre by **Culture Convener Councillor Donald Wilson** and **Ruth Kirkpatrick** (Chair, Scottish Storytelling Forum), who together rang the 17th-century Netherbow Port Bell to declare the festival open for business.

Twelve days of exhibitions, talks, walks, workshops, films, meals – and most importantly, live storytelling – will showcase the talents of 54 guest storytellers from across the globe, with artistes from Singapore to Sub-Saharan Africa, India to Ireland and Norway to New Zealand performing alongside Scottish locals to create one of the most ambitious programmes in the festival’s 28 year history.

The first Edinburgh International and Fringe Festivals, Cllr Wilson explained, aimed to foster reconciliation between countries at the end of the Second World War. This festival’s ethos is much the same, focusing on the timeless power of storytelling to inform, to develop and to contribute to peace; in short, to change the world. Director of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Donald Smith, thanked all the supporters and funders of the festival, but saved his ultimate accolade for the storytellers themselves; ‘You are this festival –

without you there is no festival.'

✘ In a series of '**Scotland meets...**' events, storytellers including **Deepa Kiran, Jess Smith, Sara Kazmi** and **Ian Stephen** will celebrate the nation's connections with India, Pakistan and Hungary. Maori storyteller **Joe Harawira's Aotearoa – Stories from New Zealand** explores the culture of his country's First Nation People, while in **Journeys to the West – Stories from China** storytellers **Ma Wei** and **Fong Lui** introduce Monkey and other characters from one of the masterpieces of Chinese literature. **Wayqui César Villegas** ✘ **Astete** will share the myths and legends of the Peruvian Landscape in **Healing the Soul – Stories from Peru**; **Maimouna Jallow** tells the tale of **The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives – Stories from Africa** – and did you know that **Snakes Can Sing?** **Malgorzata Litwinowicz** says they can, and she'll transport you into a magical world of traditional Polish stories and songs.

✘ Scotland, of course, has plenty of its own stories; in **St Magnus of Orkney – 900 years** **Tom Muir** will tell the great saga of the earl who made peace and paid with his life, while the hot topic of rewilding Scotland will be explored in stories and music by **Daniel Allison** and **Lally O'Keefe** in **The Missing Lynx**.

Children love stories, and SISF includes lots of events for families, most of them focused on the first and last weekends of the festival. On Saturday 22 October the Botanics will host **The Enchanted Garden: Storytelling amongst the Trees**, a ✘ free drop-in event for all ages, whilst at the Museum of Childhood **Wee Folk Magic** invites you to enter 'the world of fairy tales, full of mystery, malice and magic'. There's more live storytelling for ages 7+ in **Pinokio Theatre's The Storytelling Machine** – the audience even has a chance to influence the course of events, so every performance is original.


Had enough sitting down? Time to stretch your legs? In **From**

Regent Road to Russia: Globe-trotting around New Calton, the


☒ Friends of New Calton and Edinburgh World Heritage invite you to travel the globe in New Calton Burial Ground. In this light-hearted tour you'll uncover tales of slavery and freedom, love and loss, friendship and enmity, from travellers who share a common resting ground. Or if steam trains are more your thing, what about **Jan Bee Brown's Stories from Smokey Brae**, a journey across 5 floors of St Margaret's House, with stories from well-travelled studio holders? Both events are free but booking is required. Meanwhile Mercat Tours and Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature will each take you to ☒ the Old Town to find out how the city has inspired stories throughout history, and SISF volunteer Story Guides will use stories on location to enhance Edinburgh for visitors.

What is film but another way of telling a story? Two classics by **Andrei Golovnev** evoke the landscape, culture and storytelling of Northern Russia (**People of the North – Stories from Russia**), while in **Tales of the Quebec Wetlands**, eight storytellers talk about the Lake St Francis National Wildlife ☒ Area known as the 'Everglades of the North'. Traditional storytelling formats are also usurped in **Tongue Tied and Twisted – Indian Tales; Contemporary Twist**, when UK music producer **PKCtheFirst** and international storyteller **Peter Chand** tell tales collected from South Asian elders while fusing a unique blend of Urban Hip Hop and classical South Asian sounds. In **Lost Tales Live Travis de Vries** will draw on the sacred myths and legends of Australia's First Peoples to create a tapestry of stories, with live musical accompaniment and specially commissioned animations, and there's more performance art and dance in **Champions Tale – A South African Story**, co-produced by **BE United** and **The Champions**, which tells the story of a young man growing up in rural South Africa.

Everyone knows what happens on 31 October...and in **The Devil ☒ and the Clutch of Fools** SISF will host a spontaneous marathon of Hallowe'en storytelling. Hosted by **Alexander**

Mackenzie, this free event starts at 10am – and finishes twelve hours later, with different time slots for children,  young adults and grown-ups. Storytellers from all over the world will come together with local people in a storytelling extravaganza – drop in if you dare! The day also marks the end of summer and the start of the Celtic New Year. **The Beltane Fire Society** will be making its annual Samhain torchlit procession through the Old Town from 9pm, with acrobats, fireworks, beautiful costumes and breath-taking performances; more information, including access and safety advice, [here](#) – and don't forget to dress up warm! (Image: Louise Spence). There's also a **Family Samhain** – an afternoon of storytelling and drama games – on Sunday 29 October.

The summer and its festivals may already be a distant memory, but the Scottish International Storytelling Festival demonstrates that Edinburgh continues to welcome the world, whatever the weather.

The Scottish International Storytelling Festival runs until  31 October 2017. More information from the Scottish Storytelling Centre, 43-45 High Street or on the website [here](#). Tickets for most events can be booked by phone (0131 556 9579), online or in person at the centre's Box Office.