passa porta festival: the author is present

A week instead of a weekend: the Passa Porta Festival, which will run from 21 to 28 March, is being prolonged exceptionally. An ideal opportunity to extend the programme of this biennial festival of words, ideas and stories over eight days.

We already knew that the 8th edition of the Passa Porta Festival would bring together acclaimed authors such as Marie Darrieussecq, Imbolo Mbue, Hubert Antoine, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, Aleksandra Lun, Chika Unigwe and Max Porter. But today, 18 February, the international house of literature Passa Porta can unveil the full programme.

It is time therefore to announce the participation of Maggie O’Farrell, Nastassja Martin, Deborah Levy, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, Hubert Antoine, Caroline de Mulder, Fatima Oussak, Lisette Lombé, Max Lobe, Lize Spit, Yoko Ogawa, Eduardo Halfon, David Vandermeulen, Stefan Hertmans and more.

a digital festival
The festival has naturally had to adapt to the sanitary measures in force. Although still a full-fledged festival, it will be 100% digital. This means that you will be able to enjoy all the events from the comfort of your living room or bedroom, live or at a moment of your choice. There will also be opportunities for the public to interact with the authors.

It goes without saying that if sanitary measures are lifted at the last minute, everything is ready so that the public can be welcomed in the participating venues. This is possible thanks to the flexibility of our cultural partners: Ancienne Belgique, Beursschouwburg, Bozar, Kaaitheater, Théâtre des Martyrs, KVS and La Monnaie.

present
The theme of this edition is ‘The Author is Present’. As we all know only too well, the past year has been marked by absence. One encounter, however, has never taken up so much space in our lives: that of words and literature. Passa Porta therefore wants to reassert the vital presence of authors in our lives. Authors embody the spirit of the times. That is why we asked seven Belgian and international authors to write about what they were currently going through. Max Porter, Imbolo Mbue, Marie Darrieussecq, Hubert Antoine, Chika Unigwe, Aleksandra Lun and Marieke Lucas Rijneveld have each provided illuminating answers, in forms ranging from essay to poetry, and covering perspectives from ecology to multilingualism.

an international – and subtitled – festival of discoveries
The festival programme includes award-winning and widely acclaimed authors, but also new and emerging voices that will both surprise and broaden the public’s expectations. In these times of immobility, the festival hopes to open up new horizons and let readers travel down new roads.

We invited writers who live and work in Belgium of course. But also British, French, Cameroonian-Swiss, Nigerian-American, Japanese, Norwegian, Guatemalan and German
authors, in the firm belief that these are voices that count in the contemporary literary landscape. One of the aims of the festival is to bring ‘our’ authors into dialogue with their counterparts from around the world.

Besides being international, the Passa Porta Festival will be multilingual through and through. The undeniable advantage of digital technology is that this year members of the public, no matter where they are, will be able to follow the interviews that will be held in Dutch, French, English or German … Many of these interviews will be subtitled. Everyone will be free to draw up their own programme, without being constrained by language.

highlights
The Passa Porta Festival will honour established authors who have been widely translated and acclaimed by both critics and the public:

- British author Deborah Levy will talk about her ‘living autobiography’, whose first two volumes have already been published (the third is to be released in May): Things I Don’t Want to Know and The Cost of Living (joint winners of the 2020 Prix Femina étranger).
- The Scottish-American author Douglas Stuart drew on his difficult childhood in 1980s Glasgow to write his first novel, Shuggie Bain, winner of the prestigious Man Booker Prize.
- Jean-Philippe Toussaint will shed light on the theme of loss, which increasingly seems to permeate his work.
- Marie Darrieussecq will give a foretaste of her new book, the forthcoming Pas dormir, which is likely to be the talk of the upcoming literary season in September.
- Mariëlle Lucas Rijneveld, the youngest writer ever to receive the Booker International Prize for The Discomfort of Evening, will team up with the young Flemish literary star Lize Spit, author of The Melting (forthcoming).
- Max Porter, the author of the magnificent and atypical Grief Is the Thing with Feathers and Lanny, will connect with us from Great Britain.
- The Belgian Stefan Hertmans (War and Turpentine, The Convert) will discuss how he constructed certain female roles in his novels.
- The author of unsettling, poetic stories, Yoko Ogawa (The Housekeeper and the Professor) will talk to us exceptionally from Tokyo.

