

imagina el mundo NOBO DIGONTER KOLPONA

تَخَيَّلِ الْعَالَمِ *imagine the world* কল্পনায় জগত

logathe patti chindikyuga *képzeld el a világot*

कल्पना दुनिया की DYCHMYGWCH Y BYD *waza dunia*

FESTIVAL REPORT

STORYMOJA HAY FESTIVAL NAIROBI 2012



HAYFESTIVAL.ORG

AFRICA AMERICAS ASIA EUROPE MIDDLE EAST

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‘The weekend was brimming with unstoppable literary madness, from one session to the other, only a soul drunk on books would have coped.’

Beverley Nambozo, poet

The Festival



THE FOURTH ANNUAL STORYMOJA HAY FESTIVAL BROUGHT TOGETHER WRITERS, POETS, ILLUSTRATORS, STORYTELLERS, POLICY MAKERS, AMBASSADORS, CAMPAIGNERS, PUBLISHERS AND MUSICIANS TO NAIROBI TO *IMAGINE THE WORLD*. IT IS THE ONLY FESTIVAL OF ITS KIND IN EAST AFRICA AND HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT HUB FOR AFRICAN WRITERS TO MEET AND SHARE IDEAS WITH EACH OTHER, WITH THOSE FROM THE AFRICAN DIASPORA AND FROM OTHER COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE.

HAY FESTIVAL NAIROBI

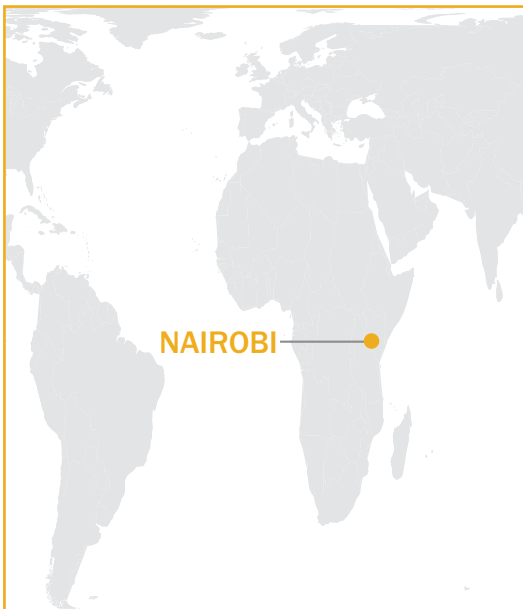
A specifically designed schools programme ran for the first two days of the festival, aiming to engage children with a passion for reading from a young age and introduce them to writers from Africa, Europe and America. University students and writers starting out on their careers attended masterclasses by MacArthur Fellow Dinaw Mengestu, University of East Anglia Creative Writing Professor and novelist Giles Foden, poets Lemn Sissay and Imtiaz Dharker and writer Precious Williams.

Over the weekend the programme commemorated Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement in Africa, with a lecture given by Chinese writer and historian Jung Chang. We also launched Paula Kahumbu’s ‘Africa’s Wildest Stories’ project with storytelling from elders of the Maasai community, examined the state of education in Kenya with Chris Mburu, and gave voice to political dissent and freedom of speech with Miguna Miguna, former advisor to the Prime Minister of Kenya.

The Storymoja Hay Festival took place in what can only be described as a near perfect festival venue, the National Museum of Kenya in Nairobi. Surrounded by millennia of Kenyan cultural heritage, including the Turkana Boy – the most complete early human skeleton ever found, at 1.5 million years old – in the beautiful wooded grounds with amphitheatres, courtyard and cafés, the setting created a gathering place for artists and audiences to share their days together just as they do at the Festival in Hay-on-Wye.



Artists came from Botswana, China, UK, Ethiopia, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Uganda, USA, Wales and Zambia. There emerged many great stories – especially from new voices – that inspired, encouraged and nurtured young writers to imagine their own world. Through introductions made for the Commonwealth Writers panel, writers Jekwu Anyaebuna (Nigeria) and Claudette Oduor (Kenya) have found new opportunities for publication through the publication *Kwani?* and are featured on the Hay Festival podcast service. Kenyan-based Scottish writer Michael Logan was specially commissioned to write a short story published in the UK’s *Telegraph*’s dedicated festival supplement, *Hayly Telegraph*. The *Hayly* also included interviews with Jekwu Anyaebuna, Lemn Sissay and Ory Okolloh.



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE TELEGRAPH, BRITISH COUNCIL, COMMONWEALTH WRITERS AND GOOGLE.

