

2018 Edinburgh International Book Festival – Freedom to Think

The overarching theme of this year's festival is freedom. Freedom of speech is one of the basic human rights, as is freedom of movement and freedom to trade.



Nick Barley Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival

The discussions which will take place at this year's festival will not necessarily deal with any of these principles head on, but it will be a theme running through all of the sessions.

And Edinburgh is also central to the festival – not just because the festival takes place here, but also because of what is in the programme. We spoke to Nick Barley Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival who explained why that is.

He said : "There are many Edinburgh connections. This year we have the launch of a new novel by Christopher Brookmyre and his wife Marisa Haetzman. It's set just down the road from

here in Queen Street, where in the 19th century it was discovered that chloroform could be used as an anaesthetic. And in particular it was used for women in childbirth.

“The novel *The Way of All Flesh* brings to life what it was like to live in Edinburgh in the 1840s and 1850s, and turns it into a thriller. It’s also signed up as a Sky Drama TV adaptation so it’s going to be quite talked about. And we will be launching that book here. It is going to be one of the best and most exciting events of the year.

“We are also really thrilled that Val McDermid is launching a novel with us called *Broken Ground*. It will be the first time she has actually been able to launch a novel at a festival. It says something about the power of Edinburgh’s Book Festival that publishers are changing their publishing dates to make sure that authors are able to launch books with us right here in the city.

“ I think it is fantastic that we have that opportunity.

“We also have a woman who spends some of her time living just across the way from us here in Charlotte Square. That’s the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. She will be interviewing the Scottish novelist Ali Smith about her Brexit novel series, *Autumn and Winter*. Soon we will also hear about *Spring and Summer*.”



Director of Edinburgh International Book Festival Nick Barley with the festival programme. Photo John Preece

THE FREEDOM PAPERS

Freedom permeates the programme this year with visits from Nelson Mandela's great grandchildren and Brazilian human rights activist Djamilla Ribiero. Using support from the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund through Creative Scotland, the Book Festival asked 52 authors to write essays about freedom and what it means to them. The Freedom Papers examine a wide range of topics and many of the writers will appear at the festival, with the writings themselves published in a special supplement to Gutter magazine in July.

Nick expanded on the chosen theme. He said : "Mostly it is

about the ways that freedom will affect us here in Scotland. When Brexit has happened what will freedom of movement mean for immigration here in Scotland. We are encouraging people from all sides of the debate to talk about what freedom of movement might mean, freedom of trade, and also freedom in our education system.

"How are we going to educate our children in a way that is right? We have the Curriculum for Excellence now but is that the best way to teach children how to be great adults? We will bring the question of freedom right down to the personal level. How can we be free to express ourselves? In recent years we have seen young people much more able to express their gender identity. The transgender community is having a much better opportunity to speak. How do we deal with that? How do we understand what the freedom of expression is in the 21st century?"

The Book Festival will be situated in Charlotte Square as before, and in the first part of George Street up to Castle Street as it was last year, but there will be an expanded capacity in the Main Theatre in the Garden to accommodate 150 more people. There will also be the Spark Theatre in George Street in honour of Muriel Spark's centenary with a new bookshop and a café.

Nick explained the reason for expanding the main theatre.

He said : "Some of the people who are coming to the Festival, the likes of Nelson Mandela's daughter, Chelsea Clinton and the Hollywood actor Rose McGowan, these are the people who would normally sell out so quickly that many people would miss out. So we thought that expanding the main theatre just a little it would give more people more opportunity to meet these people in the intimacy of Charlotte Square Gardens."

The Edinburgh International Book Festival 2018 runs from 11-27 August 2018. Entrance to the gardens is free although you need

tickets for most events. All venues are fully accessible.

More information [here](#).

Tickets will be on sale from 8.30am on 26 June 2018 either online or by telephone 0345 373 5888 or in person at the Box Office at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre on 26 June only and thereafter at The Hub, Castlehill.