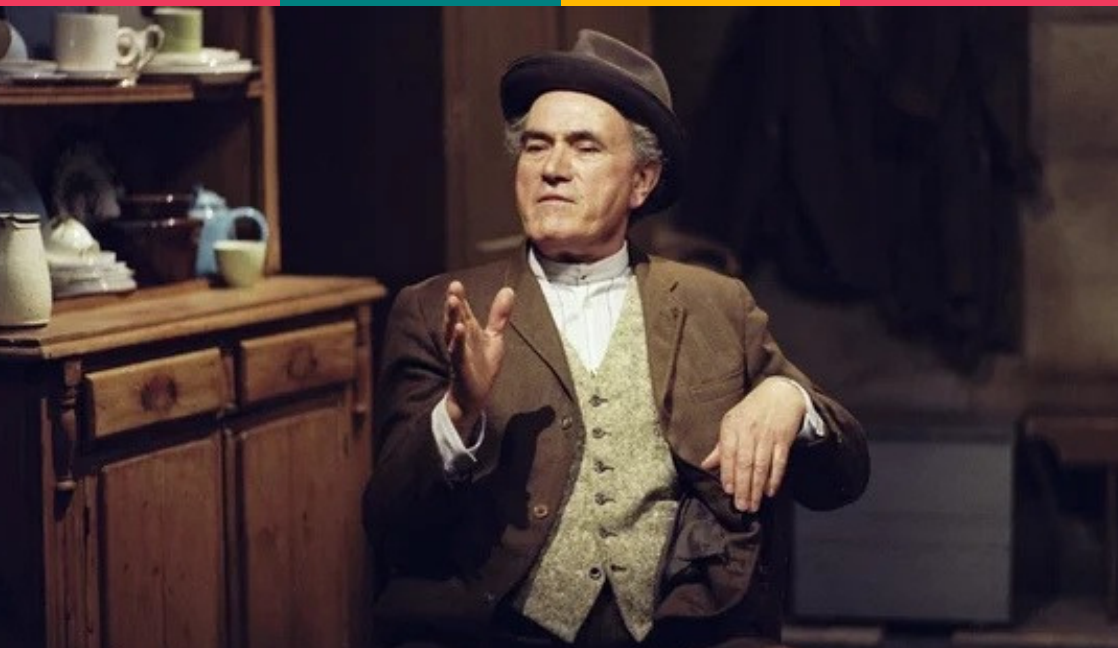




LISTOWEL INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING FESTIVAL 2026

SEPTEMBER 17 - 20

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS



WELCOME

There is a saying that no road is ever too long when there is good company, and no evening is ever wasted when a story is told. Long before books filled our shelves or theatres welcomed their audiences, stories gathered people together. They were shared by the fireside, over a cup of tea, at the fair, or in the easy conversation that turned neighbours into friends. They travelled from one voice to another, carrying laughter, wisdom and hope across generations.

It is in that enduring spirit that I warmly welcome you to the Listowel International Storytelling Festival 2026.

Our theme this year, **Past Voices, Future Stories**, celebrates the stories that have shaped us while embracing those still waiting to be told. Every generation inherits a treasury of tales, but each also has a responsibility to add something new. And there could be no better setting than Listowel, a town where stories seem to linger in the streets and where conversation has always been an art in itself. It is a place that has inspired generations of writers, poets and storytellers, and where words continue to bring people together in friendship and community.

This year we are especially honoured to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the passing of **Éamon Kelly**, one of Ireland's greatest storytellers. Éamon had the rare gift of making every listener feel they had drawn a chair close to the hearth and become part of the story itself. His legacy reminds us that storytelling is more than entertainment - it is how we preserve memory, celebrate our shared humanity and keep our cultural traditions alive.

Across these four days, storytellers, poets, musicians and artists from Ireland and around the world will gather in Listowel to share traditions shaped by different languages, landscapes and cultures. From school visits and exhibitions to fireside performances, workshops, concerts, Culture Night celebrations and story swaps, every event offers an opportunity to discover something new while recognising something familiar in the stories of others.

This festival is made possible through the dedication of our artists, volunteers, partners, funders and supporters. To each of them, I extend my sincere thanks. Most of all, thank you, our audience. Every story needs a listener, and every listener becomes the keeper of a story.

May these days be filled with laughter, curiosity and unexpected moments of wonder. May you leave Listowel carrying not only happy memories, but a story worth sharing - for that is how the oldest art in the world continues to live.

Fáilte romhaibh go léir.

Cara Trant, Festival Director



THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17

EXHIBITION OPENING:

ÉAMON KELLY – AN ABSOLUTE ARTIST

Listowel International Storytelling Festival 2026 opens with a special exhibition of photographs, posters and newspaper cuttings celebrating the career of Ireland's acclaimed storyteller and actor Éamon Kelly.

