



National Writers' Conference 2019

writingwestmidlands.org
@writingwestmids



Saturday 22 June, 2019, 10am-4pm

(registration from 9.15 - 10am)

**Spark Young Writers Awards:
4.30pm - 5.30pm
(all delegates welcome)**

**Bramall Music Building,
University of Birmingham,
Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT**



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



WGGB THE WRITERS' UNION

TLC
The Literary Consultancy



Welcome to the National Writers' Conference 2019

Welcome to the National Writers' Conference. This year's Conference covers a great range of areas of interest to writers at all stages in their career, with a focus on how individual writers can make the best of their talents. Our two keynotes will look at sustaining creative careers and making new opportunities – important for everyone. Our panel sessions bring together a wonderful range of people who know how writers can make things better for themselves.

As those who have attended before will know, this is a friendly and informal gathering: please do talk to people; ask questions, share your knowledge. The highs and lows of being a writer are easier to bear with the support of other writers, and our sector thrives on the time we all give to each other. And on that subject, if you would like to hear from some very young writers, do please join us for our Spark Young Writers Awards, being presented directly after the Conference.

We hope that the Conference will help you all manage your own careers and promote yourselves, as well as finding the energy and resilience to just continue to enjoy writing.

My thanks to the many organisations and individuals who have helped bring you the National Writers' Conference.

Jonathan Davidson
Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands

This year's conference is presented in memory of the writer Lindsey Bailey.

Timetable:

9.15am - 10am:

Registration & Refreshments

10am: Welcome & Introduction, **Jonathan Davidson**, Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands

10.10am - 10.30am:

Keynote Address

Mandy Ross: Human Writing

Mandy Ross is a poet, children's writer and community arts practitioner. In this keynote address she will consider why we write and what writing gives to individual writers and to wider communities.

10.35am - 11.35am:

Breakout sessions (to be selected at registration on the day):

Choose ONE from the following three sessions:

How Publishing Works

Elgar Concert Hall - Ground Floor

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, poet & non-fiction writer; Davinia Andrew-Lynch, Founder & Agent, Andlyn Literary Agency; Charlotte Hutchinson, Publicity Manager, Unbound.

Chair: Isabel Galleymore, University of Birmingham.

Publishing is a complicated industry with constantly changing processes. Writers, agents and publishers all have roles to play. Our panellists will share their personal experiences of being published and of working in an around that industry.

The Value of Mentoring

G33 - Ground Floor

Shahed Yousaf, fiction writer; Lynne Voyce, fiction writer; Jane Commene, poet, publisher & mentor.

Chair: Jon Opie, Deputy Director, Jerwood Arts.

How useful is it for writers to be mentored? What are the types of mentoring schemes available? And what kind of skills do mentors need? Our panel will discuss these issues, sharing their own recent experiences and answering audience questions.

Writing for Performance

The Dome - 2nd Floor

Tom Wentworth, playwright; Stephanie Ridings, playwright; Casey Bailey, poet & performer.

Chair: William Gallagher, writer & Deputy Chair, Writers' Guild of Great Britain

Writing for live performance offers unique challenges. How does one connect most immediately with audiences? What are the skills need to write for more than one voice? How can a writer contribute to the collective endeavour of performance?

11.35am - 11.45am: Comfort Break

11.45am - 12.45pm: Breakout sessions (to be selected at registration on the day):

Choose ONE from the following three sessions:

Social Media for Writers

Elgar Concert Hall - Ground Floor

Lucy Cook, Social Media expert; Claire Hunte, Publicist; Leena Normington, Blogger, YouTuber and Social Media expert;

Chair: Cynthia Miller, poet & Co-Director, Verve Poetry Festival.

Social media platforms are increasingly important, but which work best for writers? Can using social media become part of a writer's creative practice? Our panellists discuss making the best of these tools while continuing to write.