new releases
The Passa Porta Festival is also the opportunity to highlight a selection of new books and translations:

- Imbolo Mbue will present to us, from New York, How Beautiful We Were, her second internationally anticipated novel after Behold the Dreamers, winner of the 2017 PEN/Faulkner Award.
- Maggie O’Farrell will join us from her garden in Edinburgh to talk about her bestselling novel Hamnet, narrated from the perspective of Shakespeare’s wife.
- The award-winning Guatemalan novelist andshort-story writer Eduardo Halfon will discuss the release of the French translation of his latest book, Canción.
- The Czech Marek Sindelka, who has already won an award in Flanders, wrote a defining novel about migration. After a residency at Passa Porta, Sindelka will return to conquer the whole of Belgium.
• Argentinian writer Samanta Schweblin’s latest novel, translated into English as *Little Eyes*, will appeal to readers of both science fiction and thrillers.

• Caroline de Mulder’s *Bambi* plunges readers into the very dark world of teenage prostitution or ‘sugar dating’.

• Ugandan and Norwegian novelists Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and Matias Faldbakken, both highly acclaimed for their previous novels *Kintu* and *The Waiter* respectively, will give a preview of their new works.

**Various Formulas**

A home for literature in all its forms, the Passa Porta Festival also wants to propose a variety of events. The traditional author interviews that allow readers to discover an author’s world in depth will alternate with other formulas:

• Unique author line-ups: a day devoted to ‘Women and Power’ at La Monnaie; an interview on the comic-book adaptation of Yuval Noah Harari’s bestselling *Sapiens* by David Vandermeulen and Daniel Casanave; a debate with Marie Darrieussecq, Lucie Taïeb and Nastassja Martin on ecological commitment through writing, illustrated by Marine Schneider …

• Dead Ladies Show: an entertaining literary and musical evening to celebrate all the heroines who have been unjustly overlooked.

• An evening at the Klarafestival: a unique collaboration between the Passa Porta Festival and the Klarafestival to set a new text by Dutch poet Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer to music by Frederik Neyrinck.

• Brussels International: a quest to discover the international identity of Brussels.

• City of Stories: an extensive, multilingual project that allows you to have stories delivered to your home.

• Poets on Call: a telephone hotline run by international poets.

**Good Connections**

Although the Passa Porta Festival may be ‘going digital’, we are not giving up the exchanges and connections that are the *raison d’être* of such an event event. Wherever possible, the public will be able to interact with the authors. Close readings, questions from a live audience, (writing) workshops, chat sessions, individual phone conversations with poets, etc.: the public will have plenty of occasions to interact with the authors as well as with the other members of the digital public …

*Details & Schedule < passaporta.be*

*Or get in touch with the festival team via nina.mallants@passaporta.be*
festivalgoer’s guide

Good news: this year, since everything is recorded and available online until 5 April, there is no need to choose among the events scheduled during the Passa Porta Festival. With the pass, festivalgoers will have access to the entire programme, day and night, after the date of its broadcast (however, please note that some events, with limited capacity, do require prior registration*).

Here are some tips to help you find your way through the busy literary week:

• **Three thematic threads** run through the week:
  o ‘Lost & Found’, a prestigious evening on the theme of loss, recorded at the Ancienne Belgique on Friday 26 March (with Lize Spit, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, Yogo Ogawa and more);
  o a no-less prestigious day around ‘Women & Power’ on Saturday 27 March at La Monnaie (with Imbolo Mbue, Deborah Levy, Fatima Ouassak and more);
  o and a spotlight on ‘Brussels International’ to discover the international voices living in Brussels in the afternoon of Wednesday 24 (with Aleksandra Lun, Grazyna Plebanek, Carl Norac and more).

• **Every lunchtime (12:30-13:30)**, a ‘close reading’ allows you to dive into a book in the company of a moderator eager to share their reading with you. No need for any prior preparation: extracts from the text will be read out to get you acquainted with the work!

• **Every evening of the week, a major event:**
  o Ilja Leonard Pfeiffer at the Klarafestival (Monday 22);
  o an Afrolit evening dedicated to the new voices of Dutch-language Afroliteratures (Tuesday 23);
  o an exceptional meeting with David Vandermeulen and Daniel Casanave, writer and cartoonist of the Sapiens comic book (Wednesday 24);
  o and a special Festival edition of the Dead Ladies Show (Thursday 25)!

• We won’t sleep much this week, with **other events scheduled for the late evening**: nightfall is indeed the perfect time for exceptional interviews with Eduardo Halfon (Tuesday), Caroline de Mulder and Joseph Incardona (Wednesday), and Douglas Stuart (live on Thursday).

And of course, you can always draw up your programme according to the authors present: more than 80 authors responded to our invitation this year! We are grateful to them for their presence and for their willingness to be as interactive as possible with you, their readers!

Lastly, we hope you will be ‘present’ at the start of the festival with the home delivery of stories in Brussels, City of Stories and at the end of the festival with the project Poets on Call!
over 80 writers from Belgium and abroad


passa porta festival, practicals

tickets
Order your festival tickets via passaporta.be. They give you access, via a link that you will receive by e-mail, to the online festival platform until April 5th. Watch live or at a later moment of your own choice, rewatch... it's all possible!

prices
As always, a selection of the festival programmes is freely accessible. If you want to take part in the other programmes, you can choose between two formulas: a separate ticket for a specific programme of your choice, or a ‘Festival Pass’ for access to all programmes. For both formulas, you yourself choose the price you pay. A personal choice, from an entry-level price to a support price.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>digital festival pass</th>
<th>15 € / 20 € / 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>digital ticket</td>
<td>€ 5 / € 8 / € 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and what if?
If it is again possible, the Passa Porta Festival is ready to welcome the audience in the Brussels venues. Live tickets will then be available via passaporta.be. The Passa Porta Festival will ensure the safety of all: compulsory mouth masks, signage, contact tracing, filling the venues row by row, guaranteeing the necessary distance between seats per bubble...

| live ticket            | € 7 / € 10 / € 13 |
passa porta festival, partners

The Passa Porta Festival is an initiative of the Passa Porta International House of Literature. In order to realise this literary biennial, Passa Porta enters into cooperation with numerous partners, each of which contributes to the festival on the basis of their own individual qualities.

authorities and subsidising organisations

media partners

-cultural partners and festival venues

other partners

ambassade de france, alliance française, auf, belfond, bitstream, brusseleer, czech centre brussels, darna, das mag, deburen, editions albin michel, finnish cultural institute for the benelux, foire du livre, de bruxelles, goethe institut, instituto cervantes bruselas, klarafestival, l&m books, lagrange points, la trompette de clio, le 140, le nordouest de bruxelles ville des mots 2021, librairie flagey, librebook, livre suisse, meridiaan uitgevers, muntpunkt, muziektheater lod, mythras books, norwegian literature abroad, passa port bookshop, pelckmans uitgevers, pen vlaanderen, picture festival, polish institute, pro helvetia, rile, rosa, uitgeverij atlas contact, uitgeverij cossee, uitgeverij de bezige bij, uitgeverij nieuw amsterdam, uitgeverij oevers, uitgeverij orlando, uitgeverij pluim, uitgeverij querido, uitgeverij wereldbibliotheek, verb(l)ind