



Press Release

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Top Storytellers Looking Forward to Meeting Younger Readers at Wigtown

- **Big Wig children's festival plus great events for young people**
- **Spooky graveyard drama and a massive Wigtown drawing**

Some of the most celebrated contemporary children's and young people's storytellers will be taking part in this year's Wigtown Book Festival.

Among them are Michael Morpurgo – whose latest book will have been published just two days before – Katherine Rundell, A F Steadman, Sophy Henn and Louie Stowell.

There will also be much-loved illustrators including Steven Lenton and Petr Horáček.

It will be the first chance to hear Michael Morpurgo speak about his new book, *Michael Morpurgo's Tales from Shakespeare*, after it goes on sale on 28 September.

Michael will be chatting to another celebrated children's author and Wigtown favourite, Vivian French, about the book which is a retelling of 10 of Shakespeare's plays including *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*.

It will be the first chance to hear Michael Morpurgo speak after the publication of his new book, *Michael Morpurgo's Tales from Shakespeare*, which is on 28 September, just two days before the event.

Michael will be chatting to another celebrated children's author and Wigtown favourite, Vivian French, about the book, which is retelling of 10 of Shakespeare's plays including *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*.

He said: "I'm really looking forward to coming back to Wigtown after such a long time, it's one of my favourite book festivals and I always love being there."

"I'll be talking to the wonderful author Viv French about my new book *Tales from Shakespeare* which will have just been published."

"I wanted to tell again some of the stories that Shakespeare made famous in his plays. I thought it was important for young people to read them told in a language they will readily understand, and in a way they can enjoy so that they might be all the more likely to want to read the great plays of Shakespeare and go to see them on stage."

Michael is among Britain's leading writers for children. He has served as the Children's Laureate and written over 150 books with sales of over 35 million copies.

This year is the 25th Wigtown Book Festival and it runs from 22 September to 1 October in Scotland's National Book Town.

There will be 16 events and activities for young adults and the Big Wig children's festival has around 40.

The line-up includes theatre, visual art activities, book readings, workshops, poetry and film.

One of the most unusual will be *GraveTown*, a scratch performance of a new interactive piece of audio theatre taking place in Wigtown's church yard – ahead of a full run next year.

One of the most unusual will be *GraveTown*, a work in progress sharing of a new immersive piece of audio theatre taking place in Wigtown's church yard.

Created by Nikki Kalkman it will explore the supernatural folklore that surrounds ghosts, graveyards, and the afterlife.

GraveTown follows the story of a young boy who, struggling with his own grief, discovers a magical radio that allows him to hear the voices of the ghosts that inhabit the local graveyard.

This performance marks the end of three months of early-stage research and a week of development at the Wigtown Book Festival 2023.

Children and families are also being invited to take part in *Tom Schamp Draws Wigtown* – the Belgian illustrator will be asking visitors to help create a huge artwork all about the town and festival on a specially-created 16 foot wall.

And among the workshops will be Scotland's Young Makars, in partnership with StAnza, which will be a chance to hear them deliver a series of funny, imaginative and insightful poems.

Abiola Bello, author and co-founder of the Diverse Book Awards, will be sharing her favourite romance tropes in YA literature while Annaliese Avery and Ann Sei Lin will be holding a discussion on what makes great YA fantasy.

Simon James Green will be talking about his book *Boy Like Me*, which explores what it was like to grow up as an LGBTQ+ teen at the time of Section 28, which banned the mention of gay relationships in schools.

Last year the author attracted national headlines after his visit to a school in south London was cancelled.

Simon said: "At a time of rising censorship against LGBTQ+ books across the world, there's never been a more important time to dissect and destroy the arguments of book banners.

“Boy Like Me is semi-autobiographical and based on my time growing up in the 90s during section 28.

“I was inspired to write it after being banned from a school visit last year and seeing the same arguments from the 80s being used again to justify it.”

The Big Wig festival will have appearances from The Brothers McLeod (Greg and Myles) who created the Knight Sir Louis books.

The pair are winners of a BAFTA, an Irish Animation Award, have worked with Disney, Dreamworks, Aardman, the BBC, and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

There will also be Patrice Lawrence who was a working class Black child who loved reading, but never saw children that looked like her in books.

Her own books, like *Is That Your Mama* and *The Elemental Detectives*, set about to change all that.

Andy Stewart, Producer (Children and Young People), said: *“The 25th Wigtown Book Festival is going to be the most exciting yet for children and young people, with some of the best storytellers and illustrators around taking part. It’s also going to be looking at some of the major issues facing young people in today’s world.*

“And the line-up is hugely varied – from poetry, to art and theatre – hopefully making it a really inspirational 10 days with lots to do and enjoy.”

- Ends -

Notes

- For more about Wigtown Book Festival see www.wigtownbookfestival.com
- For media information contact Matthew Shelley on Matthew@Scottishfestivalspr.org or 07786 704299.

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