Rights for Writers

G33 - Ground Floor

Richard Combes, Head of Rights & Licensing, Authors' Licensing & Collection Society; Theo Jones, Publishing Contracts Adviser, Society of Authors; Lesley Gannon, Assistant General Secretary, Writers' Guild of Great Britain.

Chair: Dr Gregory Leadbetter, Birmingham City University

As soon as a writer offers their work to the world, they have something to both exploit and protect. Copyright, permissions, contracts: all have to be considered. Meet the organisations who can explain things and who help make sure writers get what they are due.

Resilience for Writers

The Dome - 2nd Floor

Mandy Ross, poet, children's writer & community arts practitioner; Sophie Hannah, crime writer & poet; Abda Khan, novelist.

Chair: Molly Rosenberg, Director, The Royal Society of Literature

Writing takes time and a creative career demands resilience. Although very few writing careers are planned, being prepared helps. Our panellists share the ways in which they have managed to overcome obstacles to achieve their writing goals, and how they can help others.

12.45pm - 1.45pm: Networking & Buffet Lunch (included in ticket price)

Please note: This will be a vegetarian and vegan buffet. Specific dietary requirements must be given at booking. We regret that we are unable to guarantee specific dietary requirements if tickets are booked after Friday 7 June.

1.15pm - 1.45pm: Speed Pitching Workshop with Olivia Chapman

The Dome - 2nd Floor
Sold Out

1.45pm - 2.45pm: Breakout sessions (to be selected at registration on the day):

Choose ONE from the following three sessions:

Overcoming Obstacles: Health & Wellbeing for Writers

Elgar Concert Hall - Ground Floor

George Bastow, writer, journalist & blogger; Jane Roberts, fiction & non-fiction writer; Maisie Chan, fiction & Young Adult fiction writer.

Chair: Louise Palfreyman, writer.

Writers who experience illness or disability face particular challenges in sustaining their creative careers. Our panellists will discuss how all writers can feel heard, supported and included and how we can make our sector inclusive.

Getting Your Work Heard

G33 - Ground Floor

Tom Peel, Overhear; Leena Normington, Blogger, YouTuber and Social Media expert; William Gallagher, writer and IT expert.

Chair: Lisa Blower, fiction writer.

The traditional 'writer reading' event is still a very important way for writers to get their work heard. But writers are increasingly using digital platforms and writing-specific apps to connect with their audiences and readers. Our panel share some ideas.

New Perceptions on Poetry

The Dome - 2nd Floor

Jon Opie, Deputy Director, Jerwood Arts; Romalyn Ante, poet; Cynthia Miller, poet & Co-Director, Verve Poetry Festival.

Chair: Stuart Bartholomew, Co-Director, Verve Poetry Festival, Co-Founder, Verve Poetry Press

Poetry in the UK is having something of a moment. The poetry world is broader and deeper than it has ever been. How can poets get the most from poetry's higher profile? And are there techniques that other writing sectors can learn from?

2.45pm - 3.15pm: tea and coffee break (provided)

3.15pm - 3.45pm: Keynote Address from award-winning novelist, **Kit de Waal**

Common People: An Anthology of Working Class Writers - Why We Did It, How It's Doing and What's Next

Award-winning novelist Kit de Waal explores the issues that prompted her to edit the ground-breaking anthology Common People.

3.45pm - 4pm: closing remarks from Jonathan Davidson, Chief Executive, Writing West Midlands

Please re-join us for our Spark Young Writers Awards, taking place from **4.30pm - 5.30pm** in the Elgar Concert Hall. We will be celebrating the work of many of the young writers aged 8 to 17 who have participated in our Spark Young Writers development programmes.

The National Writers' Conference is presented in partnership with University of Birmingham, and supported by the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society. It is also supported by Andlyn Literary Agency, Unbound, Jerwood Arts, Writers' Guild of Great Britain, Verve Poetry Festival, The Royal Society of Literature, The Society of Authors, Birmingham City University, Verve Poetry Press, Nine Arches Press and Let's Go Social Media. We are also grateful for the support of our many panellists and speakers.