Described by Fintan O'Toole as one of the most sophisticated performers of the modern Irish theatre, Kelly is probably best recognised today as a storyteller or seanchaí. His distinctive Kerry accent and natural persona captivated audiences for over two decades on Irish radio & television as well as live performances throughout the country.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 6.30 pm** **Free Event**

ÉAMON KELLY CELEBRATORY CONCERT

Éamon Kelly described the art of the seanchaí as the oldest one-man-show-on earth and throughout his long and distinguished career, he held his audience spellbound when spinning hilarious yarns while sitting in the intimacy of the firelight and candlelight.

On the opening night of our festival join us for an evening of story, music & song in honour of Ireland's acclaimed seanchaí, featuring storytellers Nuala Hayes, Frances Kennedy, Daisy Kearney, Danny Larkin, Karen Trench and other special guests.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 8 pm** **Tickets: €15**
(Refreshments served)



FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18

STORYTELLING IN SCHOOLS

Storytellers Maria Gillen & Paddy O'Brien (Ireland), Jim Brulé (USA), Dawn Casey (UK) and Omar Belaarej (Morocco) will visit local primary schools to share exciting tales about faraway places, funny characters, brave heroes, and magical adventures. Children will get to listen, imagine, and enjoy stories from different cultures and traditions. Guaranteed to be a fun and exciting way to learn, laugh, and travel the world through words.

 **Local Primary Schools** **Time: 10 am to 1 pm** **Free Event (Booking required)**

THE MOBILE MUSEUM

From the Stone Age to the revolutionary era, Kerry County Museum will transport you through time with their extensive handling collection. Participants will get the opportunity to see and touch historical artifacts up close and ask questions. Each interactive workshop is approximately 45 minutes in duration and most suitable for 3-6th class but can be tailored to suit younger classes, as well as 1st and 2nd year secondary school groups.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 10 am to 1 pm** **Free Event (Booking required)**

TALES OVER TEACUPS

Start your morning in good company with acclaimed local storyteller & singer Frances Kennedy whose performances are full of warmth humour & heart. Expect a relaxed and uplifting session filled with stories and songs rich in character, local wisdom and gentle laughter.

 **Lizzie's Little Kitchen** **Time: 10 am** **Free Event**

IRISH PLACE NAMES

In this light-hearted, engaging bi-lingual session storyteller Paddy O'Brien will explore the origins of Irish place names, with a particular focus on Kerry. A chance to learn a few words of Irish while discovering the stories behind the names.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 11.30 am** **Free Event**



FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18

PEIG UNPLUGGED

Step into the world of Peig Sayers with acclaimed storyteller and actor Nuala Hayes. Through a beautifully curated selection of stories, this evocative performance celebrates the wit, wisdom and enduring legacy of one of Ireland's greatest storytellers. Stories translated by writer and folklore scholar Éilís Ní Dhuibhne.

 **St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre** **Time: 1 pm** **Tickets: €12**

STORY & POETRY SWAP

Join poet John McGrath and storyteller Paddy Regan for our first Story & Poetry Swap of the weekend. Whether you have a captivating story, a heartfelt poem, or a thought-provoking piece to share, we invite you to take the mic and let your voice be heard.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 2.30 pm** **Free Event**

SHREDDING THE MONSTROUS PAST

Jim Brulé presents four captivating tales in which the past is confronted and transformed. Journey from Norway with Prince Lindworm, encounter King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in A Palace of Bird Beaks, and visit a Chinese village turned upside down by the mysterious dumplings of Ban Pin Shan. Jim will also share a special story with roots closer to home.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 4.30 pm** **Tickets: €8**

IRELAND AND THE EU: FROM ACCESSION TO BREXIT:

IRELAND'S 50+ YEAR EU JOURNEY

On Culture Night St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre welcomes political historian and international governance expert Dr. Peter Moloney for an insightful exploration of Ireland's evolving relationship with the European Union. Reflecting on more than five decades of EU membership, he examines its impact on Ireland's economic, social and political development, while considering the challenges of Brexit, the Northern Ireland Protocol and Ireland's changing place in Europe.

