

OUR STORIES

A conference celebrating LGBTQ+ inclusive children's & YA books & publishing



Dublin
Manchester
Nottingham

11th November 2023
18th November 2023
25th November 2023

For tickets, email: cityofliterature@dublincity.ie
Dublin Livestream: bit.ly/OurStoriesDublin



About Our Stories

Over the last three years, with funding from arts councils in four nations, Pop Up Projects - a London-based children's literature agency - produced an ambitious LGBTQ+ literature creation project called The Rainbow Library. The Rainbow Library involved 80 young people in seven cities (Manchester, Nottingham, Basildon, Glasgow, Inverness, Belfast and Cork) taking part in workshops with 11 children's writers and illustrators. While developing their own work, which was published in five digital anthologies, the young people were also directly involved in inspiring and shaping new LGBTQ+ inclusive stories, which the writers and illustrators went on to develop into manuscripts - some of which we hope to publish in the coming years.

The point of the project was to connect professional book creators with contemporary, lived experiences of being young and LGBTQ+. In an age of rapidly shifting language to describe and define more fluid notions of sexuality and gender, we felt it important that books for young people begin to reflect the realities on the ground. This conference, a no-less ambitious partnership with three UNESCO designated cities of literature in England and Ireland, marks the culmination of The Rainbow Library. Part-curated by young people in the three cities, Our Stories celebrates the power and potential of children's books to 'change the game' for LGBTQ+ people - by including us, by embracing us, by giving us a place in a shared future free from stigma, discrimination and violence.



Supported using public funding by
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An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



Over three days, Our Stories champions the bold steps children's publishers are making to advance equality, amplifies the stories of LGBTQ+ writers and illustrators, explores routes into publishing for aspiring authors, and considers the future possibilities for representation in books for all ages. By bringing together young people, writers and illustrators working in every form of literature, and publishing folk from the UK and Ireland, Our Stories aims to spark a conversation with the industry, and ultimately to empower a next generation of LGBTQ+ writers and illustrators to take up pathways into children's publishing.

Dylan Calder
Executive & Creative Director
Pop Up Projects



Illustration © Leanne Coelho
Design by UsFolk



Introduction

MC : Sasha De Buyl, literary programmer and writer.

Welcome to the first of three UNESCO Cities of Literature gatherings for young LGBTQ+ people happening this November with participants from all over Ireland and more joining online from the UK, who aspire to write and illustrate stories reflecting on their own real and imagined experiences.

From the art of the picture book to popular writing for children and young adults, professionals from the world of publishing will be part of the discussions on the day to inspire emerging artists on their journey.

1.30pm to 1.40pm / The Printworks, Dublin Castle



The Dos and Donuts of Writing

Adiba Jaigirdar, Jarlath Gregory, Ivan O'Brien, Sally Anne Sweeney. Moderator: Paul McVeigh.

In post marriage equality Ireland, authors Adiba Jaigirdar (*The Dos and Donuts of Love, The Henna Wars*) and Jarlath Gregory (*What Love Looks Like, G.A.A.Y One Hundred Ways to Love a Beautiful Loser*) reveal the success of their heart-warming gay romantic stories for young adults. Publisher, Ivan O'Brien and literary agent, Sallyanne Sweeney join these authors as they explore with writer Paul McVeigh (*The Good Son*) the excitement of seeing their books on display in book stores and libraries.

1.40pm to 2.25pm / The Printworks, Dublin Castle



Rainbow Library from Northern Ireland and Cara Friend

Betsy Cornwell, Clive McFarland, Kel Menton, Kip Alizadeh and Jamie Beard, Moderator: Dylan Calder

Two writers (Betsy Cornwell, Kel Menton) and three illustrators (Kip Alizadeh, Jamie Beard, Clive McFarland) from Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland talk about their experiences of making inclusive children's books through The Rainbow Library, a UK and Ireland-wide LGBTQ+ participatory project produced by Pop Up Projects. Chaired by Pop Up's Director, Dylan Calder, the panel will also consider hopes and fears for the future of LGBTQ+ inclusive children's and YA books - and what publishers will need to do to ensure LGBTQ+ authors and illustrators stay visible for future generations of young readers.