Writer and editor Kavita Bhanot will be **The Literary Consultancy's Ambassador** at the Conference. Please ask her to tell you about the work of The Literary Consultancy, including its Free Reads scheme.

Speakers and chairs:



Davinia Andrew-Lynch

Davinia Andrew-Lynch is founder of *ANDLYN*, a boutique agency dedicated to finding storytellers whose material can not only exist on the page, but can also find an outlet through other media territories. Having initially focused on children's fiction, the agency is now actively looking for commercial adult fiction and non-fiction.



Romalyn Ante

Romalyn Ante lived in the Philippines until she moved to the UK when she was 16 years old. She won the Poetry London Clore Prize 2018 and joint-won the Manchester Poetry Prize 2017. Her debut pamphlet, *Rice & Rain*, received the 2018 Saboteur Award for Best Poetry Pamphlet. She has also received awards from Arts Council England, the British Council, and Society of Authors.



Casey Bailey

Casey Bailey is an award-winning writer, performer, and secondary school senior leader, born and raised in Nechells, Birmingham. In 2018, he was named as one of Birmingham's most influential under 30 year olds. Casey's poetry has featured in several anthologies and he has also been an artist in residence at The Royal Shakespeare Company.



Stuart Bartholomew

Stuart Bartholomew is Co-Director and Lead Programmer for Verve Poetry Festival, based in Birmingham. He is also co-founder and publisher at the sister press, Verve Poetry Press. His programming and publishing vision is to celebrate the full breadth of quality poetic activity in the UK and beyond – whatever the style or source – in colourful and exciting ways.



George Bastow

George Bastow is a writer, journalist and blogger at Books, Films and Random Lunacy. He was the events programmer for The Birmingham Literature Festival's Teen Takeover Day in 2016 and was a guest at The Tamworth Literary Festival's GeekFest in 2017. He is currently the Assistant Writer at the Tamworth Spark Young Writers Group. George has Cerebral Palsy and is a full-time wheelchair user.



Lisa Blower

Lisa Blower is an award-winning writer with a PhD in Creative & Critical Writing. She won *The Guardian's* Short Story competition (2009), was shortlisted and longlisted for the BBC Short Story Award (2013, 2017), and longlisted for *The Sunday Times* Short Story Prize. Her novel *Sitting Ducks* (Fair Acre Press) was shortlisted for the inaugural Arnold Bennett Prize.



Elizabeth-Jane Burnett

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett is a writer and academic. The poetry collection *Swims* (Penned in the Margins) was a *Sunday Times* Poetry Book of the Year and her poetry has been highly commended in the Forward Prize. She is Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for English and Creative Writing at Newman University, Birmingham.



Maisie Chan

Maisie Chan writes for children and adults. She is published in various anthologies and has recently been commissioned for The Big Think (Human Values Foundation) project, SCOOP magazine for children and has a story in the Ladybird Tales of Superheroes (out Sept '19). Maisie runs the Glasgow Children's Writers Group and the Bubble Tea Writers Group for British East Asian writers.



Richard Combes

Richard's work at ALCS focuses on the development of collective rights and licensing schemes in the UK and internationally, aimed at providing writers with fair remuneration for the re-use of their work. Richard's department is responsible for engaging with UK and EU policy on copyright and authors' rights. He represents ALCS on the Boards of the British Copyright Council and the Educational Recording Agency, of which he is currently Vice-Chair.



Jane Commane

Jane Commane was born in Coventry and lives and works in Warwickshire. Her poetry has featured in *The Best British Poetry* 2011 and in *The Guardian*. Jane is editor at Nine Arches Press, co-editor of *Under the Radar* magazine, and is co-author (with Jo Bell) of *How to Be a Poet*. In 2017, she was awarded a Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship.