 **St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre** **Time: 5.30 pm** **Free Event**



FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18

TEEN MUSIC FUSION

Join us for an energetic performance with Teen Music Fusion, a vibrant collective of local young musicians and teenagers, featuring a mix of contemporary hits and original performances. This event celebrates local youth talent and showcases their creativity, passion and love of music.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum**

Time: 6.15 pm

Free Event

A TAPESTRY OF TALES IN LISTOWEL

As twilight falls on Culture Night, A Tapestry of Tales in Listowel weaves together enchanting stories, myths and memories featuring storytellers from Ireland, the UK, USA, Japan and across Europe. Celebrating Ireland's Presidency of the EU, this special evening will also feature voices and traditions from EU member States. Bean an Tí Maria Gillen will be joined by Listowel Community Youth Choir and guest artists for an uplifting evening responding to our festival theme *'Past Voices, Future Stories'*.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum**

Time: 7.30 pm

Free Event

LATE NIGHT POETRY & STORIES

Listowel Writers' Week Poets Corner

We are delighted to collaborate with Listowel Writers' Week on Culture Night for a lively Open Mic night where anything could happen! Feast on plenty of courage, culture and the craic at Christy's Bar. Enjoy verses & stories from emerging and established voices, paired with a pint and good company in the heart of literary Listowel.

 **Christy's 'The Well' Bar**

Time: 9 pm

Free Event



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19

THE STORYTELLERS TRAIL

Join John Keane on this story walk and discover the birthplaces of literary greats, Bryan McMahon and John B Keane, the doyen of sculptural stuccos, Pat McAuliffe and ending in the Square where in May 1951, Tom Doodle, president of the Independent Coulogeous Party made his only public appearance with the iconic election slogan

USE YOUR NOODLE, VOTE FOR DOODLE!

 **Departs from Listowel Castle** **Time: 10 am** **Free Event**

LEGACY STORYTELLING

In this storytelling workshop Jim Brulé will demonstrate how to discern values that are important to us, and weave short anecdotes to be passed along as our legacy. Jim's classes, workshops, and communities embody his dedication to multicultural wisdom, grounded in the belief that true abundance arises from interconnected generosity and gratitude.

 **Listowel Arms Hotel** **Time: 10 am to 12 pm** **Tickets: €20**

MAGICAL NATURE TALES FOR CHILDREN

Step into a world of wonder with storyteller and children's author Dawn Casey as she shares enchanting traditional tales inspired by the natural world. Hear the old stories that honour and celebrate the birds and the animals, the plants and the trees – stories that remind us that we are all related, in the family of life. Following the storytelling, children can create and decorate their own willow star wand to take home. They can make a wish for the natural world and blow through the star of their wand, to send their hopes and dreams floating on the breeze. A magical storytelling and craft experience that encourages creativity, imagination and a deeper connection with nature. Suitable for children aged 5 to 12 years, must be accompanied by an adult.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 10.30 to 11.30 am** **Tickets: €5**
(Limited to 15 participants)

TALES OVER TEACUPS

Relax with a fresh brew and enjoy one of Kerry's cultural icons Sonny Egan. He is not just a champion storyteller, he is a musician, a singer, a podcaster, an actor and an expert on many subjects. He is generous with his talents and for years opened his door to everyone in his famous rambling house.

 **Lynch's Bakery & Coffee Shop** **Time: 10.30 am** **Free Event**



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19

BOOK LAUNCH: SEANCHAI WRITERS ANTHOLOGY

We're the lucky thirteen! Thirteen Seanchai Writers coming together in Kerry Writers' Museum from January to May this year and deciding to enshrine their latest poems and stories for future generations in this collection, The Seanchai Writers' Anthology 2026. Lucky we are too that this is Listowel, where words are treasured and writers sustained.



Kerry Writers' Museum

Time: 12 pm

Free Event

MEMORIES OF ÉAMON & MAURA KELLY

Theatre historian Dr. Fiona Brennan chairs this panel discussion which will reflect on the life and careers of Éamon & Maura Kelly, from their early days with Listowel Drama Group to their move to Dublin to join the Radio Éireann repertory and acclaimed work with the Abbey Theatre, while also celebrating their enduring contribution to Irish cultural life. Fiona will be joined by Éamon & Maura's son Eoin Kelly, Nuala Hayes, Ronan Wilmot and Owen McMahon.



Kerry Writers' Museum

Time: 2 pm

Tickets: €10

STORY SWAP AT JOHN BS

Step right up and share your tale at our Saturday Story Swap in Listowel's famous hostelry. Join Frances Kennedy & Paddy O'Brien for a rip-roaring afternoon of stories. Whether it's a personal experience, a fictional narrative, or a funny incident, we want to hear it. All stories are welcome, and participation is encouraged, but not required. Come listen, laugh, and be inspired!