2.35pm to 3.35pm / The Printworks, Dublin Castle

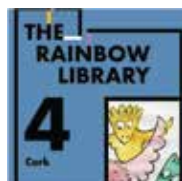
Rainbow Library Cork

A Rainbow Libraries initiative, in partnership with Cork County Council's Library and Arts Services, Pop Up Projects and Creative Ireland. Moderator : James Hudson

Throughout 2022 Pop Up Projects delivered creative workshops across the UK and Ireland.

Rainbow Library participants from Cork will share the impact of the project on their creativity and well-being with writing mentor and transwriter, James Hudson.

4.00pm - 4.45pm / The Printworks, Dublin Castle



Creating Waves

Helen Corcoran, Meg Grehan, Matthew Parkinson-Bennett. Moderator: Elaina Ryan

Award-winning authors Meg Grehan (*The Lonely Book (Little Island)*) and Helen Corcoran (*Daughter of Winter and Twilight (O'Brien Press)*) track their creative routes to getting published. Editorial advice will be provided by Little Island's Matthew Parkinson-Bennett. Elaina Ryan, CEO of Children's Books Ireland will moderate this discussion.

4.55pm - 5.40pm / The Printworks, Dublin Castle



Launch of Faerie Press CIC, All Ireland publishing enterprise

Faerie Press CIC is an ambitious new queer community publishing enterprise, developed between LGBTQ+ young people in Northern Ireland, Pop Up Projects (a UK children's literature agency) and Cara-Friend (NI LGBTQ+ youth services provider). Founding members of the enterprise, which will develop and publish inclusive children's books across the island of Ireland, join the Our Stories line-up to launch their incredible vision.

5.50pm - 6.20pm / The Printworks, Dublin Castle



The O'Brien Press was established in 1974 by Michael O'Brien and his father Thomas and for nearly 50 years has established a reputation for quality and excellence in publishing for adults and children. Since then, The O'Brien Press has published well over two thousand books with nearly half the books published still in print.

They strive for the widest possible market for authors and have an extensive network of international rights agents representing books by Irish authors for all major languages and territories.

Always innovative, they have regularly broken new ground in publishing. The first in Ireland to take publishing for children seriously, they are the country's leading publisher of books for young people. The first to publish true crime, the first to create quality graphic novels, the first to explore many other genres - they are always up for a challenge!



Little Island publishes the best new Irish writing for young readers. Their slogan is "Books create waves". That means they believe in the power of books to make a sea-change in young minds. They believe in books with the power to reach out to the young reader and stir the sea within. They want to publish books that make a splash! At Little Island they are proud to represent the best Irish writing for children, teens and young adults. They were founded in 2010 by Ireland's first ever Laureate na nÓg (children's laureate), Siobhán Parkinson. They remain proudly independent and committed to their founding ideals of publishing high-quality writing and illustration for young readers and having an outward-looking, international mind-set. Their books have been translated into many languages and published around the world.





Kip Alizadeh

Belfast

Kip Alizadeh is an illustrator and visual artist. When they aren't creating, they like to DJ, spend time with their cats, and play sports. Kip is queer, Iranian, and English, and lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland.



Jamie Beard

Dublin

Jamie 'Beard' Baird is a Northern Irish illustrator. His work, primarily centred around portraiture, is perpetually fuelled by a fascination with people and their stories, and notions of individuals and collective identity much of it rooted in or inspired by the LGBTQIA+ community.

He's featured in multiple books including *Encounter* (a collaboration with Outburst Arts, al-Jumhuriya, and the British Council), *The Little Crayon* (with Amelia Kai) and *Mistaken for a Bear* (with Philip Ardagh). Jamie's clients to date include Belfast Pride, Outburst Arts, Queen's University Belfast, The Naughton Gallery, Lambert Smith Hampton, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Ulster Museum and more.



Dylan Calder

Dublin

Dylan Calder is the Director of Pop Up Projects, a social enterprise he founded in 2011, with a mission to empower and advocate for more diverse children's books creators. Pop Up's flagship programme, Pathways Into Children's Publishing, supported by 25 publishers and universities, is a pioneering talent pipeline through which publishers discover bold new voices from under-represented backgrounds. As a queer man, Dylan is committed to ensuring a future for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in children's books, and Pop Up's recent The Rainbow Library and current Pathways Northern Ireland programmes demonstrate the organisation's contribution to that work.