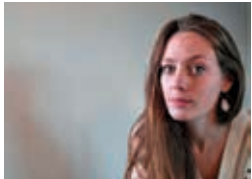
Lucy Cook

Lucy is a mum of three and a certified social media trainer. She moved back to the UK in 2015 after almost two decades of living in Africa. Stuck in a rural location with young children, she saw a gap in the market for a local lifestyle blog. With a passion and talent for social media, Lucy has also established Let's Go Social, a company which offers bespoke training and workshops for SMEs.



William Gallagher

William Gallagher is Deputy Chair of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain. He runs the Room 204 Budding Programme, writes *Doctor Who* radio dramas and is the author of 19 non-fiction books including the British Film Institute's BFI TV Classics: *The Beiderbecke Affair*. His first collection of short stories is due to be published in 2019.



Isabel Galleymore

Isabel Galleymore's debut collection is *Significant Other* (Carcanet, 2019) and was named Poetry Book of the Month by *The Telegraph*. In 2017 she received an Eric Gregory Award. She teaches in the Department of Film and Creative Writing at the University of Birmingham.



Theo Jones

Theo Jones is a Publishing Contracts Advisor at the Society of Authors where he works to support the organisation's mission to protect the rights and further the interests of writers: from novelists to translators, playwrights to children's book illustrators and academics to ghost-writers.



Claire Hunte

Claire spent more than 20 years working in communications as a journalist and in PR across various industries in the US, India and the UK. Since moving to Shropshire in 2014, she's found the transition from urban life to rural strife, relatively smooth and uplifting. She is founding partner of lifestyle blog, *Let's Go Ludlow*.



Lesley Gannon

As Assistant General Secretary of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, Lesley takes part in negotiations of WGGB minimum terms and conditions, oversees other core areas of the union's work, represents WGGB in the UK and abroad, and deputises for the General Secretary. Originally a writer, musician and performer, Lesley is a highly experienced trade unionist with a career-long commitment to campaigning for equality and inclusion.



Sophie Hannah

Sophie Hannah is an internationally bestselling crime writer. She has sold more than two million copies of her books in the UK alone, and is published in forty-nine languages. She is a Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College in Cambridge, and Course Director of the University of Cambridge's new Master's degree in Crime and Thriller Writing. Sophie is also the founder of the Dream Author coaching programme for writers.



Charlotte Hutchinson

Charlotte Hutchinson is the Publicity Manager at Unbound. She has previously worked for the likes of Profile Books and Zed Books over her six years in the industry. Charlotte is originally from Yorkshire but now lives in North London.



Abda Khan

Abda Khan is a lawyer turned writer. Her novel *Stained* was described by Booklist (USA) as the "contemporary Tess of the d'Urbervilles". Abda was Highly Commended in the Nat West Asian Women of Achievement Awards 2017 and won the Woman of the Year Award at the British Muslim Awards 2019. Her novel *Razia* is published by Unbound in July 2018.



Gregory Leadbetter

Gregory Leadbetter is a poet. His poems have appeared in *The Poetry Review*, *The Rialto*, on BBC Radio 4, and in *CAST: The Poetry Business Book of New Contemporary Poets* (Smith/Doorstop, 2014), among others. He was awarded a Hawthornden Fellowship in 2013. His debut full collection of poetry, *The Fetch*, is published by Nine Arches Press.



Cynthia Miller

Cynthia Miller is a Malaysian-American poet who has been published in *The Rialto*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Best New British and Irish Poets 2018* and *Primers Volume Two*. She won the Plough Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for the Bridport Prize. She is also Co-Director of the Verve Poetry Festival and a Trustee of the Forward Arts Foundation.



Leena Normington

Leena's book-themed YouTube channel has had 4 million+ views to date and has founded two chart-topping podcasts. She was awarded the London Book Fair Trailblazer Award in 2019. She currently produces the Vintage Books podcast for Penguin Random House. She has collaborated with European Commission, the U.S. Embassy London, the Man Booker Prize and Vice, and has featured in *Cosmopolitan*, *Refinery 29* and many more.



