

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24th BLUE METROPOLIS INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL: PLANET, SOCIETY, PEOPLE: WHAT AGE ARE WE?

**Over 250 participants, over 150 events
20 new podcasts, discussions on Ukraine and its literature
with Oksana Lutsyshyna and Andrei Kurkov**

Montreal, April 5, 2022 – Everything is changing, everything is speeding up. What to do? And if we settled into the time of books and reading? For our 24th edition, April 28 to May 8, 2022, the Blue Metropolis International Literary Festival is pleased to return to in-person programming (May 5 to 8) coupled with a dozen or so virtual encounters (April 28 to May 4). What do these events involve? All of us! Our era is experiencing upheavals on a number of fronts: environmental, social and individual. And now with the recent attacks on Ukraine, war is back in Europe. Have we arrived at a crossroads? Planet, society, people: what age are we? The Festival attempts a number of answers to this question this spring. Over the course of 10 days, a hundred writers from Quebec, Canada and abroad are set to converge on Montreal. Writers to meet, read, discover, and reread.

A wide variety of items on the menu.

IN-PERSON PROGRAMMING

Слава Україні (Slava Oukraïni) / “Glory to Ukraine”

Ukraine is in the throes of a tragedy. What can literature do against war? Plenty. War is inhuman. Literature is one of the best humanity has to offer.

A nod to the national Ukrainian salute, the “Glory to Ukraine” / Слава Україні (Slava Oukraïni) series proposes events in support of Ukraine, featuring Ukrainian authors side by side with their Quebec, Canadian and international colleagues.

The Festival welcomes Ukrainian novelist and poet Oksana Lutsyshyna to Montreal. Winner of the Taras Shevchenko Prize and the UNESCO Lviv City of Literature Prize for her novel *Ivan and Phoebe* (2019), she teaches in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. What’s more, Andrei Kurkov, Russian-language author of the novel *Death and the Penguin* (Harvill, 2001), which saw him reach the readerships of thirty languages, and who most recently published *Grey Bees* (MacLehose Press, 2020), will join us via video conference for a round table that is sure to be a high point of the Festival:

- “East, West, Mittel, Middle-East: European Literature in the era of tanks.” A round table with Andrea Bajani (Italy), Oksana Lutsyshyna Ukraine/US), Santiago H. Amigorena (France), Yishai Sarid (Israel), and Andrei Kurkov live from Western Ukraine.

Other events in this series:

- Is empire a masculine theme? Discussion featuring Rosemary Sullivan, biographer of the daughter of Stalin, and Oksana Lutsyshyna, expert on Polish author Bruno Schultz and feminist studies professor.
- *Ukraine/ Україна*: performance combining interviews, music, readings of Ukrainian poets translated into French and words of support by local writers translated into Ukrainian. In collaboration with P.E.N. Quebec.
- “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Ukrainian Literature but Never Asked”: an introductory workshop on the subject of Ukrainian literature led by Oksana Lutsyshyna, who co-edited *Words for War*, a 2017 anthology of Ukrainian poetry. Who said Ukrainian culture and literature don’t exist? Spaces are limited.
- Finally, as part of the Babel Blue multilingual reading event, Festival authors read excerpts of works by imprisoned writers, including Ukrainian journalist Vladyslav Yesypenko, who most recently worked for *Krym Realiy*, a media outlet in Crimea, the Russian-occupied territory. In collaboration with Amnesty International.

Note that all proceeds generated by ticket sales for these events will be donated to the Montreal chapter of the Ukrainian National Federation of Canada.

