

MLF 2023 - Writer blurbs and biographies

1. **Bridget Pitt.** *Eye Brother Horn.*

Bridget Pitt, a Cape Town author and environmental activist, brings us her commanding new novel Eye Brother Horn, published by Catalyst Press in the USA. It has been described as a “compelling cocktail of brother love, colonial conquest and rhino magic set in British-ruled Natal in the 1870’s.” Meticulously researched, the story tracks two boys, Daniel and Moses who grow up as brothers on a mission station. When they leave the confines of the uMzinyathi mission, issues of race, social pressure, colonialism, and conflicting religious traditions, force the brothers to make a difficult choice.

Bridget Pitt has three previously published novels as well as poetry, short stories and non-fiction. Two of her novels were long-listed for the Sunday Times Literary awards. She has also been shortlisted for the Commonwealth Book Prize (2011) and the Wole Soyinka African Literature Award (2012). Her short stories have also received a Commonwealth nomination and have been published in anthologies in South Africa, Canada and the UK.

2. **Sicelo Mbatha .** *Black Lion.*

Sicelo Mbatha brings us his powerful memoir Black Lion: Alive in the Wilderness, in which he shares the stories and wisdom he has gleaned from a life spent in the African wild. Having grown up alongside the Hluhluwe/Imfolozi Nature Reserve - and in spite of the early trauma of seeing his cousin taken by a crocodile - he has devoted himself to being a wilderness spiritual guide. His close encounters with wilderness and with wild animals have taught him to ‘see’ with his heart and have formed the basis for his own spiritual awakening. His extraordinary book, co-written by Bridget Pitt, reminds us of the power of wilderness to heal us and re-connect us with ourselves.

3. Ashwin Desai & Goolam Vahed. *Durban's Casbah : Bunny Chows, Bolsheviks and Bioscopes.*

Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed , professors at the University of Johannesburg and UKZN, and entertaining contributors at previous MLF events, collaborate once again on a new joint venture: Durban's Casbah: Bunny Chows, Bolsheviks and Bioscopes. Having spent their childhoods in and around Durban's Grey Street, the authors provide a fascinating history on the history of the area known by residents as 'The Casbah.' The book has been described as breathing "magical life into apartheid's grisly geography, knocking on doors, dancing on rooftops and doggedly pursuing retreating shadows into the arcades of wonder. A story about place that will take you around the world and bring you back home."

4. Janet van Eeden. *Cut to the Chase : Scriptwriting for Beginners.*

Janet Van Eeden's book Cut to the Chase: Scriptwriting for Beginners (published by Mojaji) is a highly effective, step-by-step practical approach to help people who are interested in learning to write for the screen. In it she lays bare the secrets of scriptwriting. Her credentials to do this are impeccable, having written more screenplays herself than she can count. She is an educator, screenwriter, playwright, producer, evaluator as well as Dean of AFDA in Durban. She also has a PHD in English from UKZN.

5. Brenda George - The Sound of War Drums.

Now living in Pietermaritzburg, Brenda George grew up in the small mining town of Luanshya, in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia, with her parents and three sisters. A freelance editor, publishing consultant, literary agent and author, she edited the international best-selling novel, A Man Cannot Cry by her sister, Gloria Keverne. Thus, the two sisters share a unique

writing/editing relationship. George started writing in 1982 and now devotes most of her time to this much-loved pursuit.

*Her novel *The Sound of War Drums* is set in the years, 1949-1978, in the Cherokee Indian Reservation in the Great Smoky Mountains, Zambia and Zaire. Based on true events, such as the pernicious Indigenous Boarding Schools, Jim Crow, the Eugenics horror, elephant hunting, and a rebel invasion into Katanga, it is rich and evocative, filled with unforgettable characters and is a triumph of compelling story-telling.*

6. Ashti Jaggath - *Peaches and Smeets*. (Longlisted for the Sunday Times Fiction Prize)

*Ashti Juggath grew up on the beautiful KwaZulu-Natal North Coast and would spend school holidays with her grandparents in Springs on the East Rand, the setting for her first novel *Peaches and Smeets*. It tells the story of Smita who struggles to find her feet in a world beset by contradictions, caught as she is between the beloved traditions of India and life in a quickly modernising South Africa, between family roots in Natal and a prosperous present in the Transvaal; between the madness of apartheid and the pull of her own desires.*

Ashti lives in Johannesburg with her husband, three children and many books. When not reading or writing, she works as a pharmacist for a large corporate.

7. Musa E. Zulu. *I Am Art*.

Musa E Zulu is a published author, an award winning entrepreneur, international artist, celebrated motivational speaker and prominent disability activist in South Africa. He was fast climbing the career ladder when, at the age of 23, he was paralyzed in a car accident. By applying his personal philosophy of embracing change, he not only found a way to

cope with his new life, but to inspire others as well. Over the past 28 years (since the 1995 road accident) he has delivered motivational talks to various institutions throughout South Africa. He has won multiple awards for his work, including 'One of the South 10 South African men we just love' by Oprah magazine. He will be talking about his latest book I am art.

