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**New podcasts are launched to celebrate the magical rivers weaving through South Downs landscape**

A series of thought-provoking podcasts are being launched inspired by the beautiful and mysterious rivers of Sussex and Hampshire.

Seven acclaimed writers and poets have teamed up for Full Harvest – a series of audio stories and poems inspired by the South Downs National Park’s landscape and available as free podcasts from 12 July 2021 via all major listening platforms.

It comes after the wordsmiths have spent the past few months exploring the scenic river valleys and engaging with the community on local stories, anecdotes and reflections about the landscape.

The result is an eclectic mix of writing styles featuring short stories, poetry and monologues.

The inspiring initiative has been led by arts charity Applause in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority.

**“Full Harvest is much more than just observations on the landscape, it encompasses thought-provoking reflections on how nature and humanity interact. We’ve also worked with a really diverse group of writers and actors to enable some incredibly personal stories and experiences to be heard. ”**

**Sally Lampitt, Deputy Director, Applause**

The Full Harvest episodes are as follows:

**“Wild Garlic”, River Ouse, Sarah Hehir**

Through charming rhyme and rhythm, Wild Garlic charts the close bond of a father and daughter- from the childish glee of springtime swims to the grown woman mourning his death, the river and its flora and fauna provide a comforting constant.

**“Cement Bags”, River Adur, Sara Clifford**

Ever passed a disused building and wondered about what stories it had to tell? Cement Bags brings to life the hustle and bustle of the Cement Factory at Beeding. Meet the women who worked there on the telephone exchange and listen to their lives in parallel to the building, from its glory days as an industrial hub to its poignant decline.

**“Nature’s Storehouse”, River Meon, Lucy Flannery**

Exploring the history and mythology of the South Downs as a man uses his love of running to work towards recovery both physically and mentally.

**“Celestial Navigation”, River Ouse, Sara Clifford**

A poignant tale of family relationships, the intergenerational bond between a young woman and her grandfather is explored against the backdrop of a busy Ferry town. A reminder that we don’t know what we have until it’s gone.

**“Meanderings”, River Cuckmere, Rosanna Lowe**

An elderly woman reflects on her meandering life as it mirrors the bends and breaks of the River Cuckmere. Life is never quite what it seems on the surface and her winding journey finds diversity in the landscape and its inhabitants, proving that where there is life there is hope.

**“The Baptism”, River Rother, Theo Toksvig-Stewart**

A dark and unexpected tale about a young girl who meets a mysterious figure by the River. A modern-day myth about being careful what you wish for.

**“My Mother”, River Lover, River Arun, Rosanna Lowe,**

A man reflects on the ebbs and flows of his complex relationship with his mother. He recalls his mother’s close bond with the water, her struggles with mental health and alcohol dependency, and her joyous moments of freedom in nature. A tale of love and loss on the River Arun.

**“A Good Place to Cry”, River Cuckmere, A.G.G**

We follow a young man at a crisis point in his life. One traumatic moment forces him to escape the city and find solace and hope in the landscape of the South Downs

**“Dear Wellsbourne/ Brighton Rocks”, River Wellesbourne, Merrie Williams**

Dear Wellsbourne is a series of seven sevenling poems addressed directly to the stream; interspersed with a short story about local residents, called ‘Brighton Rocks. Mirroring the intermittent pattern of the stream itself, Brighton Rocks explores how two friends deal with the challenges to face their past and live the lives they desire.

**“Perspective”, River Itchen, Lucy Flannery**

A reminder that many people have walked before us! A clever poem interweaving lives past and present who have interacted with the landscape. From modern-day runners, to the past battalions of Cromwell’s men, to the father and daughter who find connection and peace by the River.

