



PRESS RELEASE

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The 2020 Booker Prize for Fiction

Star-studded programme, including HRH The Duchess of Cornwall and President Obama, announced for winner ceremony without walls

- Broadcast in partnership with the BBC from London's Roundhouse on Thursday 19 November from 7-8pm GMT
- Hosted by John Wilson, with a line-up of special guests: President Obama and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall; three former Booker Prize winners Kazuo Ishiguro, Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo; and 2020 chair of judges Margaret Busby
- Featuring readings produced by The Old Vic from actors Ann-Marie Duff, Thandie Newton, Ayesha Dharker, Nina Sosanya, Stuart Campbell and Paapa Essiedu, and a live performance from the Chineke! Chamber Ensemble

Today The Booker Prize unveils the programme for its innovative, globally accessible 2020 winner ceremony without walls, which is now just one week away. Broadcast from London's Roundhouse on Thursday 19 November it will be a world-class audio experience on BBC Radio 4's Front Row (7.15-8pm GMT) and visual experience livestreamed on BBC iPlayer and [BBC Arts Digital](#) (both 7-8pm GMT) available to listeners and viewers across the world.

The ceremony, hosted by Radio 4's John Wilson, includes both virtual and in-person special guests. President Obama will talk about what reading Booker Prize novels has meant to him and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall will share her thoughts on the importance of reading during the pandemic (both on video). Kazuo Ishiguro will be talking to John about the experience of having won both The Booker Prize and The Nobel Prize in Literature, and Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo will share what they've been up to in their year as Booker Prize winners. John will also interview Bernardine in person about the challenges fiction has faced in 2020.

The Chineke! Chamber Ensemble will be performing *String Quartet No.3* by Joseph Boulogne, Le Chevalier de Saint-Georges live from the Roundhouse. Meanwhile, on display in the venue will be the 2020 Booker Prize trophy and this year's six bespoke bound books, created for the shortlisted authors by individual makers who are members of Designer Bookbinders.

All six shortlisted authors – Diane Cook, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Avni Doshi, Maaza Mengiste, Douglas Stuart and Brandon Taylor – will join the ceremony via a special screen in the Roundhouse and as

part of a series of interviews filmed and produced by the BBC. For the first time, The Booker Prize has partnered with The Old Vic to bring the shortlisted books to life. The six readings, directed by The Old Vic Baylis Director Katy Rudd, have been performed and filmed on The Old Vic stage and will be showcased exclusively in the ceremony. The actors are Ann-Marie Duff for *The New Wilderness*, Thandie Newton for *This Mournable Body*, Ayesha Dharker for *Burnt Sugar*, Nina Sosanya for *The Shadow King*, Stuart Campbell for *Shuggie Bain*, and Paapa Essiedu for *Real Life*.

This year's chair of judges, Margaret Busby, will be interviewed in person by John before announcing the winner of the 2020 Booker Prize. The winner will then join the ceremony live on screen to deliver an acceptance speech and speak to John.

The BBC Arts Editor Will Gompertz and Arts Correspondent Rebecca Jones will be bringing the story to BBC News and BBC World News audiences in the UK and across the globe, reaching more than 500 million households.

There will be additional rolling content on [BBC Arts Digital](#) which will give audiences the opportunity to join in the discussion about the shortlist during the afternoon and evening of 19 November as the anticipation builds for the winner announcement.

Final shortlist celebrations

Ahead of the winner ceremony, there are still plenty of opportunities for readers to get to know the shortlisted authors and their books.

Tonight, Thursday 12 November, BBC Two will broadcast a special 30-minute [Booker Prize programme](#) at 7.30pm GMT. Novelist and activist Kit de Waal will follow the progress of the prize and examine the wider landscape of the publishing industry in the wake of the year's unprecedented global events. She'll profile the six shortlisted authors and discover the novels in contention for the prize, as well as speaking to members of the judging panel. She'll also talk to Bernardine Evaristo, winner of last year's prize and the first black woman to win since The Booker's inception in 1969. This will also be broadcast on BBC World News (schedule [here](#)).

On Friday 13 November (7pm GMT, free), [Doncaster Creates](#), the prize's regional partner for 2020, will bring together the six shortlisted authors with Sheffield-born poet and former Man Booker International judge, Helen Mort. Doncaster Creates is a dynamic arts programme set up to celebrate the town's creativity and unsung narratives of 'grit and grandeur'.

Over three consecutive nights leading up to the winner announcement, [The Booker Prize](#) and [Waterstones](#) are hosting Instagram Live conversations, featuring interviews with two shortlisted authors every day. On Monday 16 November, author and presenter Sara Collins will interview Tsitsi Dangarembga (6.30pm GMT) and Diane Cook (7.15pm GMT); on Tuesday 17 November journalist Sarah Shaffi will interview Avni Doshi (1pm GMT) and Maaza Mengiste (7.30pm GMT) and on Wednesday 18 November presenter and BookTuber Simon Savidge will interview Douglas Stuart (7.30pm GMT) and Brandon Taylor (8.15pm GMT).