8. Cuba Ikaneng. A land of no heroes

Makhubalo (Cuba) Ikaneng, is a man with many talents: podcast host, author, theatre practitioner, story teller, TV director and film producer. In 2022 he won the 'Time of the writer' literature champion award. He is the co-founder of Ubuntu Nest which runs the Young Authors Book Initiative (YABI): a life skills project that mentors young aspirant writers through the writing process. This year he will be talking about his collection of short stories called A land of no heroes. It includes 12 tales, some of which have been adapted as entertaining and thought-provoking stage plays.

9. Gloria Keverne. A Man Cannot Cry

Self-taught writer Gloria Keverne achieved her life's dream 34 years ago when her first novel become an international bestseller. She'd left school at age 15, married at 18 and started writing immediately. A Man Cannot Cry was born in the little town of Luanshya, on the Roan Antelope Copper Mine which employed her father and husband in colonial Northern Rhodesia. An ex-editor of LIFE MAGAZINE, the legendary New York Agent, Julian Bach, called the book the finest first novel he'd read in his almost 50 years in the literary world. It was also named by PEOPLE magazine as a 'Top Ten Book of the Year' in America as well as BOOKSELLER'S 'Most Promising Title' in Britain.

10. Saleem Badat. Tennis, Apartheid and Social Justice

Saleem Badat, research professor at the University of the Free State is the author of Tennis, Apartheid and Social Justice . The book documents a European tennis tour for six talented young black South Africans in 1971. It describes the impact of the tour on the young players; 18-year-old Hoosan Bobat in particular, who was denied the opportunity to play in the Junior Wimbledon Championship. The book contends that there has been neither recognition of nor reparations for outstanding apartheid-era black sportspersons and that the apartheid legacy continues to impinge powerfully on tennis today.

11. Malisha Peters. See me

Malisha Peters is a survivor. Her memoir See me! is testament to her ability to endure and eventually flourish to become 'a better, rather than a bitter person'. Her many struggles include growing up without a father, her identity crisis, years of bullying, child abuse, divorce, single motherhood, obesity and coping with the empty nest syndrome. Her book details her life's journey to wholeness and is written in an engaging, honest style with touches of humour.

Malisha Peters was born and bred in Pietermaritzburg. She is currently a Chief Accounting Clerk in Finance -for the KZN Department of Education. She is very active in her community and has been a volunteer with a community charity Grassroots Legacy, a reservist with the SAPS, a volunteer with the Pietermaritzburg Fire Department, and a reservist soldier with the SANDF. She is also a dynamic public speaker, MC and motivational speaker, poet, and writer.

12. Gladys Ryan. Gentle like water

Glynis Ryan's first book Gentle like water grapples with the human journey towards 'selflessness'. In a broken world that is full of distraction and trauma, she shares tips on how to travel with less anxiety and alienation and how to bring less harm to ourselves and one another. The

book, which is divided into four sections, has discussions and exercises that focus on self-growth and reflections on the world. A key element for her is to work with ambiguities and contradictions. She also offers tools and useful reflections to help us on our individual paths towards self-awareness and wholeness.

Gladys Ryan is a Durban-based communication consultant working in the area of adult education, human rights and development. She was a trade union activist during the apartheid years.

13. Darius & Catherine Brubeck *Playing the Changes: Jazz at an African University and on the Road*

Cathy and Darius Brubeck, provide a richly detailed, personal account of South African history (1983–2006) and the transformative effect of jazz at university and at large. Playing the Changes is a memoir, replete with anecdotes and adventures, in part a double biography and a one-off story. The book includes sad and comic incidents as well as insightful portraits of the people who made music throughout this politically turbulent time.

Darius Brubeck is an internationally renowned pianist, composer and band leader. He was head of Jazz Studies and then director of the Centre for Jazz and Popular Music at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 1989 to 2005, when he moved to London and established The Darius Brubeck Quartet.

Catherine Brubeck worked for political change as a student at the University of Natal before a varied career in publishing, conference organising and music management in New York. On her return to South Africa, she initiated and arranged tours and concerts for students and professional South African jazz groups.

14. Sven Axelrad. *Buried Treasure.* (Longlisted for the Sunday Times Fiction Prize)

Sven Axelrad was born in New Zealand to a French-speaking British father and a South African mother, and lives in Durban. He is a man of many parts: an accountant who loves words, and an avid reader. He also plays the guitar and is covered in tattoos. His debut novel Buried Treasure, published by Penguin, is set in the fictional town of Vivo and is erudite and wise, magical and quirky. It has been described as an enchanting adventure that explores what our names mean to us and who we are without them.