Betsy Cornwell Lyons

Galway

Betsy Cornwell Lyons is the New York Times bestselling author of six books for young people, including *The Circus Rose*, a novel in prose and verse that was named a Top Ten title for teen readers in the American Library Association's 2020 Rainbow Book List. Betsy holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of Notre Dame and a BA from Smith College, and she currently teaches at the University of Galway. She lives in a renovated knitting factory in the west of Ireland, which she is working to turn into a childcare-inclusive retreat space for single parents.



Helen Corcoran

Dublin

Helen Corcoran grew up in Cork, dreaming of scheming queens and dashing lady knights. After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, she worked as a bookseller for over a decade. She lives in Dublin, writing fantasy novels and haunting coffee shops in search of the perfect latte. Her first novel, *Queen of Coin and Whispers*, was published to rave reviews in 2020 and was shortlisted for an Irish Book Award. The much-anticipated follow-up, *Daughter of Winter and Twilight*, has just been published.



Sasha De Buyl

Cork

Sasha De Buyl is a writer and programmer from Cork. They are currently Literature and Ideas Programmer at International Literature Festival Dublin and in 2023 acted as Guest Curator for StAnza, Scotland's International Poetry Festival. They were the Director of Cúirt International Festival of Literature in Galway from 2019 – 2022 and prior to this managed Scottish Books International, developing projects and partnerships for Scottish literature overseas. Sasha spent two years working as Literature Officer at Creative Scotland, and has held roles with Scottish Book Trust, StAnza International Poetry Festival, Edinburgh International Book Festival and Aye Write Book Festival. Sasha is a board member of GAZE: Dublin's International LGBTQ Film Festival.

Meet the speakers



Jarlath Gregory

Dublin

Jarlath Gregory is from Crossmaglen, Co Armagh, and lives in Dublin. He is the author of *Snapshots*, *G.A.A.Y.*, and *The Organised Criminal*. He worked as a bookseller in Chapters Bookstore, and has written for *Attitude*, *Esquire* and *GCN* magazines. He completed an MPhil in Creative Writing at Trinity College Dublin and works as a freelance copywriter. *What Love Looks Like* was his YA fiction debut.



Adiba Jaigirdar

Dublin

Adiba Jaigirdar is the award-winning, critically acclaimed and bestselling author of the *Henna Wars*, *Hani & Ishu's Guide to Fake Dating*, and *A Million to One*. A Bangladeshi/Irish writer and former teacher, she has an MA in Postcolonial Studies from the University of Kent, England and a BA in English and History from UCD, Ireland.

She is the winner of the YA book prize 2022, the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2021, and was a finalist for the 2022 Lambda Literary awards. All of her writing is aided by tea and a healthy dose of Janelle Monáe and Hayley Kiyoko.



Meg Grehan

Louth

Meg Grehan is originally from County Louth but now hiding away in County Donegal in the north-west of Ireland, with a very ginger girlfriend, an even more ginger dog and an undisclosed number of cats (none of whom is ginger). Her first book *The Space Between* won the Éilís Dillon Award at the 2018 Children's Books Ireland Awards. *The Deepest Breath* won the Judge's Special Prize at the 2020 Children's Books Ireland Awards and was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize. It is published in the USA by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and in France by Talents Haut. *Baby Teeth* was a Kirkus Best YA Book of 2022 and was nominated for the 2023 Carnegie Medal.



Clive McFarland

Dublin

Clive McFarland was raised in Omagh, Co. Tyrone and graduated from the Liverpool School of Art and Design. He is an author and illustrator of several picture books, including *A Bed for Bear*, *Caterpillar Dreams*, and *The Fox and the Wild*. His latest book, *Standing on One Leg is Hard* written by Erika McGann, was recently published by The O'Brien Press. He lives in Northern Ireland.



James Hudson

Dublin

James Hudson is a speculative fiction writer and editor from Dublin. His writing is published by *The Stinging Fly*, *Channel*, *Neon Hemlock*, *PopUp Projects*, *ShoutOut*, and others. He is the editor of the anthology *VERY ONLINE* and the magazine *TOWER*, a programmer at the *GAZE* Film Festival, and a regular organiser with the Small Trans Library Dublin. He endeavours to make Irish trans life richer and more pleasurable through access to LGBTQ+ art and literature.