Winner events

Following the announcement, [Southbank Centre](#) will host the first digital event with the winner on Monday 23 November (7.30pm GMT, £5) as part of its 'Inside Out' series. The interviewer will be Bernardine Evaristo.

The winner will also be interviewed by author and former prize judge Natalie Haynes for the [Hay Festival Digital Winter Weekend](#) on Friday 27 November (5.30pm GMT, free).

As part of The Booker Prize's continuing partnership with Doncaster Creates, there will be a virtual [Open Mic night](#) on Thursday 26 November hosted by 2020 Booker judge, writer and broadcaster Lemn Sissay MBE, and 2017 shortlisted author Fiona Mozley, who will read passages from their work side-by-side with Doncaster writers. As both the finale and legacy of the partnership, Fiona Mozley will lead the search for a Doncaster New Writer to mentor, who will be announced in January 2021.

– Ends –

More information about the prize is available at:
www.thebookerprizes.com

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Notes to Editors

- Images of the actors and special guests, as well as shortlisted book synopses, author biographies, author images and jacket images are available to download [here](#)
- Details of all events can be found on The Booker Prize website [here](#)
- BBC Arts Digital for The 2020 Booker Prize can be found [here](#)
- Front Row, BBC Radio 4, is produced by Sarah Johnson and Dymphna Flynn. The editor is Alice Feinstein.
- The Booker Prize 2020 presented by Kit de Waal is a BBC Studios Production for BBC TWO and BBC Arts. The Executive Producer is Tanya Hudson and the Producer Director is Gabriella Meade.

- HRH The Duchess of Cornwall has supported The Booker Prize every year since 2013 and presented the prize to Anna Burns in 2018. In 2019 The Duchess invited the joint winners, Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo, for tea at Clarence House.
- Sir Kazuo Ishiguro won The Booker Prize in 1989 for *The Remains of the Day* and was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature in 2017 and was made an OBE in 1985. Margaret Atwood has won The Booker Prize twice, first in 2000 for *The Blind Assassin* and again in 2019 with *The Testaments*. She was awarded the Companion of Honour in 2019. Bernardine Evaristo won The Booker Prize in 2019 for *Girl, Woman, Other* and was made an OBE in 2020.
- The Chineke! Chamber Ensemble musicians will be Elodie Chousmer-Howelles (violin), Betania Johnny (violin), Jesse Francis (viola) and Elliot Bailey (cello).
- This year's makers from Designer Bookbinders who have created the book bindings are: Stuart Brockman (*The New Wilderness*); Rachel Wade (*This Mournable Body*); Sue Doggett (*Burnt Sugar*); Lori Sauer (*The Shadow King*); Derek Hood and Kate Holland (*Shuggie Bain*); and Dominic Riley (*Real Life*).
- The Booker Prize for Fiction was first awarded in 1969 and was called The Man Booker Prize for Fiction when sponsored by Man Group from 2002 - 2018. The winner receives £50,000. The 2019 winners were *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood and *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo. The 2020 Booker Prize panel is chaired by Margaret Busby, editor, literary critic and former publisher and consists of: author Lee Child; author and critic Sameer Rahim; writer and broadcaster Lemn Sissay; and classicist and translator Emily Wilson.
- The International Booker Prize is awarded annually for the best single work of fiction translated into English and published in the UK. It was known as the Man Booker International Prize when sponsored by Man Group. The £50,000 prize is divided equally between the winning author and translator. The 2020 winner was *The Discomfort of Evening* written by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld and translated by Michele Hutchison. The 2021 judging panel is chaired by Lucy Hughes-Hallett, cultural historian and novelist, and consists of: journalist and writer, Aida Edemariam; Man Booker shortlisted novelist Neel Mukherjee; Professor of the History of Slavery, Olivette Otele; and poet, translator and biographer George Szirtes.
- For the current Booker Prize shortlist, as well as a full history of the prize including previous winners, shortlisted authors and judges visit the website: www.thebookerprizes.com
- The Booker Prize Foundation is a registered charity (no 1090049) established in 2002. It is responsible for the award of The Booker Prize for Fiction and for The International Booker Prize. The trustees of the Booker Prize Foundation are: Mark Damazer (chair) - freelance journalist and former broadcast executive; Nick Barley - director, Edinburgh International Book Festival; Bidisha SK Mamata - writer, critic and broadcaster; Carol Lake - managing director, Philanthropy Executive at JPMorgan Chase; James Naughtie - broadcaster; Ben Okri - poet and author; Professor Louise Richardson - vice chancellor of the University of Oxford; The Rt Hon. Lord David Willetts - writer, ex-minister and advocate of fairness between the generations.

