



Irene Sabatini wins the 2010 Orange Award for New Writers

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19.15pm, London, 9 June 2010 – Zimbabwean debut author **Irene Sabatini** has won the 2010 Orange Award for New Writers with her novel ***The Boy Next Door*** (Sceptre).

Chair of Judges, Di Speirs, presented the £10,000 bursary, provided by Arts Council England, to the author at the Orange Prize for Fiction awards ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, London attended by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall.

Di Speirs, Chair of Judges said: “Immediately engaging, vivid and buzzing with energy, *The Boy Next Door* is the work of a true storyteller. At heart a love story, it is also so much more as, through the experiences of its charismatic protagonists, it charts the first two decades of the emerging Zimbabwe with honesty, humour and humanity.”

She continues, “Irene Sabatini has written an important book that will enchant readers and which marks the emergence of a serious new talent.”

Launched in 2005 as part of the 10th anniversary celebrations for the Orange Prize for Fiction, the emphasis of the Orange Award for New Writers is on emerging talent and the evidence of future potential.

All first works of fiction - including novels, short story collections and novellas, written in English by a woman of any age or nationality and published as a book in the UK -

are eligible. First time authors can be entered for both the Orange Prize for Fiction and the Orange Award for New Writers in any one year.

The judges for the 2010 Orange Award for New Writers are:

Di Speirs (Chair), Editor - Readings, BBC Radio 4

Rachel Cooke, Writer and Columnist, The Observer

Bernardine Evaristo, Novelist, critic and winner of the 2009 Orange Prize Youth Panel award for *Blonde Roots*

Diana Evans took the first ever Orange Award for New Writers in 2005 for her debut novel, *26A*. She subsequently went on to win the Decibel Award 2006 at the British Book Awards and was shortlisted for the Whitbread First Novel Award 2005. Naomi Alderman won the Orange Award for New Writers in 2006 and has since gone on to win The Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year (2007) for her first novel, *Disobedience*.

Canadian writer, Karen Connelly, took the Award in 2007 for her novel, *The Lizard Cage* and Joanna Kavenna won the Award in 2008 for her debut novel, *Inglorious*. Most recently, Francesca Kay took the Award in 2009 for her first work, *An Equal Stillness*.

The Award was launched in 2005 in partnership with Arts Council England. Renewing their commitment to the partnership with Orange in 2008, Arts Council England committed a further £30,000 over three years (£10,000 per year) for bursary awards for the winners of the Orange Award for New Writers. By offering a bursary to a novelist or short story writer for her first publication, the Arts Council is able to support the professional development of a writer at a crucial stage in her career.

Moira Sinclair, London Executive Director of Arts Council England, said: "Arts Council England would like to congratulate Irene Sabatini on winning this year's Orange Award for New Writers. We are very pleased to be supporting such an exciting writer at this important point in her career. The partnership with Orange is a vital part of our investment in emerging literary talent and we hope the award will enable a wonderful new writer to flourish."

Irene Sabatini

Irene Sabatini grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She studied psychology at the University of Zimbabwe and then took a Masters at the Institute of Education in London. She has lived and worked in several countries: teaching in Colombia, conducting research work in Barbadian schools and writing environmental science books for Zimbabwean primary schools. She currently lives in Geneva with her husband and two sons.

The Boy Next Door

As Zimbabwe breaks free of British colonial rule, young Lindiwe Bishop encounters violence at close hand when her white neighbour is murdered. But this is a domestic crime, apparently committed by the woman's stepson, Ian, although he is released from prison surprisingly quickly. Intrigued, Lindiwe strikes up a covert friendship with the mysterious boy next door, until he abruptly departs for South Africa.

Years later, Ian returns to find that Lindiwe has been hiding her own secret. It is to bring them closer together, but also test a relationship already contending with racial prejudice and the hostility of Lindiwe's mother. And as their country slides towards chaos, the couple's grip on happiness becomes ever more precarious.

The 2010 award ceremony took place in The Clore Ballroom of the Royal Festival Hall. In addition to the Orange Award for New Writers winner announcement, author Anne Michaels was named as the winner of the Orange Prize 2010 Youth Panel Award and Anna Lewis won the Orange/Harpers Bazaar Short Story Competition for unpublished writers.

Guests toasted the winner announcement at a champagne drinks reception courtesy of Taittinger.

-ENDS-

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If you would like to speak to Irene Sabatini after the 9th June 2010, please contact Nikki Barrow at Sceptre on 0207 873 6440 or nikki.barrow@hodder.co.uk

Notes to Editors

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