

SYDNEY JEWISH WRITERS FESTIVAL

2020 Program

August & September | Online

WELCOME

The events of 2020 gave us the opportunity to innovate and think differently about how to connect with the community. The Sydney Jewish Writers Festival has hosted more events in the past few months than we would have in our regular program. By moving online, we were able to invite some wonderful international speakers, and we've been deeply moved to see so many attendees from all over the world.

We're thrilled to bring you the official online program for this year's Festival. Our aim, as it has always been, is to keep you connected and uplifted this August and September. Featuring some of the most fantastic contemporary Jewish writing, we're delighted to offer you a broad range of authors, exploring themes of identity, belonging, past trauma, shared responsibility, and much more.

Usually, we'd all get together over one weekend in August, excitedly chatting over cups of coffee, rushing to the next interview while squeezing past all the other festival-goers in the foyer. This year, we're bringing you an online program with some incredible international and Australian authors. And, for the first time ever, we're able to share our festival with people all over Australia, New Zealand, and beyond. We're dedicated to providing high quality events that you can attend from the safety of your own home. Following each interview, we invite you to continue the discussion in our new Facebook group The Jewish Book Club.

An enormous amount of work has gone into our 2020 program. I'd like to give my sincere thanks to the Shalom team for all their hard work. And thank you to the devoted, creative members of our SJWF Programming Committee - Rita Nash, Michaela Kalowski and Adam van Rooijen. I also want to thank Scott Whitmont for his dedication to the SJWF over the years.

We look forward to seeing you online.

Anna Stern
Sydney Jewish Writers Festival Director

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Thursday 20 August | 8pm

The Year of Facing Fire

Helena Kriel in conversation with Rita Nash

Tuesday 25 August | 10am

Concealed

Esther Amini in conversation with Karmel Melamed

Thursday 3 September | 8pm

The Watermill

Arnold Zable in conversation with Nicole Abadee

Sunday 6 September | 8pm

Learning from the Germans

Susan Neiman in conversation with Michaela Kalowski

Monday 14 September | 8pm

Growing Up Queer

Benjamin Law in conversation with Roz Bellamy and Hayley Katzen

Thursday 20 August | 8pm

THE YEAR OF FACING FIRE

Helena Kriel in conversation with Rita Nash

Helena Kriel's debut memoir, set in 1990s South Africa, emerges from the darkness of apartheid. *The Year of Facing Fire* centres around Helena's dying brother, and how he and each member of the family navigates the searing inevitability of his death and all that it means. Rita Nash will interview Helena about the real-life inspiration for her powerful book.

“My brother was on the list of the first twenty people in South Africa that were diagnosed with HIV. Nobody even knew what HIV was. My siblings didn't know he was diagnosed with HIV because our parents decided not to disclose to us.”

-Helena Kriel, *The Year of Facing Fire*



Helena Kriel

Award-winning playwright and Hollywood screenwriter, Helena Kriel, is a world-traveller. *The Year of Facing Fire*, about her dynamic South African family, is set in the year Helena was commissioned to write the screenplay for the hit film *Kama Sutra*. Helena teaches screenwriting at Spalding University, and is the founder of Baby Rhino Rescue, a NFP dedicated to saving rhinos from extinction. Helena divides her time between South Africa, and Los Angeles.



Rita Nash

With an extensive career as a librarian, book shop manager and teacher, Rita Nash's story, *The Last Barrier*, was published in *Children of the Shadows*, Australia's first collection of second-generation Holocaust survivor stories. In the 1990s, Rita also worked at a high school as Student Welfare Coordinator, where she developed programs to reduce the stigma around HIV and AIDS, and in 1991 cared for a family friend as he battled his AIDS diagnosis. Rita is a dedicated guide at the Sydney Jewish Museum and a long-standing member of the SJWF Programming Committee.

Tuesday 25 August | 10am

CONCEALED

Esther Amini in conversation with Karmel Melamed

Born to Persian Jews who fled Iran, Esther Amini grew up in freewheeling 1960s New York. *Concealed: Memoir of a Jewish-Iranian Daughter Caught Between the Chador and America*, uncovers her parents' early years as crypto-Jews in Iran's holiest Muslim city, and their arduous journey to America, where they faced the threat of freedom.

“My father’s terror of the outside world and my mother’s hunger for it spilled into our raucous home.”

-Esther Amini, *Concealed*



Esther Amini

Esther Amini is a New York-based writer, painter, and psychoanalytic psychotherapist. Her short stories have appeared in *Elle*, *Lilith*, *Tablet*, *The Jewish Week*, and *Proximity*. She was awarded the Aspen Words Emerging Writer Fellowship in 2016, and was chosen by the Jewish Women's Theatre as their Artist-in-Residence in 2019. Esther's pieces have been performed in theatres in Los Angeles and in Manhattan.



Karmel Melamed

Karmel Melamed is an award-winning internationally published journalist, activist, speaker and attorney based in Los Angeles. Fluent in Farsi, Melamed is an expert on the Iranian-American community, the current Iranian regime's human rights violations against Jews and other minorities, and Middle East politics. His writing frequently appears in *The Times of Israel* and *The Forward*. Karmel is based in Southern California.