John B. Keane's Bar

Time: 3.30 pm

Free Event

THE WILD SWANS

As evening falls, gather for a magical lamp-lit storytelling experience with acclaimed storyteller and children's author Dawn Casey. Settle in as The Wild Swans, one of the world's most beautiful fairy tales, is brought to life through a traditional story box, an age-old storytelling form that uses hand-crafted paper-cut silhouettes to create a mesmerising scrolling theatre of light and shadow. Inspired by the timeless magic of swans, this enchanting tale celebrates courage, love and transformation, while revealing the hidden gifts of the natural world through the humble nettle plant. A captivating evening of story and visual theatre that will delight children & adults alike.



Kerry Writers' Museum

Time: 6 pm

Tickets: €8

(Free entry to children)



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19

WOKEN BIRD

WOKEN BIRD is the latest creative project from Niall Cuddy and Paddy Doyle – a unique format combining interwoven streams of lyric, music, story and verse. A visceral and retrospective 45-minute show that charts their artistic journeys from rural Ireland to cities such as New York, Berlin, San Francisco and back to the ground of their own tradition.



The Kilmorna Collection

Time: 7 pm

Free Event

THEATRE OF THE HEARTHSTONE

We continue our celebration of Éamon Kelly by remembering his life on stage, and readings from plays in which he made the characters his own, including *The Tailor and Ansty*, in which he starred alongside his wife Maura. Featuring Nuala Hayes, Ronan Wilmot and a special presentation by Owen McMahon. This event will also include film footage of the man himself!



Kerry Writers' Museum

Time: 7 pm

Tickets: €10

THE MUSIC OF NINA SIMONE

Kerry Writers' Museum and Listowel International Storytelling Festival is delighted to welcome jazz and soul singer Karen Underwood for her debut performance in St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre. Karen brings to you in narration and song the engrossing life story of the great legend Nina Simone, from her struggle against racism and exile in her homeland to her flamboyant, troubled relationships and poignant later years. Karen sings all the classic Nina songs, "Strange Fruit", "Mississippi Goddamn", "Sinnerman", "My Baby" and "I Need a Little Sugar In My Bowl" supported by a live band featuring Gary Beecher on piano, Eoghan Regan on guitar, David Whitla on bass, and Davy Ryan on drums.



St. John's Theatre & Arts Centre

Time: 8.30 pm

Tickets: €22.50



SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20

POETRY WORKSHOP: BLOWN TO THE WINDS

The phrase from a poem by Julie O'Callaghan is the focal point for a workshop with award winning poet Lorraine Carey, exploring movement, migration and the longing for places that often no longer exist. This session will blend reading and discussion of contemporary work with generative writing prompts to produce and share new writing, while building community. *(Limited to 12 participants)*

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 10 am to 1 pm** **Tickets: €25**

MAGICAL NATURE TALES FOR CHILDREN

Storyteller and children's author Dawn Casey as she shares enchanting traditional tales inspired by the natural world. Hear the old stories that honour and celebrate the birds and the animals, the plants and the trees – stories that remind us that we are all related, in the family of life. Following the storytelling, children can create and decorate their own willow star wand to take home. Suitable for children aged 5 to 12 years, must be accompanied by an adult.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 10.30 am** **Tickets: €5**

STORIES FROM ACROSS THE SEA

Stories have a way of crossing boundaries & borders, of shapeshifting us into a recognition of our common humanity & community. This is a celebration of Irish, Moroccan & co-created stories with Maria Gillen & Omar Belaarej. Suitable for all ages.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 12 noon** **Tickets: €8**
(Free entry to children aged 12 and under)

POETRY & STORY IN THE PARK

Gather beneath the open sky for an afternoon where poetry, stories and conversation flow as freely as the summer breeze. Hosted by North Kerry's haiku master Mike Gallagher, with special guests, acclaimed poet Eileen Sheehan and award-winning storyteller James Fogarty, this welcoming session celebrates the power of words to entertain, inspire and connect. Whether you're taking to the microphone or simply listening, all are invited to enjoy this joyful celebration of local voices, shared memories and creative expression.

 **Listowel Castle** **Time: 2 pm** **Free Event (Donations welcome)**

SLÁN ABHAILE – A FAREWELL GATHERING

Listowel International Storytelling Festival 2026 closes with a gathering of all our tellers and invited guests with our regular performers from Listowel Rambling House. Join Fear an Tí Johnny McElligott for an afternoon of stories, traditional Irish music, song and dance.

 **Kerry Writers' Museum** **Time: 3.30 pm** **Free Event (Donations welcome)**



LISTOWEL INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING FESTIVAL 2026

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



An Roinn Cultúir,
Cumarsáide agus Spóirt
Department of Culture,
Communications and Sport





LISTOWEL INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING FESTIVAL 2026

BOX OFFICE

Festival & ticket booking details available at
www.kerrywritersmuseum.com
or scan the QR code



Weekend Festival Ticket - €100

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Follow us on   @kerrywritersmuseum