The Festival in Words



‘If there was ever a good reason to fly 19 hours to be with a group of exceptional readers and writers, the Storymoja Hay Festival is it. Every literary festival has its own unique culture and atmosphere, and the one here at Storymoja is a mix of unbridled optimism for what lies ahead, not only for the festival but for the millions of future readers it hopes to inspire, and a sense of profound commitment on the part of everyone here to teach, read and inspire as many people as possible in four days.’

DINAW MENGESTU

‘I’m proud of the workshops and the performances I gave and I can’t ask for more from a literature festival than the laughter at *The School Bell Rings* – a world-class event under the Nairobi sky – and the tears with Precious Williams on stage. I met so many great writers.’

LEMN SISSAY

‘The weekend was brimming with unstoppable literary madness, from one session to the other; only a soul drunk on books would have coped. My mind kept churning with how to take this all back to Uganda, my pen kept drafting poems and stories and my heart kept loving it all.’

BEVERLEY NAMBOZO, *poet*

The Festival in Words



‘I’m dazzled by the enthusiasm (and politeness) of the dozens and dozens of schoolchildren milling around the National Museum grounds.’

PRECIOUS WILLIAMS

‘As a veteran of the original Hay in Wales, I have been fortunate enough now to attend several of the festival’s sorties abroad. This year’s event in Nairobi has really got into its groove.’

JOHN KAMPFNER

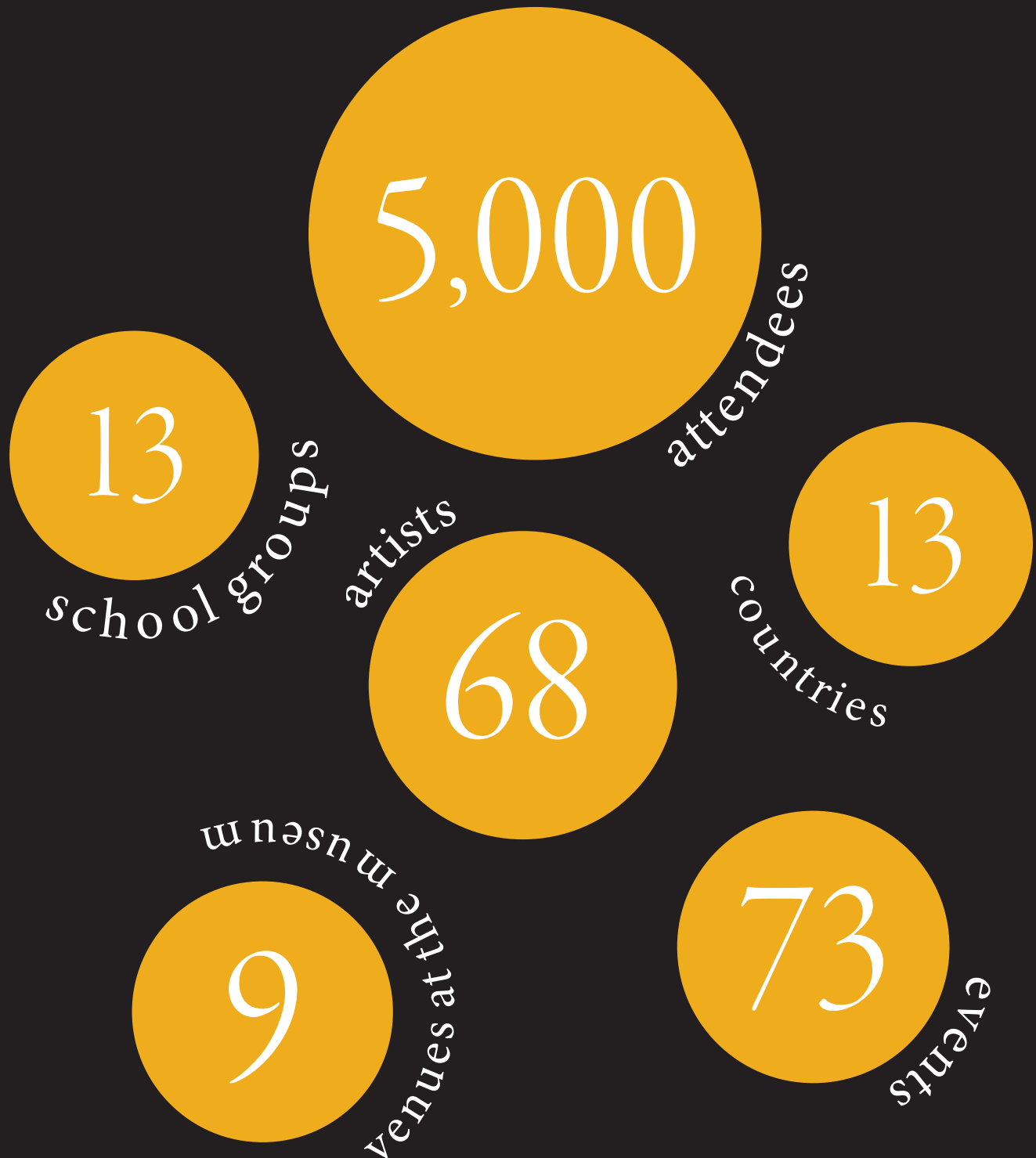
‘It’s hard to believe that this festival is just four years old. Between readings and workshops, I try to get to as many as I can, but I would need to be in five places at once to see it all.’

