



7TH ANNUAL BAY AREA BOOK FESTIVAL LAUNCHES VIRTUALLY WORLDWIDE MAY 1-9, 2021

Featuring Nobel Prize Laureate Kazuo Ishiguro, Booker Prize Winner Douglas Stuart, National Book Award winner Charles Yu, and other literary stars speaking to current social issues and the power of art to heal

Berkeley, CA, March 18, 2021: It's been said that while doctors, firefighters and the like are "first responders" in a crisis, artists are "second responders" – helping human beings and society overall to rebuild meaning and chart a positive future that can grieve the past and learn from it, individually and collectively. This year, a streamlined Bay Area Book Festival presents 45 of the world's most renowned authors in a nine-day extravaganza (May 1-9, 2021) featuring 11 insightful [conversations for adults](#) and eight fearless [programs for youth](#), all channeling the power of literature to inspire audiences to become whole again.

The author roster for adult programs consists entirely of headliners, including a Nobel Laureate in Literature, the current winners of the Booker Prize and the National Book Award for fiction, a Pulitzer winner, several international Booker Prize finalists, two Hugo Award winners, and other prominent names. Topics include civil rights and racial justice in a time of tumult; meeting the political, economic, and ecological moment we're in with visionary boldness; grief, love, and caretaking; China, climate change, and brilliant women daring to speak fearless truths; and perhaps the most pressing question of all: "after all the upheaval of the past year, what new world can we envision?"

All adult events are live except for one, the closing event on Mother's Day evening, May 9, with three leading female novelists from three time zones worldwide. Thus audiences will be able to add their own voices in live Q&As within each program.

Of the 11 adult programs, three are free, and most of the others are accessed through a \$15 admission ticket. Three levels of passes, at \$60, \$85, and \$120, offer easy and economical options for watching multiple programs. Programs take place on every evening May 1-9 and on weekend afternoons.

Youth programs, all of which are free, present authors such as memoirist and "Top Chef" star Kwame Onwuachi, hip-hop journalism pioneer Dave "Davey D," and Newbery Medalist Meg Medina. More details can be found in our press release devoted to youth programs.

For tickets, online access, the full virtual schedule, and confirmed speakers, please visit baybookfest.org.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Opening Event of Festival

Saturday, May 1st at 7 PM PDT - FREE

[See No Stranger: A Radical Vision for Mending our World with Valarie Kaur and Jamilah King](#)

A daughter of Sikh farmers in Central California, activist attorney Valarie Kaur has changed laws around hate crimes, racial profiling, and more -- and now is targeting hatred itself. Her TED Talk on the topic has garnered more than 3 million views. Hailed by visionaries from Eve Ensler to Rev. William Barber, her book *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* “is the book we have been waiting for” (Van Jones). Live Q&A!

Sunday, May 2nd at 6 PM PDT - TICKETED

[When Everything Falls Apart, How Does the Heart Survive? Orville Schell and Yiyun Li on China, Tolstoy, and the Power of Art, with Adam Hochschild](#)

A journalist and renowned expert on China, Orville Schell has penned his first novel, *My Old Home*, drawing not only on his deep knowledge of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution but on his conviction that art and love can outlive brutality. He’s joined by MacArthur “genius” Yiyun Li, who emigrated from China to the U.S. at 23 as a scientist and took the literary world by storm, most recently leading a free virtual book club where thousands of people, isolated under shelter-in-place, read *War and Peace* together. In a conversation moderated by award-winning journalist, historian, and author Adam Hochschild, these renowned writers will explore how art truly can light a lamp in the dark.

Sunday, May 2nd at 1 PM PDT - TICKETED

[Love and Illusion: Kazuo Ishiguro on *Klara and the Sun*, with Yaa Gyasi](#)

Bestselling literary sensation Kazuo Ishiguro is back with his first novel since winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017. The dazzling, genre-bending *Klara and the Sun* sheds light on everything from climate change to mortality through the adventures of “Artificial Friend” Klara, a solar-powered robot designed to be a child’s companion. In a headlining event, “the poet of the unspoken” (*New York Times*) will be joined in conversation by PEN/Hemingway Award winner Yaa Gyasi, whose 2020 novel, *Transcendent Kingdom*, was called “a book of blazing brilliance” by *The Washington Post*. This is Ishiguro's very last stop on his virtual book tour for this hotly awaited novel: a not-to-be-missed chance to hear from and ask questions of one of the brightest literary stars writing today.

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Monday, May 3rd at 7 PM PDT - TICKETED

[Interior Chinatown, Tinseltown, and Other Worlds Imagined: Charles Yu on Showbiz and Storytelling, with *Lodge 49*'s Jim Gavin](#)

A veteran writer for several TV series (including HBO's *Westworld*, for which he won two Writers Guild of America Awards), Charles Yu won the 2020 National Book Award for *Interior Chinatown*, a brilliant, heartbreaking satire lampooning Asian-American stereotyping in Hollywood. He's talking all things Tinseltown, fiction, and giving voice to the underdog with Jim Gavin, creator of the much-lauded cult favorite AMC show, *Lodge 49* (Patton Oswalt and Tom Hanks are huge fans), for which Yu was also a writer.

Tuesday, May 4th at 7 PM PDT - FREE EVENT

[Epicenter of Girlhood: Carol Edgarian and Vendela Vida on Coming of Age in San Francisco](#)

San Francisco's boom-and-bust drama and breathtaking beauty make it a perfect backdrop for coming-of-age stories: especially ones about girls who can't be pigeonholed. Two leading ladies of the Bay Area literary scene—*Narrative Magazine* founder Carol Edgarian, author of *Vera*, a pulse-pounding novel set during the 1906 earthquake, and *The Believer* magazine co-founder Vendela Vida with *We Run the Tides*, set in the tony Sea Cliff neighborhood in the 1990s—come together to talk unconventional teen-girl heroines, San Francisco's many reinventions, and the drama of growing up.

Wednesday, May 5th at 7 PM PDT

[Green Rabbits Glowing at the End of the World: Annalee Newitz and Nathaniel Rich on What Happens When Civilizations Fail](#)

Ralph Waldo Emerson once made a prediction: “The end of the human race will be that it will eventually die of civilization.” A century and a half later, in a world transformed by human-made climate change, we're bringing together two highly respected journalists (who also happen to be speculative fiction writers) to explore our own “end times.” Annalee Newitz' *Four Lost Cities: A Secret History of the Urban Age*, excavates the rise and fall of four ancient urban-centered civilizations, while Nathaniel Rich's *Second Nature: Scenes from a World Remade* reports on how we've changed every inch of our planet and how scientists are looking to create new systems (some of them pretty trippy) to help us survive.

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Thursday, May 6th at 7 PM PDT

[Lager and Love Can't Pay the Bills: 2020 Booker Prize Winner Douglas Stuart on his Masterpiece, *Shuggie Bain*](#)

Douglas Stuart's heart-stopping debut novel, *Shuggie Bain*, took the world's top literary award, the Booker Prize, in 2020. *Shuggie Bain* draws from Stuart's own history of childhood poverty, hardship, coming of age as a queer man in a society that condemned it, and devotion to a mother struggling with addiction. Stuart will be talking with viral TED speaker and author Casey Gerald, who grew up in similar circumstances, albeit a continent apart, about economic inequality, queer manhood, and breaking old cycles while still honoring where we came from.

Friday, May 7th at 6 PM PDT

[How to Dream the World You Want: Nnedi Okorafor and Jeff VanderMeer on Resistance and Transformation](#)

If you haven't read much sci-fi, there's never been a better time to discover this genre that centers diversity, disrupts complacency, and turns the status quo on its head like no other. Two literary pioneers—groundbreaking Africanfuturism scribe Nnedi Okorafor, who has two projects in development with HBO and Hulu—and “prophet of climate fiction” (*Esquire*) Jeff VanderMeer—come together to steer us into uncharted territory with imaginative audacity and fearless vision.

Saturday, May 8th at 7 PM PDT

[There's a Revolution Outside, My Love: Mourn, Heal, and Take to the Streets with Former U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith, Reginald Dwayne Betts, and Camille T. Dungy, moderated by Ismail Muhammad](#)

The power of words to spark change and detonate oppression has never been more needed than it is today, following a year rocked by a racial-justice reckoning, threats to democracy, and a plague that exposed some of society's worst inequalities. Pulitzer winner and former U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith and literary critic and author John Freeman gathered some of America's most lauded, socially engaged writers to contribute to *There's a Revolution Outside, My Love*, an “eloquent and urgent” (Kirkus) distillation of what we're living through as a country. This Saturday night headliner event features Smith herself; criminal justice reform advocate, Obama appointee, and award-winning poet Reginald Dwayne Betts; and National Book Critics Circle Award finalist Camille Dungy—literary revolutionaries who embody the credo of the late, great Lawrence Ferlinghetti: “Printer's ink is the greater explosive.”

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Sunday, May 9th at 1 PM PDT

[Love, Loss, and Meaning in Life: World-Renowned Therapist Irvin Yalom with Joyce Carol Oates](#)

“Mourning is the price we pay for having the courage to love others,” opens the extraordinary memoir by renowned psychiatrist Irvin Yalom (*Love’s Executioner*) and his late wife, Marilyn Yalom, the esteemed feminist scholar and writer. Exploring universal questions of intimacy, love, and grief, *A Matter of Death and Life* recounts the final months of the couple’s 65-year marriage after Marilyn’s cancer diagnosis. There could be no better partner for this conversation than Joyce Carol Oates, one of the most honored authors in American letters, whose more than 100 books—fiction, memoir, essays, poetry and more—masterfully delve into love, loss, mortality, and other core human experiences. After a year that taught us all to cherish human connection more than ever, this Mother’s Day, we pay tribute to the women we love, but also to the many people this year who have cared for us.

Sunday, May 9th at 6 PM PDT - FREE EVENT

[Splitting the World Open: An International Roundtable of Dangerous Women Writers - Avni Doshi, Maaza Mengiste, and Alia Trabucco Zerán, moderated by Karen Phillips, Executive Director of Words Without Borders](#)

In 1968, poet Muriel Rukeyser wrote, “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.” Today, in the middle of a global pandemic, women everywhere—especially mothers or primary caretakers—feel split into a million pieces. On this Mother’s Day, we offer an opportunity for women everywhere to feel connected within a worldwide community: an hour, free of charge, with three powerhouse female authors, all shortlisted for the Booker Prize or the Booker International Prize, the most prestigious literary awards in the world, discussing their woman-focused novels and sharing their own experiences of speaking out. Co-presented by Words Without Borders and moderated by its executive director, Karen Phillips, this rare gathering features Dubai-based Indian author Avni Doshi (*Burnt Sugar*), Ethiopian-American novelist Maaza Mengiste (*The Shadow King*), and Chilean author and former human rights lawyer Alia Trabucco Zerán (*The Remainder*). Be part of a conversation that promises a Mother’s Day like no other.

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