Thursday 3 September | 8pm

THE WATERMILL

Arnold Zable in conversation with Nicole Abadee

Celebrated author Arnold Zable returns to SJWF to discuss his latest book, *The Watermill*. The collection of four stories explores themes of past trauma and healing, displacement and belonging. Each tale is set in a starkly different location, from the remote provinces of China to Indigenous Australia. Arnold will speak to Nicole Abadee about the journeys and people that inspired this moving piece of work.

“I can think of no other writer who describes the aching heart of humanity with as much wisdom and compassion as Arnold Zable. *The Watermill* brings gentle light to some dark places. Whatever ails the human race, Zable is surely part of the solution.”

-Michael McGirr



Arnold Zable

Arnold Zable is a highly acclaimed novelist, storyteller and human rights advocate. His works include *Cafe Scheherazade*, *Jewels and Ashes*, *Sea of Many Returns*, *The Fig Tree*, *Scraps of Heaven*, *Violin Lessons* and *The Fighter*, which was shortlisted for both a Victorian and NSW Premier’s Literary Award. His awards include the 2017 Australia Council Fellowship for Literature and the 2013 Voltaire Prize for freedom of expression.



Nicole Abadee

Following a twenty-year legal career, Nicole Abadee now writes about books for *Good Weekend* and *Australian Book Review*, and appears regularly as a facilitator at writers’ festivals. Nicole is also a literary consultant, assisting writers to develop their manuscripts and advising them on how to get published. Her podcast *Books, Books, Books*, in which Nicole interviews Australian and international authors about their new releases, was launched during Covid.

Sunday 6 September | 8pm

LEARNING FROM THE GERMANS

Susan Neiman in conversation with Michaela Kalowski

Susan Neiman's most recent book, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*, combines philosophical reflection and interviews with both Americans and Germans who are grappling with their own national histories and racism in particular.

What is our responsibility to our national pasts? How should children be educated, monuments built or removed, reparations for injustice organised, and political cultures constructed? Discussing post-war Germany and its moral responsibility for the actions of the Nazi party, to Black Lives Matter movements around the world, Susan will reflect on how the unexamined past forces its way into the present.



Susan Neiman

Susan Neiman is a moral philosopher, the director of the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, Germany and a member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences. Her previous books include *Why Grow Up: Subversive Thoughts for an Infantile Age*, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists*, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, and *Slow Fire: Jewish Notes from Berlin*. Neiman studied philosophy at Harvard and the Free University of Berlin and was a professor of philosophy at Yale and Tel Aviv Universities. She is the mother of three grown children, and lives in Berlin.



Michaela Kalowski

Michaela Kalowski is an interviewer and facilitator for writers', film and ideas festivals. She has conducted radio interviews for ABC Radio National, Classic FM and Local Radio, and was festival curator of the *Big Weekend of Books*, ABC Radio National's first ever on-air writers festival. Highlight interviews include Margaret Atwood, Trent Dalton, Amos Oz, Tom Keneally, Turia Pitt and Charlotte Wood. Michaela is a member of the SJWF Programming Committee.

“From Baltimore to Bristol to Brisbane, thousands are standing in solidarity with black Americans and calling for a re-examination of their own local histories...We cannot have a just and decent present as long as we refuse to face our pasts.”

-Susan Neiman,
Learning from the Germans

Monday 14 September | 8pm

GROWING UP QUEER

Benjamin Law in conversation with Roz Bellamy and Hayley Katzen

Join Benjamin Law as he talks to two emerging literary talents about Australian Jewish queer identity and the inspiration behind their writing. With recurring themes of home, migration, and belonging, their collective works are a must-read for anyone who has ever felt out of place.



Benjamin Law

Benjamin Law is a celebrated author and journalist, and the editor of *Growing Up Queer in Australia*. He is a columnist for Fairfax's *Good Weekend* magazine, co-host of ABC RN's weekly national pop culture show *Stop Everything*, and frequently appears on the TV shows *Q&A*, *The Drum* and *The Project*. Benjamin's memoir, *The Family Law*, about growing up gay and Asian in Australia, was adapted for SBS TV.



Roz Bellamy

Roz Bellamy is a Melbourne-based writer, PhD candidate and editor at *Archer Magazine*, and is in the process of completing a memoir about gender diversity, Jewish identity and mental illness. Roz describes their experience attending a Modern Orthodox Jewish school as a queer and non-binary person in their essay 'Binary School', which appears in the anthology *Growing Up Queer in Australia*.



Hayley Katzen

Hayley Katzen migrated from South Africa to Australia in 1989. After a career as a law lecturer and researcher, Hayley studied acting, and wrote and produced a play about asylum seekers. In 2005, Hayley moved to her girlfriend's cattle farm in the Australian bush and completed an MFA (Creative Writing). Hayley's short stories and essays have been published internationally. *Untethered* is her debut memoir.

“On reflection, it’s odd that I grew up without meeting openly queer people, and with so little exposure to stories with which I could identify”.

-Benjamin Law,
Growing Up Queer in Australia

OUR PARTNERS



booktopia

GERTRUDE & ALICE
CAFE BOOKSTORE



www.shalom.edu.au
Shalom | UNSW Sydney | NSW | 2052
Email shalom@shalom.edu.au
Phone 02 9381 4000

f [/ShalomSydneyJewishWritersFestival](#)

@ [@sydjewishwritersfest](#)

in [/company/shalomsydney](#)