

Book Festival will celebrate 200 year old thriller

One of Scotland's greatest novels, James Hogg's classic "The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner" is to be celebrated with a series of events at this year's Edinburgh International Book Festival to mark the book's 200th anniversary.

The 1824 gothic thriller, often cited as the original Scottish crime novel, will be celebrated in "Justified Sinner 200", a series of six events to run during the festival next month.

This is an idea promoted by the new Book Festival Director Jenny Niven, and the multidisciplinary events will explore Hogg's masterpiece through the worlds of AI, theatre, technology, music, philosophy and literature.



Jenny Niven Chief Executive of the Edinburgh International Book Festival

A bespoke tour of Edinburgh narrated by novelist Louise Welsh and featuring an original score by Stuart Braithwaite of Mogwai, a pop up choir, a book club event featuring Sir Ian Rankin and a state-of-the-art app that transforms the streets of the capital into an interactive story are all included in the mix.

Niven said: “The Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner is a Scottish classic, a brilliant and deeply unsettling gothic novel that reads as vividly as if it was just written.

“There are so many things to reinvestigate from a 21st century perspective. It’s about moral absolutism, and the dangers of a fundamentalist ideology. It also describes these incredible tensions between a supposedly rational Enlightenment Scotland and one steeped in a supernatural past, and it’s full of outrage and paranoia.

“As a piece of fiction it is hugely progressive, playful and

experimental, and so of course I wanted to work with writers and theatre makers whose own approach reflects exactly those things.

“I think we’ve really done this book justice on its 200th anniversary and it’s a great example of one of the many ways I’d like to take the Book Festival forward, creating a new story of Scottish creativity while celebrating our incredible heritage.”

Published in 1824, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* was a cutting satire on the Calvinist concept of predestination.

Set in the early 18th century, its anti-hero believes he is guaranteed salvation and is justified in killing those he believes are already damned by God.

The book, a gothic novel, psychological mystery, satire and an early example of modern crime fiction, is now often voted one of the greatest Scottish novels ever.

It influenced writers from Robert Louis Stevenson in the late 19th century to contemporary crime writers including Sir Ian Rankin.

Justified Sinner 200 has been made possible thanks to funding by The Scottish Government’s Festivals EXPO Fund, and support from Sir Ewan and Lady Brown.

The six events are *Perambulations of a Justified Sinner* (from 12 August), *Extraordinary Trash: A Theatre Essay* (18 August), *Justified Sinner Book Club* (19 August), *New Myths* (20 August), *Cut Up the Justified Sinner* (21 August) and a special Close Read event (23 August).

[All festival events and booking details are listed here.](#)



Photo Ian Munro