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Judges announced for fifth BBC National Short Story Award

www.theshortstory.org.uk

****under embargo until Thursday 27 May 2010****

A prestigious panel of judges has today been announced for the 2010 BBC National Short Story Award. The award, which is now in its fifth year, celebrates the best in contemporary short story writing.

This year's panel of judges are:

BBC Radio 4 broadcaster **James Naughtie** (chair), author and *Guardian* journalist **Kamila Shamsie**, author and poet **Owen Sheers**, author **Shena Mackay** and Editor Readings, BBC Radio, **Di Speirs**.

This year's award is open for submissions of unpublished stories, stories published since January 2009 and stories scheduled for future publication from publishers, agents and authors from the UK. The closing date for entries is **18th June 2010**. The author of the winning story is awarded £15,000, with the runner up receiving £3,000 and a further three authors receiving £500 each.

James Naughtie, BBC Radio 4 broadcaster and chair of the 2010 judging panel comments:

'The short story is still a writer's opportunity that offers something distinct, and exciting. The best of them are alive with passion, perfectly crafted to make every word count, and beautiful artefacts that can't be pulled apart. They are also tales for our time. A short story can sit happily on the ear, and on the page, on your phone, or your screen; it travels well and it fits into even the busiest life. I can't wait to read this year's entries, because they seem to get better and better.'

The shortlist will be announced in November with the five stories broadcast on BBC Radio 4 each weekday a week before the winner is announced on the 29th November. The five stories will also be published in a special anthology.

Di Speirs, BBC Radio Editor Readings and 2010 panel judge comments:

'Five years ago there was a very real sense that the short story form was endangered. Year on year since, we have seen a resurgence of interest and commitment to the form from readers and listeners, and from publishers and authors. More published collections are crossing my desk and every year a broader church of writers recognise and respond to the unique appeal and deceptive simplicity of short fiction. I am personally delighted that the BBC National Short Story Award has played a part in this renaissance and am looking forward again to reading superlative stories from our best established and emerging talent this summer'

Past winners of the award include **James Lasdun** who secured the inaugural award for *An Anxious Man* and the poet **Kate Clanchy** who won last year with *The Not-Dead and*

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The Saved. Other authors shortlisted in previous years have included **Jackie Kay**, **William Trevor**, **Rose Tremain**, **Clare Wigfall**, **Naomi Alderman** and **Lionel Shriver**.

BBC Radio 4 is the world's leading broadcaster of short stories and a staunch and long-time supporter of the form. Short stories are broadcast every week attracting more than a million listeners. The BBC hopes that the award can continue to serve as a reminder of the power of the short story.

For further information on the award, please contact:
Alice Ingall on alice.ingall@booktrust.org.uk or 0208 875 4827

For further information on the BBC, please contact Victoria Wawman on
Victoria.Wawman@bbc.co.uk or 0207 765 008

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About the judges

James Naughtie

James Naughtie presents Today and Bookclub on BBC Radio 4. He is one of the country's best-known broadcasters and an author of several books on politics and music. He chaired the Man Booker judges in 2010 and among his many other activities he is a patron of the Borders Book Festival, a patron of Southbank Sinfonia and Chancellor of Stirling University.

Kamila Shamsie

Kamila Shamsie is the author of 5 novels, including *Burnt Shadows* which was shortlisted for the Orange Prize and is being translated into 21 languages. Her short stories have appeared in 'Ox-Tales', FiveChapters.com, The Asham Anthology and various other publications. She is a trustee of the Free Word Centre, and a contributor to *The Guardian*.

Owen Sheers

Owen Sheers was born in Fiji and brought up in Abergavenny, South Wales. He is winner of an Eric Gregory Award and the 1999 *Vogue* Young Writer's Award. His first collection of poetry, *The Blue Book* (Seren, 2000) was shortlisted for the Welsh Book of the Year and the Forward Prize Best 1st Collection 2001. His debut prose work *The Dust Diaries* (Faber 2004), was shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature's Ondaatje Prize and won the Welsh Book of the Year 2005. In 2004 he was selected as one of the Poetry Book Society's *20 Next Generation Poets*. Owen's 2nd collection of poetry, *Skirrid Hill* (Seren, 2005) won a 2006 Somerset Maugham Award. Owen's first novel, *Resistance* (Faber, 2008) is translated into 10 languages and won a 2008 Hospital Club Creative

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Award. Owen's collaboration with composer Rachel Portman, *The Water Diviner's Tale*, was premiered at the Royal Albert Hall for the BBC Proms 2007. He recently wrote and presented the BBC 4 TV series *A Poet's Guide to Britain* and wrote the introduction and selected the poems for the accompanying anthology (Penguin 2009). He currently lives in London.

Shena Mackay

Shena Mackay is the author of nine novels and five collections of short stories and the editor of two anthologies. Winning a prize in the BBC Radio3/ Listener magazine short story competition in the early 1980s inspired her to write more stories and led to the publication of her first collection *Babies in Rhinestones*. In 1986 her novel *Redhill Rococo* won the Fawcett Prize and she has received Scottish Arts Council Book Awards and a Society of Authors Travelling award. Her novel *The Orchard on Fire* was shortlisted for the 1996 Booker Prize, *Dunedin* was shortlisted for the McVitie's prize and *Heligoland* for the Orange Prize. Her work has been widely broadcast and anthologised. She has been a judge for several literary prizes including the Booker and the Whitbread prizes. She lives in Southampton and has three daughters and five grandchildren.

Di Speirs

Di Speirs joined the BBC in 1990 and is now Editor, Readings, leading a team producing for Book of the Week, Afternoon Reading and Book at Bedtime on BBC Radio 4 as well as Readings slots on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 7 and the BBC World Service. A passionate supporter of the Short Story, she has edited two collections of Short Stories and has been involved from the start in the BBC National Short Story Award, and been a member of all five judging panels. She was also a judge for the Asham Prize 2009 and is currently Chair of the Orange New Writers Award.

- The BBC National Short Story Award is administered in partnership with Booktrust. It was formerly known as the National Short Story Prize. The award is open to authors with a previous record of publication who are UK nationals or residents, aged 18 years or over only. The story entered must either be unpublished, or be first published or scheduled for publication after 1 January 2009. The story must not be more than 8000 words. Entrants must submit original work that does not infringe copyright or any other rights of any third party. Entrants must have a prior record of publication. Entries are limited to stories written in English and only one will be accepted per author. For full details, entry criteria and an entry form see <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/Prizes-and-awards/BBC-National-Short-Story-Award> or www.theshortstory.org.uk, or send a stamped addressed envelope to the BBC National Short Story Award, c/o Booktrust, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.
- The judging panel will select a shortlist to be announced by 12th November. The shortlisted stories will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 daily at 3.30pm from 15th

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November, preceding the final announcement of the award winner and runners up on 29th November.

- For information on **story**, the national campaign to celebrate the short story, please visit www.theshortstory.org.uk. This site includes interviews with writers, agents and publishers, events, competitions and projects listings and features, tips for writers and readers and a selection of classic and contemporary short stories.
- **BBC RADIO 4** is the world's biggest single commissioner of short stories. Short stories are broadcast every week attracting more than a million listeners. About 40 per cent of BBC Radio 4's short stories are special commissions, mainly from leading authors, and some 35 per cent are from already published material – contemporary and classic – and include stories broadcast to coincide with publication. Unsolicited stories and those not published by mainstream publishers make up at least a further 25 per cent of output. www.bbc.co.uk/radio4
- **Booktrust** is an independent charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and cultures to engage with books. The written word underpins all our activity and enables us to fulfil our vision of inspiring a lifelong love of books for all.