

August 16, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STARFest announces star-studded 2021 festival lineup

ST. ALBERT — The STARFest (St. Albert Readers Festival) returns for its 11th season with a star-studded slate of authors over three weeks from October 12 to November 2, in an engaging mix of in-person and virtual events. The 2021 lineup is sure to have something to connect with every reader, with bestselling, award-winning authors bringing comedy, drama, thrills and chills, romance, fantasy, and history. There's music, and film, and an exploration of Muslim mosques across North America. STARFest 2021 is a compelling mix of audience favourites, exciting new voices, and thought-provoking literary explorations that are inspiring national conversations.

The lineup includes powerful fiction inspired by history: multi-award-winning author Helen Humphreys joins us with *Rabbit Foot Bill*, the story of a lonely boy in a Prairie town who befriends the local outsider and then witnesses him commit a shocking act of violence. Genevieve Graham's *Letters Across the Sea* is a poignant love story in which a young Protestant girl and her Jewish neighbour are caught up in the terrible wave of hate sweeping the globe on the eve of WWII.

We've got epic quests: Will Ferguson takes us on a heroic, imaginative journey across continents with his new novel, *The Finder*, as Interpol agent Gaddy Rhodes obsessively tracks "The Finder," a shadowy figure she believes is collecting lost objects. In Morgan Murray's hilarious debut *Dirty Birds*, our hero travels to Montreal from Saskatchewan in search of fame, fortune, love, and his messiah, Leonard Cohen. And in Glenn Dixon's *Bootleg Stardust*, a young man filled with dreams of rock and roll fame jumps at the chance to audition at Abbey Road Studios for a famous band – the problem is, it's all lies.

Award-winning Edmonton author and filmmaker Omar Mouallem brings his stunning nonfiction title, *Praying to the West*, to STARFest: a new father, searching for a place for himself and his family in the Muslim community he has resisted all his life, visits thirteen unique mosques across the West on a journey that reveals surprising history and a deepening sense of identity and belonging. And Joshua Whitehead joins STARFest with his tour-de-force *Jonny Appleseed*, featuring a proud NDN glitter princess who must reckon with his past when he returns home to his reserve.

Nationally acclaimed director and author Anne Wheeler is with us for back to back nights: a special evening at the Arden features a screening and post-film talkback of her most famous, award-winning film, *Bye Bye Blues*, and a live jazz band paying tribute to the movie's music. Wheeler is

back the next night with her memoir *Taken by the Muse*, recounting her world travels and fight to gain acceptance in the male dominated world of film.

We've got romance: join our fabulous panel with bestselling romance authors Courtney Milan, Farah Heron and Uzma Jalaluddin dish on what's fun, what's steamy and what's new in the world of Romance novels, a genre that outsells all other genres of writing combined.

We've got the fantastical: Amanda Leduc's novel *The Centaur's Wife* is a fable for uncertain times that opens with the destruction by falling meteors of a city and is replete with fairy tales, magic and catastrophe. And Canada Reads (and St. Albert Reads!) finalist Natalie Zina Walschots joins us with *Hench*, her witty, clever novel about the lives of superheroes and the costs of their brand of justice.

And we've got chills: International bestseller Chevy Stevens' thriller, *Dark Roads*, takes us down a notorious highway where young women have gone missing for decades, and where those who come together there have competing goals: hiding from their lives or searching out the truth.

Continuing the spooky theme, horror screenwriter Susie Moloney and director Eva Colmers join forces to screen their short film *The Suburbanight* on Halloween Eve, followed by a discussion of the horrifying process from page to screen. STARFest 2021 closes on November 2 with Andrew Pyper and his terrifying new novel, *The Residence*, a ghost story set in the White House.

"STARFest audiences love new reading experiences, and we're excited to offer a range of genres, moods and voices that will appeal to a wide range of readers," says Interim Festival Director Michelle Steinhusen. "We're also pleased with the mix of in-person and online – we've heard how much our core audiences missed the vibrancy of in-person events last year, and we're also keenly aware that virtual events offer increased access to new writers and new audiences."

As always, a fantastic lineup of STARFest hosts will keep the questions and the conversation flowing: Jacqueline Baker, Jana Pruden, Barry Bailey, Natasha Deen, Zain Velji Elinor Florence, Celine Caruso Dixon, Emily Riddle, Marty Chan, and St. Albert Public Library Writer in Residence, Nisha Patel.

"We're proud to present world-class authors locally through STARFest and to bring our audiences the engaging, provocative events that make our festival a stand-out," says Peter Bailey, CEO of St. Albert Public Library. "Libraries are about people and STARFest does a great job of bringing communities together – in-person and online."

STARFest 2021 tickets are on sale now at www.STARFest.ca. Set up and protocols for all in-person events will honour St. Albert Public Library's commitment to the health and safety of authors, interviewers, attendees, and library staff and volunteers.

Check www.STARFest.ca for the full festival schedule and to buy event tickets today.

Media contacts and media kit:

Leslie Greentree

Marketing & Communications Specialist

St. Albert Public Library

780-459-1750

lgreentree@sapl.ca

Michelle Steinhusen

Interim STARFest Director

St. Albert Public Library

780-418-6623

msteinhusen@sapl.ca