IMTIAZ DHARKER

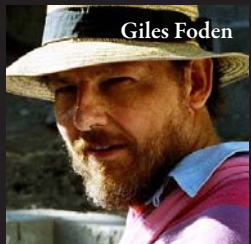
‘Such a wonderful experience teaching a (so-called) masterclass in Nairobi. Some amazing young writers from all over Kenya.’

GILES FODEN

The Festival in Numbers



The Authors



Festival content



HAY FESTIVAL NAIROBI

Writers this year included **Dinaw Mengestu**, Ethiopian-born American author of *Children of the Revolution*, **Precious Williams**, author of the memoir *Precious* and ambassador for the charity Africans Unite Against Child Abuse, **Giles Foden**, Professor of Creative Writing at University of East Anglia and author of the book based on Idi Amin's life, *The Last King of Scotland* and **Jung Chang**, author of *Wild Swans* and *Mao: The Unknown Story*, who gave the inaugural Wangari Maathai Lecture, honouring the Nobel Peace Laureate and founder of The Green Belt Movement in Kenya.

Masterclasses in art, poetry and creative writing are an essential part of the Festival and this year were given by **Lemn Sissay**, artist-in-residence at London's Southbank Centre, Pakistani-born poet and film-maker **Imtiaz Dharker**, Nigerian poet **Lola Shoneyin** and Dutch illustrator **Marit Tornqvist**. Wales Children's Laureate and Hay International Fellow **Eurig Salisbury** ran a children's poetry workshop.

Other African writers whose work was celebrated were **Lauri Kubuitsile**, **Lawrence Njagi**, and **John Sibi-Okumu**, while children were entertained in the Storyhippo Village by accomplished storyteller Wangari Grace.

The freedom of speech discussion between **Ory Okolloh**, head of Policy and Government Relations Africa for Google and author **John Kampfnr** could not have been more aposite in the run-up to Kenya's Elections March in 2013 and in the light of the violent clashes five years ago. Controversial politician **Miguna Miguna**, former advisor to the Prime Minister of Kenya, appeared on the final day to talk about his book, *Peeling Back the Mask*. In addition,



a Commonwealth Writers panel debated *The Writer and the Reader: Who are Contemporary African Authors Writing For?* with speakers including **Jekwu Anyaegbuna** Commonwealth Writers Short Story regional winner, Africa 2012.

It would not have been an African, or a Welsh, festival without music. Party with the Stars was a sparkling, exhilarating outdoor concert on the theme of 'Imagine the World', MC'd by author and festival co-founder **Muthoni Garland**. This was a melodious, global celebration of all that is positive about Africa and the writers and artists it produces.

For full programme visit www.hayfestival.org/nairobi, and for a taste of the festival content go to <http://blog.hayfestival.org/index.php/category/hay-festival-kenya/>

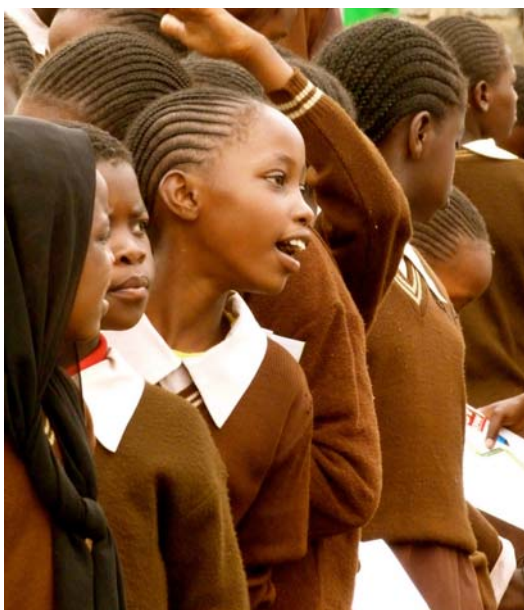
Schools and outreach programme



TEACHERS FROM A WIDE RADIUS WERE ENCOURAGED TO BRING THEIR CLASSES, MANY OF WHOM HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED PERFORMANCE ART OR EVEN COME INTO CONTACT WITH PUBLISHED WRITERS. AN ONGOING PROJECT THROUGHOUT THE FESTIVAL COMBINED STORY-TELLING, DRAWING, PAINTING AND HEALTH EDUCATION, RESULTING IN A HUGE MURAL CREATED BY THE CHILDREN AND NOW ON DISPLAY IN THE NETHERLANDS EMBASSY, NAIROBI.

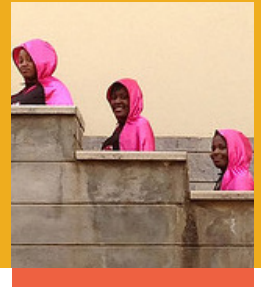
HAY FESTIVAL NAIROBI

Led by Dutch illustrator Marit Tornqvist, known for her children’s book illustrations, the audience was entertained with stories about the ocean, while learning about basic hygiene, the risk of water-borne illnesses, and how the food we grow relies on a supply of this precious resource. One teacher, from Spring Valley Centre, said her pupils aged 11-14 would certainly benefit. ‘Their writing and reading will improve, and the art will fire their imagination.’ She explained that although the government pays for books at State schools, parents find it hard to pay for uniform and other charges, and many do not see the value of secondary education when their children could be earning money or working for their family. The Storymoja Hay Festival has launched the Start a Library charity to provide schools throughout Kenya with books and equipment (www.startalibrary.org).



At the outdoor amphitheatre, a poetry gala presented Hay International Fellow and Welsh children’s laureate Eurig Salisbury, London-based Ethiopian poet Lemn Sissay and Uganda’s Beverley Nambozo, who organises a women’s poetry award (and pleaded, ‘Please bring Hay to Kampala’). Again, adults and teachers remarked that their children had no opportunity to hear poets of such acclaim, were it not for Storymoja Hay Festival. Other outreach events for children were held in the arts and crafts tent where, guided by experts, they brought to life in physical form characters from their favourite books. Teenagers and visitors of all ages were fascinated by tales from Maasai elders, whose words were translated into ‘Africa’s Wildest Stories’, and are being recorded as part of a community project by scientist Paula Kahumbu, the 2011 National Geographic Explorer of the Year. The oral history is supported by the National Museum of Kenya, this year’s new venue for the Storymoja Hay Festival.

Media coverage



‘SINCE ITS INCEPTION FOUR YEARS AGO, THE STORYMOJA HAY FESTIVAL HAS SEEN ITSELF PRIMARILY AS A LITERARY FESTIVAL, THE FIRST ONE OF ITS KIND TO OPEN IN KENYA. AND FROM THE LOOK OF THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL AUDIENCES THAT CAME TO THE FOUR-DAY FETE, THE KENYAN PUBLIC HAS BEEN STARVED OF SUCH A CULTURAL EVENT: ONE WHICH BRINGS AUTHORS – POETS, PLAYWRIGHTS, NOVELISTS, BLOGGERS AND EVEN FILMMAKERS TOGETHER FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. IT’S ALSO SO INTERACTIVE THAT IT GENERATES CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CULTURAL ISSUES THAT PEOPLE CLEARLY RELISHED HAVING.’

Business Daily

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

Daily Telegraph

GM story from Louise Gray, comment piece from Madeline Miller and Hay Diary – *Friday 1 June*

Telegraph dedicated *Hayly Telegraph* festival supplement

Daily Nation – Zuqqa pull-out, double-page spread

Daily Nation – Lifestyle section, three separate event mentions

The Star – Article and coverage on its society page

The Standard – Article (Interview)

Kenya Yetu Magazine

UP Magazine

ONLINE:

www.telegraph.co.uk
www.crazynairobian.com
www.nairobiliving.com
www.kenyanpoet.com
www.thegreenbeltmovement.com
www.diasporadical.com

TV

KTN – 1 x Breakfast Interview
NTV – 3 x Breakfast Interview
KBC – 1 x Breakfast Interview
BBC World News, *Fast Track*
CNN – Coverage of Storytelling session
with Paula Kahumbu
GBS – 1 x Live Interview on *Women's View*

RADIO

Kiss 100 – On location interview
BBC English Service
BBC Somali Service
BBC Swahili Service
KBC English Service

In addition, see [Zoe Flood's interview with Giles Foden in the Telegraph](#), and related articles, at:

www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/hay-festival/9547660/Hay-Festival-Nairobi-Exciting-times-for-literature-in-Kenya.html

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