Paul McVeigh

Dublin

Paul McVeigh's debut novel, *The Good Son*, won The McCrea Literary Award and The Polari First Novel Prize for LGBTQ+ Literature. His short stories have appeared in numerous anthologies, journals and newspapers, as well as, on BBC Radio 3, 4 & 5, and Sky Arts. He edited *The 32: An Anthology of Irish Working Class Voices* and the *Queer Love* anthology. In 2023, his gay love story, *Big Man*, won an Irish Times Theatre Award and his ten-part short story series, *The Circus*, aired on BBC Radio 4. His work has been translated into seven languages.

Meet the speakers



Kel Menton

Dublin

Kel Menton (they/them) is a non-binary writer from Cork, Ireland. They hold a BA in English literature from University College Cork, and an MA in Medieval literature in 2020. Kel was selected as a Young Writer Delegate for the 2021 Dublin Book Festival in conjunction with the Irish Writers Centre, and their plays have been performed at the Fitzgibbon Theatre and the Cork Midsummer Festival. They have been published (articles, prose, poetry) in the Irish Examiner, Good Day Cork, and the ROPES literary journal. They are represented by Laura Bennett from the Liverpool Literary Agency.



Elaina Ryan

Dublin

Elaina Ryan is chief executive officer of Children's Books Ireland. She has a background in children's publishing. She holds an MLitt in Publishing from University of Stirling and is former managing editor of Little Island books, where she worked closely with Ireland's inaugural Laureate na nÓg, Siobhán Parkinson. She is co-Artistic Director, with Niamh Sharkey, of Towers and Tales, the Lismore Story Festival in County Waterford. Elaina Ryan joined Children's Books Ireland in 2013.



Ivan O'Brien

Dublin

Ivan O'Brien is managing director of The O'Brien Press, a family-owned book publishing company based in Dublin. An interest in science led to several years investigating the stars before the world of books drew him back. The world of books is changing all the time and The O'Brien Press has changed with it, embracing modern technologies and constantly exploring new areas of publishing for readers big and small. When he's not working you'll find him with his wonderful children, singing in a choir or out on a bike, climbing a remote hill somewhere.



Sallyanne Sweeney

Dublin

Sallyanne Sweeney grew up in Dublin and studied English at Trinity College before completing an MPhil in American Literature at Queens' College, Cambridge. She joined Mulcahy Sweeney Associates in 2013 and is growing her list of authors and illustrators for children (picture books to Young Adult) and adults. Awards her clients have won or been shortlisted for include the British Book Awards, Irish Book Awards, Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, Waterstones Children's Book Prize, Sainsbury's Children's Book Awards and YA Book Prize.

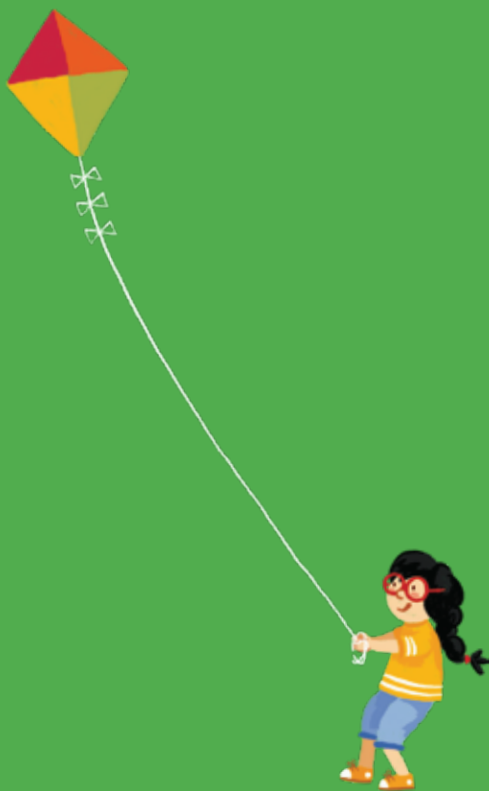


Matthew Parkinson-Bennett

Dublin

Matthew Parkinson-Bennett is a publisher with Little Island Books, a Dublin-based independent publisher of books for young readers. He has spent most of his career working in books, across trade, academic, educational and legal publishing. In a previous life he taught English in Ireland, England and Spain, and wrote for outlets including the Times Literary Supplement, Irish Times, Sunday Times and Dublin Review of Books.





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