Jon Opie

Jon Opie is Deputy Director of Jerwood Arts, an independent funder for UK artists, curators and producers. For Jerwood Arts, he leads on the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships. Previously, he was the Administrator for the Independent Theatre Council and Development Manager for Hampstead Theatre. He is also a Trustee of Cardboard Citizens Theatre Company.



Louise Palfreyman

Louise works as a digital writer and marketing strategist for arts organisations, and edits the online journal *The Arts Foundry*. She continues to write short fiction and is working on a novel. She is also a firm advocate of the social model of disability.



Tom Peel

Tom Peel is the founder of *Overhear*. The *Overhear* app makes content exclusive to specific co-ordinates on a map. Having those co-ordinates correspond to spaces that find value in festival footfall; *Overhear* creates a new creative economy for city, space and artist.



Stephanie Ridings

Stephanie is a playwright based in the West Midlands. Her recent work includes; *The Fear of Fear*, commissioned by Warwick Arts Centre and *The Road to Huntsville*, a Bitesize commission. She is the winner of an Arts Voice Award and a Peter Brook award. She has also written *Dylan's Parents* for Live Lunch at the Royal Court and *Unknown Male*, which was produced with Birmingham REP.



Mandy Ross

Mandy Ross is a poet, children's author and community arts practitioner. She has worked with Echo Eternal, BMAG, CBSO, interfaith groups, cancer patients and mental health service users. As one half of Secret City Arts, Mandy works with storytellers, musicians, photographers and filmmakers to bring words off the page. As a trainee psychotherapist, she is exploring writing for personal development.



Jane Roberts

Jane Roberts is a freelance fiction and wine writer living on the Shropshire/Welsh border. Her fiction has been shortlisted for Bridport and Fish Prizes, longlisted for the Saboteur Awards, and features in collections including: *Unthology 9*, *The Mechanics' Institute Review 15*, and *High Spirits: A Round of Drinking Stories* (Valley Press).



Molly Rosenberg

Molly Rosenberg, is the Director of the Royal Society of Literature. She has also worked at the Southbank Centre and Royal Opera House and studied English at King's College London and University of California, Berkeley. Molly earned a Distinction in the Irish Writing MPhil at Trinity College Dublin and is now studying towards a PhD in contemporary Irish and Northern Irish poetry at King's College London.



Lynne Voyce

Lynne Voyce's short fiction has been widely published in anthologies, literary magazines and online. She has won several literary competitions, including Momaya, Legend and the Calderdale Short Story Prize. In May 2019, her memoir piece *A Brief History of Industrial Action at Vauxhall Motors*, *Ellesmere Port* was included in *Common People: An Anthology of Working Class Writing* (Unbound Press).



Kit de Waal

Kit de Waal was born in Birmingham to an Irish mother and a Caribbean father. Her writing has received numerous awards including the Bridport Flash Fiction Prize 2014 and 2015, the SI Leeds Literary Reader's Choice Prize 2014 and the Kerry Group Irish Novel of the Year. *My Name Is Leon*, her first novel, was published in 2016 and shortlisted for the Costa Book Award. She edited *Common People*, published in May 2019.



Tom Wentworth

Tom Wentworth is a playwright. His most recent play *Burke and Hare* recently played at The Watermill Theatre, Newbury, before transferring to London's Jermyn Street Theatre. He's currently under commission to Graeae Theatre Company and Amplified Theatre Company. Tom has recently been part of BBC Writersroom's London Voices and the Bush's Emerging Writers Group.



Shahed Yousaf

Dr Shahed Yousaf is a British writer and artist of Pakistani heritage. He is a GP who works in prisons and with the homeless community and is interested in the therapeutic potential of literature and the arts. He was shortlisted for the Bath Flash Fiction Prize 2016 and commended for the Faber & Faber FAB prize 2017. Shahed won a place on to the Middle Way Mentoring Project 2018 for writers based in the Midlands.

Notes: