

Media Release



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Books
Writing
Ideas

New storytellers announced for A Gala Night of Storytelling 2011: Voices from Elsewhere

Local greats **John Birmingham**, **Sonya Hartnett** and much-loved children's author **Mem Fox** join the "enfant terrible of Chinese literature" (*Sydney Morning Herald*) **Murong Xuecun** as well as award-winning French author **Yannick Haenel**, German poet **Dagmar Leupold** and acclaimed Indian novelist **Abha Dawesar** to share their stories.

Last year, the **Wheeler Centre's** first ever event celebrated twelve of Australia's finest writers and storytellers. This year will expand the conversation when some of our own finest writers are joined by a selection of extraordinary international voices. With local actors reading the English translations, our visiting writers will deliver their stories in languages ranging from Chinese to French, German to Hindi. From the universal to the intensely personal, the international writers' stories will be interwoven with contributions from our local greats. All profits raised by their **2011 Gala Night of Storytelling** will go to flood-affected libraries across Queensland.

A Gala Night of Storytelling 2011: Voices from Elsewhere

Friday 11 February, 2011. 7:00 – 8:30pm

Melbourne Town Hall, corner Swanston and Collins Streets, Melbourne

Tickets \$20/\$12 concession through wheelercentre.com



Murong Xuecun is one of contemporary China's most celebrated authors. In 2002 when his novel *Leave Me Alone: A novel of Chengdu* (published in China as *Chengdu Please Forget Me Tonight*) took China by storm, Murong gave up his job and devoted himself to writing full time. As he declined to join the China Writers' Society, he is regarded as an 'independent' writer. He currently lives in Guangzhou where he has started his own advertising company. His other four books include *Heaven on the Left, Shenzhen on the Right, Countless People Die of Greed* and, in October 2008, released *Dancing Through Red Dust* which has sold an estimated 100,000 copies in China.

On Friday 19 November 2010, in Beijing, Murong was awarded the 2010 People's Literature Prize for his acclaimed new book *The Missing Ingredient*. Murong had prepared to use the occasion to make a speech criticising China's continued censorship of writers but at the last moment as he ascended the platform, he was barred from speaking.



Mem Fox is Australia's most highly regarded picture-book author. Her first book, *Possum Magic*, is the best-selling children's book ever in Australia, with sales of over four million. In the USA, *Time for Bed* and *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* have each sold over a million copies. *Time for Bed* is on Oprah's list of the twenty best children's books of all time. Mem has written over thirty five picture books for children and five non-fiction books for adults. Her recent book: *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes* was on the *New York Times* bestseller lists for 18 weeks. It also won the 'best book for 0-3

year olds' award at the International Book Fair in Turin.

Mem Fox was an Associate Professor in Literacy Studies at Flinders University in Adelaide (Australia), where she taught teachers for twenty four years until her early retirement in 1996. She continues as an influential international consultant in literacy. Her latest book is *Let's Count Goats*.

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John Birmingham is the author of the cult classic *He Died With a Felafel in His Hand*, the award-winning history *Leviathan* and thriller trilogy comprising *Weapons of Choice: World War 2.1*, *Designated Targets: World War 2.2* and *Final Impact: World War 2.3*. Between writing books he contributes to a wide range of newspapers and magazines on topics as diverse as biotechnology and national security. In 2008, John Birmingham released his electrifying thriller *Without Warning*. His most recent blockbuster, *After America*, returns that to world.



Sonya Hartnett is the internationally acclaimed author of several novels, including *Thursday's Child*, winner of the 2002 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, and *Forest*, winner of the 2002 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year: Older Readers. Her work has been published internationally with editions available in the UK, US, Canada, Germany, Italy, Norway and Denmark.

In 2003, her adult novel, *Of a Boy*, won *The Age* Book of the Year and was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. In 2004, *The Silver Donkey* was published to great critical acclaim. It has won the 2005 Brisbane *Courier Mail* award for young readers and was CBC Book of the Year (Young readers) in 2005. *Surrender* was published in 2005. It was shortlisted for *The Age* Book of the Year Award and the Aurealis Award – Fantasy Division in 2005. In 2008 Sonya was the recipient of The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. It is the first time this award has gone to an Australian.



Yannick Haenel is the author of several novels, including *Introduction à la mort française* and *Évoluer parmi les avalanches*. In Paris in 1997 he co-founded the avant-garde journal for literature, *Ligne de risque*. *The Messenger*, published in France under the title *Jan Karski*, won the *Prix Interallié* and the *Prix du roman FNAC* in 2009. It is an extraordinary work of biography, woven into a compelling and tragic novel about a man's moral courage and our collective humanity, with parallels to Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* and WG Sebald's *Austerlitz*.



Dagmar Leupold lives in Kirchseeon near Munich. She is a poet and novelist and this year she will hold the Liliencron Chair for Poetics at the University of Kiel. Her poetry publications include *Wie Treibholz* (Like Driftwood), *Die Lust der Frauen auf Seite 13* (Women's Desire on page 13), *Byrons Feldbett* (Byron's Cot), and *Destillate* (Distillations). Her novels include *Federgewicht* (Featherweight), *Ende der Saison* (End of the Season) and *Eden Plaza* which was recently adapted into a film. She is currently the executive chairman of the German Literature Fund.



Abha Dawesar is the author of four critically acclaimed novels: *Family Values*, *That Summer in Paris*, *Babyji* and *Miniplanner*. She is the recipient of numerous honours including the American Library Association's Stonewall Book Award and a Lambda Literary Award. India's leading weekly magazine *India Today* named Dawesar as one of twenty five path-breaking Indians in 2007 and she was named one of India's 12 remarkable women by *Femina* magazine. *Babyji* was short-listed for France's most important literary award for foreign fiction Le Prix Médicis-Roman Etranger and also for Le Prix Bel Ami. The French translation of *Family Values* was shortlisted for the Prix Médicis Etranger, the Prix Femina, and the Prix RFI-témoin du monde.

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