Eight Literary Prizes

Each year, Blue Metropolis’ Literary Prizes mark the highlights of our program. In 2022, there are eight, including two additions: French-Senegalese writer **David Diop** is our laureate of the Words for Change Prize; Columbian writer and journalist **Juan Gabriel Vásquez** is our laureate of the Azul Prize, sponsored by Ginny Stikeman; Haisla/Heiltsuk novelist **Eden Robinson** is our laureate of the First Peoples Prize, presented, for the first time, in partnership with Indigenous Voices Awards; Cree writer and musician **Tomson Highway** is our laureate of the Violet Prize, presented by Air Canada; writer and astrophysicist **Hubert Reeves** is our laureate of the Science and Literature Prize, to which we add an offshoot of the Prize intended for emerging researchers, the FRQSC-Science and Literature Prize, which is supported by the Fonds de recherches du Québec – Science et Culture and will be awarded to **Élaine Després**; in partnership with the Observatoire québécois des inégalités, the newly-created Lumières sur la pauvreté Prize is awarded to Quebec anthropologist and artist **Francine Saillant**; finally, the Blue Metropolis/Conseil des arts de Montréal Diversity Prize has been renamed the New Horizons Prize, and will be awarded as part of the fall 2022 program of the Festival, while an event featuring this year’s finalists, **Elkahna Talbi**, **Tawhida Tanya Evanson** and **Caroline Dawson**, is planned for the spring program.

The Grand Prize will not be awarded this year. Uncertainty surrounding sanitary measures and international travel were incompatible with the logistical planning required for the Prize. The Grand Prize will make its return, and will be grander than ever, in 2023.

Last but not least among these distinctions, we will be presenting the French and Quebec first-time francophone novelists selected by the Quebec reading clubs of Rendez-vous du premier roman in partnership with the Festival du Premier Roman de Chambéry/Lectures plurielles.

Myriam Vincent (Quebec) and Dimitri Rouchon-Borie (France) have garnered the favour of readers, with thought-provoking novels that bode well for their literary futures.

Two Headlining Thematic Series

In 2022, the Blue Metropolis Festival is spotlighting science and its relationships to literature.

The **Science, Planet, Society series** centers ecology, the importance of the living world, mechanisms of disinformation, the role of social media, and dialogues between scientists and science fiction authors in relation to four distinct disciplines: biology, anatomy, astrophysics, and artificial intelligence.

For the **Age, Time, Literature—A New Outlook series**, rich encounters await, including conversations about history, decolonial perspectives, the memory of peoples, and the art of ripening with age, a practice many will want to cultivate and exemplify.

A number of choice authors feature prominently in one or the other of these series, including: Norma Dunning (Alberta), Andrea Bajani (Italy), Yishai Sarid (Israel), Rosemary Sullivan (Canada), Christopher DiRaddo (Quebec), and others.

Three Literary Series

The **Azul series** (Hispanic and Portuguese-language literature) is more vibrant than ever! In addition to the Juan Gabriel Vásquez (Colombia/Spain), writers featured include Julián Fuks (Brazil), Martha Bátiz (Mexico), Carmen Rodríguez (Chile/Canada), David Unger (Mexico). An homage to Carlos Fuentes is also planned and set to include, notably, the late author's daughter, Cecilia Fuentes Macedo, who has published a book about her mother, the actress Rita Macedo.

The **Indigenous Literatures and Voices series** proposes, among other things, an in-person dialogue between two literary greats, Edén Robinson and Tomson Highway, this edition of the Festival's two Indigenous laureates. Hosted at the Grande Bibliothèque, the exchange promises to be a memorable one.

Science fiction, fantasy, anticipation, whodunits: the **Imaginaires series** highlights authors working in these genres, including established, rising and perennial voices such as Chris Bergeron, Sylvain Neuvel, Pascal Raud, Su J. Sokol, Elisabeth Vonarburg, Megan Bédard, Marie-Ève Bourassa, Vincent Brault, Derek Künsken, Mohamed Premeé, and Marie-Josée Martin, among others.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

April 28 to May 4, 2022, the Festival presents an all-too-tempting online program.

First, a series of three headlining solo interviews with major authors: American feminist Gloria Steinem, Algerian novelist and journalist Kamel Daoud, and Italian novelist Francesca Melandri. These interviews feature, respectively, questions of feminism in and beyond the #MeToo era, of post-independence Algeria, and of elements of Italian history that are hard to overcome.

Then, an offering of films: four portraits of great contemporary authors, presented in partnership with the Montreal Israeli Film Festival (Amos Oz, Saul Bellow, David Grossman, and Abraham Yehoshua, the latter of which will be followed by an interview conducted specifically for the Festival, here in Montreal).

To this we add a number of virtual encounters: on the relationships between science-fiction and science, on 19th Century poetic thought transported to the modern moment, on the idea of community in genre literatures.

Finally, Spain was the honoured country and invitee at the 2023 Frankfurt bookfair and Canada was the same in 2022. With that connection in mind, the Festival presents the Spain-Canada Digital Dialogues series, organized by Ingrid Bejerman, Director of AZUL programming at the Festival. The series will feature five duos each comprised of Quebec, Canadian and Spanish writers, editors, and translators in impassioned conversation on our relationships to literature. Maria Campbell/Sol Salama, Jorge Carrión/Stephen Henignan, Rosemary Sullivan/Raquel Martínez-Gómez, Katiza Agirre/Kevin Lambert, Katia Grubisic/Lawrence Schimel—you won't want to miss any of them.

LES INÉDITS | WORKING FICTIONS PODCAST SERIES

The Festival gets off to an exciting start on March 31, 2022, with the launch of Les Inédits | Working Fictions, a brand-new podcast series. Twenty authors from Quebec and across Canada have written original short stories tackling one of the overarching themes of the series: ecology, sustainability, social justice, the passage of time and intergenerational dialogues. With a new podcast released each week, these stories feature themes of the moment and combine imagination and intuition, invention and the music of language. Building on the atmosphere of these imaginaries, the Working Fictions webpage also proposes a selection of multi-genre reading recommendations chosen by librarians from various teams at the Grande Bibliothèque, BAnQ, our partner on this project. All available free of charge. Follow the podcast series wherever you get your podcasts and check out the series page here:

<https://bluemetropolis.org/fictions/>

THE TD-BLUE METROPOLIS CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Fascinating themes and captivating authors and experts to introduce youngsters to math, ecology and astronomy or simply to move them or make them laugh. This year, the TD-Blue Metropolis Children's Festival and its education programs propose a hybrid format adaptable to all circumstances and which launched last September. Over 70 activities are on the menu. Beloved children's authors, such as **André Marois**, **Sandra MacMillan Dumais**, **Andrew Katz**, **Mireille Levert**, **Sandra Dussault** and many others, meet their audiences in libraries and schools. Moreover, in addition to fun quizzes and reading recommendations for all ages, Blue Metropolis proposes La récréation | Playtime, a podcasts series that presents original texts by **Fabienne Gagnon**, **Bonnie Farmer**, **Sylvain Rivard**, **Mireille Messier**, and more.

Discover this year's educational programming: <https://bluemetropolis.org/educational-programs/>

BLUE METROPOLIS AT A GLANCE

Blue Metropolis Foundation is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1997 that brings together people from different cultures to share the pleasures of reading and writing, and encourages creativity and intercultural understanding. The Foundation produces an **annual international literary festival** and offers a wide range of **educational and social programs year round**, both in classrooms and online. These programs use reading and writing as therapeutic tools, to encourage academic perseverance, and to fight poverty and isolation.

- 30 -

For our detailed program: www.bluemetropolis.org (English);
www.metropolisbleu.org (French)

For information and media requests:

Anglophone media: Janis Kirshner: jkirshner@sympatico.ca 514 287-8912

Francophone media: Felipe del Pozo: felipe@feliperp.com 514 616-4713

MERCI AUX PARTENAIRES MAJEURS DE LA FONDATION METROPOLIS BLEU QUI SOUTIENNENT LE FESTIVAL 2022
ET NOS PROGRAMMES ÉDUCATIFS ET SOCIAUX 2021-2022
THANKS TO BLUE METROPOLIS FOUNDATION'S MAJOR PARTNERS WHO SUPPORT THE 2022 FESTIVAL
AND OUR 20201-2022 EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Canada



Conseil des arts
du Canada

Canada Council
for the Arts

Québec

Montréal



GINNY STIKEMAN

Zeller



AIR CANADA



POWER CORPORATION
DU CANADA

Stella-Jones

ERIC T. WEBSTER
FOUNDATION

Fondation J.A. DeSève

Fondation ECHO
ECHO Foundation



Fondation Lucie
et André Chagnon

Paragraphe
Librairie / Bookstore

LA LIBRAIRIE
GALLIMARD
DE MONTRÉAL



LEDEVOIR