15. Craig Higginson. *The Ghost of Sam Webster*

*CRAIG HIGGINSON is an award-winning author and playwright who is based in Johannesburg. *The Ghost of Sam Webster* is his most haunting and ambitious novel to date. The novel describes what happens when writer Daniel Hawthorne investigates the disappearance of Sam Webster, the beautiful daughter of his friend, the famous historian Bruce Webster. The novel draws together the same epic historical sweep, the state-of-the-nation resonance and the dramatic psychological complexity of his other prizewinning and celebrated novels, *The Landscape Painter* (2011), *The Dream House* (2015) and *The Book of Gifts* (2020).*

16. Pamela Power. *My Year Of Not Getting Sh*tfaced*

*Johannesburg-based author Pamela Power takes an honest, fun and humorous look at (attempted) sobriety in *My Year of Not Getting Sh*tfaced*. In it Power takes a hard look at her drinking habit and realises that although she does not need to find an AA group immediately, she might be a serial binge drinker and needs to take back control. Her story is set against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and through it we experience all the frustration, the discomfort of the withdrawals and the reaction from friends*

and family to her decision to go dry. Pamela Powers is a television scriptwriter and script editor, currently working on Muvangho. Her work includes Top Billing, Generations, Rockville and Uzalo.

17. Jeff Opland and Pamela Maseko *Hadi Waseluhlangeni: Collected Writings of Jonas Ntsiko (1873-1916)*

Professor Jeff Opland and Pamela Maseku have edited and translated the work of Jonas Ntsiko, a Xhosa writer, who until now has been largely overlooked by history. Ntsiko (1850–1918) wrote under the pseudonym ‘Hadi waseluhlangeni’, the National harp. This volume contains two substantial essays, by Marguerite Poland and Jeff Opland about his life and the contribution he made to Xhosa literature – as well as Ntsiko’s own writing: journals, narrative and lyrical poetry, obituaries and polemical articles on the bible translation, politics and church affairs.

Jeff Opland is Research Associate and visiting Professor in the Rhodes University’s African Language Studies. Professor Pamela Maseko is the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at Nelson Mandela University. Opland has recently been awarded presidential Silver in the Order of Ikhamanga Awards for his contribution in the field of history and an impressive body of works in literature.

18. Darryl Earl David. *BookBedonnerd. The Road to Elsewhere* . (A Literary Memoir.)

Our own maverick Midlands Literary Festival organizer Darryl David will be talking about his latest book, a memoir titled Bookbedonnerd: The Road To Elsewhere. The book is packed with anecdotes about his travels around South Africa for the past 20 years; journeys he has undertaken often with 5 dogs in tow (2 of which are St Bernards). Darryl lectures in Afrikaans at UWC and last year was the recipient of the English Academy of South Africa’s Gold Medal Award for his tireless work in championing South African literature. Among his many talents, Darryl has authored books on Country Churches of South Africa as well as a children’s book that features Egyptian Geese. He is a lover of dogs and donkeys and is a serial founder of book festivals that include: The Midlands literary festival, The Breyten

Breytenbach literary festival, the JM Coetzee literary festival, The Schreiner festival; The Fugard festival, the Boekbedonnerd festival in Richmond and, during the pandemic he brought to life the Madibaland World Literature Festival – the largest online book festival in the world!

19. Nomaza Malamlela Mei. *The Crowing Rooster*

*Nomaza Mei is an ambitious, brave, strong South African woman who survived a childhood illness thanks to a dedicated team of outreach nurses in the 1970s. However, her illness left her with severe hearing loss . In her memoir *The Crowing Rooster* she tells the story of her journey from early childhood just before she fell sick on a remote family farm through the challenges and achievements she has encountered living with a hearing defect.*

Despite being humiliated and discriminated against, she has studied to become a healthcare professional who has saved countless lives, especially children. Her inspirational story is full of practical suggestions for anyone coping with the hearing-impaired life.

20. Futhi Ntshingila. *They got to you too.* (Winner of the 2022 Sharjah International Book Prize)

*Futhi Ntshingila grew up in Pietermaritzburg but she now she lives and works in Pretoria. She is a former journalist and holds Master’s Degree in Conflict Resolution. She loves telling stories about the marginal corners of society. Her third novel *They got to you too* was the winner of the ‘Best International Fictional Book Prize’ at the UAE book Fair in 2022.*

The story, set in contemporary South Africa, is narrated by two characters bound to each other by their harrowing histories: one an 80-year-old white man haunted by the crimes he committed as an officer under the apartheid

government, the other a compassionate black nurse who is caring for him, and hiding her own secrets. As the Covid-19 lockdown keeps them isolated, the bond between these two unlikely companions deepens.

21. Ashwin Desai. Kingsmead Scores a Century.

Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed , professors at the University of Johannesburg and UKZN, and entertaining contributors at previous MLF events, collaborate once again on a new joint venture: Durban's Casbah: Bunny Chows, Bolsheviks and Bioscopes. Having spent their childhoods in and around Durban's Grey Street, the authors provide a fascinating history on the history of the area known by residents as 'The Casbah.' The book has been described as breathing "magical life into apartheid's grisly geography, knocking on doors, dancing on rooftops and doggedly pursuing retreating shadows into the arcades of wonder. A story about place that will take you around the world and bring you back home."