- The Booker Prize Foundation Advisory Committee, which advises on any changes to the rules and on the selection of the judges, represents all aspects of the book world. Its members are: Nic Bottomley - co-founder, Mr B's Emporium of Reading Delights; Jamie Byng - publisher, Canongate Books; Jonty Claypole - head of arts, BBC; James Daunt - managing director of Waterstones; Jonathan Douglas CBE - director of the National Literacy Trust; Adam Freudenheim - publisher, Pushkin Press; Daniel Hahn OBE - writer and translator; Peter Kemp - chief fiction reviewer, The Sunday Times; Sharmaine Lovegrove - publisher, Dialogue Books; Emma Paterson - agent, Aitken Alexander Associates; Fiammetta Rocco - senior editor and culture correspondent, *The Economist* and *1843* and The International Booker Prize Administrator; Eve Smith - Secretary, Booker Prize Foundation; Boyd Tonkin - writer and critic; Helen Williams - Legal Counsel of Booker Group plc. It is chaired by Gaby Wood - Literary Director, Booker Prize Foundation.
- Crankstart, a charitable foundation, is the exclusive funder of The Booker Prize and The International Booker Prize.
- The Literary Director of the Booker Prize Foundation is Gaby Wood. The Administrator of The International Booker Prize is Fiammetta Rocco, senior editor and culture correspondent of *The Economist* and *1843*.
- Four Culture handles PR, comms and event management for the prizes and provides all events and administrative back-up.
- Booker Group is the UK's leading food & drink wholesaler with branches nationwide and a delivery network. It serves over 400,000 catering customers and 100,000 independent retailers.
- The Booker Prize Foundation has a longstanding partnership with RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People). The Foundation funds the production of the shortlisted titles in braille, giant print and audio, which the RNIB produces by the date the winner is announced. The accessible versions are then made available to the tens of thousands of blind and partially sighted members of the RNIB Library. People with sight loss have a limited choice of books in accessible formats and often have to wait much longer than their sighted peers for titles to be made available to them - and there are many more books that they will never have the chance to read. The Foundation is working with RNIB to change this story. For further information contact the RNIB PR Team on 020 7391 2223 or pressoffice@rnib.org.uk
- The Booker Prize Foundation has partnered with the National Literacy Trust since 2012 to deliver Books Unlocked. The Foundation funds the programme, which has transformed the lives of prisoners and young offenders in the UK by helping them develop a love of reading. Prisoners are able to engage with high-quality writing as copies of Booker Prize shortlisted titles are sent out to prison reading groups. These same titles are also serialised as audiobooks on National Prison Radio, which is broadcast into c.80,000 cells, enabling still more prisoners to experience these exceptional stories. Authors go into prisons to discuss their writing directly with reading groups and many also record interviews on National Prison Radio. The shared vision for Books Unlocked is to bring about positive change in prisoners' life chances. Since 1993, the National Literacy Trust has led the campaign to transform the future of the UK's most disadvantaged young people by improving their literacy levels: literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/books-unlocked/
- The Booker Prize Archive was given on loan in 2003 to Oxford Brookes University, where it now resides.

- **The Old Vic** is an independent charity in receipt of no regular public subsidy. An artistic powerhouse with a strong social mission, for over two centuries it has remained at the centre of its civic, creative and cultural community. During this time the theatre has taken on many identities (an opera house, a temperance tavern and a college to name a few) and has been no stranger to adversity as it has battled fires, bankruptcies and bombing. But throughout this time one element has endured; an unwavering determination to remain a beacon of hope, entertainment, education, solace and inspiration with a social mission to be a force for good. And now, during this period of closure, the theatre is once again working to stay meaningfully connected with all its audiences: theatre-goers, creative, schools, young people, the local community and supporters.
- **The Chineke! Chamber Ensemble** comprises the principal players of the Chineke! Orchestra, which was founded in 2015 by the double bass player, Chi-chi Nwanoku OBE to provide career opportunities for established and up-and-coming Black, Asian and ethnically diverse classical musicians in the UK and Europe. Chineke!'s mission is: 'Championing change and celebrating diversity in classical music'. Alongside traditional orchestral repertoire, the Chineke! Orchestra enables audiences to discover lesser known works by Black, Asian and ethnically diverse composers. The Chineke! Orchestra works closely with its sister ensemble, the Chineke! Junior Orchestra, with senior players acting as mentors, teachers and role models to the young musicians. In its brief and pioneering existence, Chineke! has performed at the Proms, premiered new works by Black, Asian and ethnically diverse composers, helped to launch stellar careers, including that of Sheku Kanneh-Mason and won the Royal Philharmonic Society's first ever 'Game Changer' Award.

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