**Sara Clifford, lead writer and Sussex resident:**

**“The Sussex Downs is both a beautiful National Park and a living landscape that supports people and work, and I am interested in discovering how the river has shaped the local community and its stories, from industry and jobs, to the environment and leisure, and how local people view it today. I am particularly interested in people who might feel that the National Park is inaccessible for them, for whatever reasons, and finding ways of connecting groups with their local landscape, history and culture of the National Park.”**

**Theo Toksvig-Stewart, writer and Hampshire resident:**

**"My story was inspired by the duality of the landscape of the National Park, its beauty and its danger.  The characters were really personified from that landscape, and toying with what could lie beneath the beauty is something we had a lot of fun exploring in my work with the students at Alton college."**

**“Each story approaches the theme of ‘rivers’ very differently, from the darkness of horror to conversational monologues. The common thread throughout is that natural landscapes can provide hope and new perspectives, and the connection between nature and the journey to recovery. Our mental health and wellbeing is so centred on our sense of place and belonging, I hope people enjoy these stories for their entertainment (whether listening from home on a wet afternoon or walking the downland), and find they open up different ways of experiencing the unpredictable, tranquil, wild and powerful nature of water.”**

**Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the South Downs National Park,**

Audiences can plug in and listen while they walk and explore the landscape, or enjoy at their leisure.

They will be available to **download and listen** on the SDNPA and Applause websites and popular listening platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcast, Overcast and Pocket Casts:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk> / [www.applause.org.uk](http://www.applause.org.uk)

Find out more below about each of the seven writers involved in Full Harvest.

**Writers**

**Sara Clifford – focussing on the River Ouse and River Adur**

**Lead writer/Dramaturg for Full Harvest**

[**www.saraclifford.com**](http://www.saraclifford.com/)

Sara works as a writer, director and community artist, and has written over forty plays including commissions for the Soho Theatre, York Theatre Royal & Nottingham Playhouse. She has been Writer in Residence at the University of Brighton and at Chichester Festival Theatre, and her work has been produced in France, Italy, Guadeloupe and Hong Kong. Her play A Thousand Days, was a Finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn award.

As Artistic Director of her company, Inroads ( [www.inroads.org.uk](http://www.inroads.org.uk/))  she works with local communities to write place-based work rooted in their stories, and has developed six site-specific participatory pieces, with a new show coming for 2022, Two Pairs of Eyes, seed funded by Farnham Maltings.

In 2019, she was Writer in Residence for the South Downs Park/ Applause, and the resulting show, Cherry Soup, toured rural venues across the Park.  She is the lead writer on Full Harvest, the project which developed from this.

**Lucy Flannery – focussing on the River Meon and River Itchen**

Lucy’s writing career has included: working with Alison Stead and Roy Hudd on **Like A Daughter,** a drama for BBC Radio 4, being commissioned to write an original play, **Tomorrow Will Be Too Late**, as part of the D-Day 70th Anniversary Commemoration and writing **Nan**a one-minute monologue created during lockdown for Ink Festival. She has worked on the Chichester Festival Theatre’s playwriting course and most recently as Writer-In-Residence at the University of Plymouth. She is both an artistic practitioner and an FE College Governor, she is experienced in working with young people.

**Sarah Hehir – focussing on the River Ouse**

Sarah has been a writer, dramatist and a drama teacher for over 20 years. She performed at Kosovo’s International Literary Festival in 2019, and in 2013 she won the BBC Writer’s Prize for a radio drama **Bang Up** where the North Downs became part of the narrative and was broadcast as the afternoon drama on Radio 4. An accomplished writer for Theatre, Film, Radio and TV she was recently chosen as the commissioned poet on the Turner Prize ‘**Connect together’** a project using words and ideas collected through community workshops to create an epic poem about the journey from London to Margate.

**A. G. G.  – focussing on the River Cuckmere**

A. G. G. is a writer and essayist from London. Through literature, he explores a variety of themes including masculinity, belonging, trauma, love, crime and rehabilitation. Photography and filmmaking, are additional mediums he employs as forms of expression. After completing his education he went on to work in a variety of creative roles, most recently as a workshop facilitator addressing gang culture and youth violence across the Capital. He recently signed his first book deal, which is due to be published later this year.

**Rosanna Lowe – focusssing on the River Arun and River Cuckmere**

Rosanna is an experienced writer, director and performer. Pieces she has written/directed have been performed in theatres in the UK, France, Malaysia and the US and include the devised show Hummingbirds at the Young Vic, nominated for a Total Theatre Award in Edinburgh, Chester Tuffnut at Polka Theatre, The Bacchae in the Cultural Olympiad and co-writing/co-directing portmanteau feature film London Unplugged. She has written two climate change radio plays, winning Radio 4 and IRDP awards. Her work often focuses on history, people and place and ranges from sketch-writing for TV series Horrible Histories to co-writing Brighton The Graphic Novel. She has worked in travel writing, winning awards with the Royal Geographical Society Award and The Times. She lived in Guatemala during its civil war and wrote Volcanoland, a travel narrative, collecting extraordinary stories and testimonies about the war and its aftermath. She was the commissioned writer for Goonhilly Village Green, a multidisciplinary festival celebrating the nature, heritage and community of Goonhilly Downs. She is currently the Lead Storyteller for interactive children’s show Printer’s Playtime. She has worked on various heritage and engagement projects with arts organisation MSL, creating a series of audio story poems called Ordinary Extraordinary inspired by Hastings residents. Rosanna has run numerous creative writing projects, often with children, but also with mothers from Holloway Prison and with Creative Future. She currently runs writing for wellbeing sessions for Arts on Prescription, which caters for people, like herself, with mental or physical health inequalities.

**Theo Toksvig-Stewart – focusing on the River Rother**

Theo is a dyslexic writer and actor. His play **Endless Second** was shortlisted for the Holden Street Theatre Award and the Sit Up Award at the 2019 Edinburgh Fringe. The play transferred to the Park Theatre and Pleasance Islington as part of each venue’s ‘Best of the Fringe’ season and was commissioned as an audio drama for BBC Radio 4.

In 2020 Theo was commissioned by Warts and All Theatre to write an adaptation of **Robyn Hood** developed with children in care in Wellingborough. He was part of the BBC Writersroom Drama Room Scheme 2019/2020 and the 2021 Minack Emerging Playwrights Programme.

**Merrie Joy Williams – focussing on the Hidden river in Brighton**

Merrie Joy Williams is a poet, novelist and editor. She was shortlisted for the 2020 Bridport Poetry Prize, longlisted for the 2020 National Poetry Competition, and is a winner of The Poetry Archive’s ‘Wordview 2020’ competition, permanently featured on their website. She is the recipient of a London Writers Award, and Arts Council England awards for poetry and fiction.

Merrie is passionate about collaborations, as well as residencies and commissions, which help keep her writing practice fresh and evolving. She was a poet-in-residence with MMU Special Collections and Manchester Poetry Library, who are currently releasing an illustrated broadside of one of her poems.  Her most recent residency was with Historic England, in partnership with Spread the Word, commissioned to research and write one of their **High Street Tales** (Woolwich).

Merrie has read or discussed her work in various places, including The Southbank Festival, The Seren Cardiff Poetry Festival, and BBC Radio. Poems been published in Poetry Wales, The Interpreter’s House, The Good Journal, and elsewhere. Her debut collection is **Open Windows** (Waterloo Press, 2019).

**Notes to Editors**

* **Full Harvest is *commissioned by Applause in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority***
* Applause is an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation based in Kent, a rural touring scheme that supports communities throughout the South East to access professional theatre, music and other performing arts. Applause is committed to commissioning and supporting artists and companies to make, produce and tour exciting new work across our region.
* **The South Downs National Park** is the third largest National Park in England and has the largest National Park population, with 117,000 residents. The National Park has a rich cultural heritage, with four market towns, 5,860 listed buildings and 616 scheduled monuments. From rolling hills to bustling market towns, the South Downs National Park’s landscapes cover 1,600km2 of breath-taking views and hidden gems, including 18 distinctive landscapes and 13 European wildlife sites. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is responsible for keeping the South Downs a special place and is also the planning authority for the National Park. The Authority is a public body, funded by government, and run by a Board of 27 Members.
* Further information and images please contact: **Sally Lampitt** [**programming@applause.org.uk**](mailto:programming@applause.org.uk) **07751 250398**

www.applause.org.uk [www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk)