YARN

STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

7 – 15 November 2026




Єдність
Togetherness
Дім
Home
Добробут
Wellness
Сміливість
Courage
Дружба
Friendship
Сила
Strength
Надія
Hope
Радість
Joy
Творчість
Creativity

YARN
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Welcome to the 17th YARN Storytelling Festival.

For seventeen years, YARN has brought storytellers, artists and audiences together in celebration of the ancient and enduring art of storytelling. Each year, stories help us build connections across generations, cultures and communities, reminding us of the power of listening, imagination and shared experience. We are delighted to welcome you once again to a festival filled with performances, conversations, workshops, music, film and creative encounters.

This year, we are particularly proud to support five Artists in Residence. Four artists are participating through the Arts Council's International Residency Initiative Scheme, while a new partnership with La Maison du Conte in France expands YARN's commitment to international artistic exchange and collaboration.

Moroccan Residencies – Storytellers Union

Our Arts Council supported international residencies, continue to build on the strong creative relationships developed through our collaborations with Morocco over the past three years. We are delighted to welcome back **Zouhair Khaznaoui,** who continues his collaboration with **Eimear Burke** for a second year. Together they will present a documentary screening and discussion at Mermaid Arts Centre, the culmination of two years of shared research, artistic exchange and storytelling across cultures (Invisible Threads see page 22).

Moroccan Residencies – World Storytelling Café

We are also very pleased to welcome **Lalla Fatima Ait Abderrahman** as Artist in Residence representing the World Storytelling Café in Marrakech. A highly respected storyteller and performer from Morocco, Fatima brings a rich oral storytelling tradition to YARN and will collaborate during the festival with fellow Artist in Residence, **Órla Mc Govern**, one of Ireland's most acclaimed storytellers and

theatre-makers. As part of this residency exchange, Órla will travel to Morocco in January 2027, as YARN Storyteller in Residence at the World Storytelling Café during the Marrakech International Storytelling Festival. Further strengthening the cultural connections that have grown between Ireland and Morocco through YARN's international partnerships.

French Residency – La Maison du Conte

We are equally excited to launch a new residency partnership with La Maison du Conte in France. As part of this new international exchange, **Sinéad McAlevey** will travel to France to undertake a residency with one of Europe's leading centres for storytelling, creating opportunities for creative development, collaboration and cultural exchange while extending YARN's international reach.

2026 YARN Storytelling Festival Tellers

In addition to our artists in residence we are honoured to welcome international guests **Fidaa Ataya** from Palestine and **Markus Luukkonen** from Finland. They are joined by some of Ireland's most celebrated storytellers and artists, including **Colin Urwin**, **Francis McCarron**, **Eddie Lenihan**, **Sarah McKenna Dunne, Niall de Búrca**, **Colm Keegan**, **Mick Creagh**, and **Naoise Ó Duinn** and **Sinéad O'Brien**.

We are also thrilled to welcome **The Gab** from Cork, an award-winning collective of storytellers, musicians and performers renowned for their imaginative, participatory and contemporary approach to storytelling. Our YARN film is **Cill Stuifín**, which won best Irish Language Film at Galway Film Fleadh 2026. There will be a post-screening Q&A with director **Kevin L Smith** and folklorist **Aindrias de Staic**. Our musicians **Clare Sands** and **The Speks**, our artists in residence and our many collaborators bring an extraordinary wealth of stories, traditions, voices and creative perspectives to Bray this November.

Once again in 2026 thanks to the kind support of Wicklow County Arts Office, we are able to bring storytelling events across County Wicklow, to Wicklow Town, Glenmalure and Laragh.

Jack Lynch & Colum Sands Commission

We are delighted to present a special YARN Commission for 2026. We have commissioned Jack Lynch and Colum Sands to record and develop a new performance based on Táin Bó Fraoch, an 8th-century tributary tale to the Táin Bó Cúailnge. This is a less known dramatic romance, translated from Middle Irish by Jack, to be set to a musical soundtrack by Colum. The commission supports the recording of the story and the development of a live performance script.

This investment ensures important work from Ireland's rich storytelling heritage is preserved.

Peace by Piece

You might notice a beautiful quilt (see inner front cover) on stage as a back drop at some events during the festival. This is a collaborative textile artwork created by Ukrainian and Irish women living in County Wicklow. Made piece by piece, stitch by stitch, and story by story this quilt brings together fragments of memory, home and imagination. The creative process carried an intention to create a little space for peace-taking, a moment to slow down, remember and connect. Through the simple act of sewing, individual stories are remembered and stitched together into something shared. The quilt has become a map of memories, feelings and of hope for the future. This project was facilitated by the textile artist Lucy Moller and co-ordinated by the Social Prescribing team in the Bray and North Wicklow Area Partnership.

At the heart of YARN is a belief that stories matter. They help us understand who we are, where we come from, and how we connect with one another. They inspire empathy, curiosity and conversation, and remind us of the common threads that link us across places, cultures and generations. In additon to the public facing events storytelling performances will be taking place during the festival in community groups and schools.

Whether this is your first festival or your seventeenth, we invite you to immerse yourself in the programme, discover new voices, revisit familiar favourites, and enjoy the warmth, wonder and generosity that oral storytelling inspires.

A heartfelt thanks to all of the team at Mermaid especially Danielle Lynch, YARN's Creative Producer, for her hard work and dedication in bringing to life this exciting YARN 2026 Festival programme.

Let the stories begin!

Aoife Demel
Artistic Director, YARN Storytelling Festival
Mermaid County Wicklow Arts Centre

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Family Storytelling at Ballywaltrim Library with Órla Mc Govern

Date: **Saturday 7 November**
Time: **11am**
Venue: **Ballywaltrim Library**
Suitable For: **5+ years**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

Come along to Ballywaltrim Library for an enchanting family storytelling session with Galway based oral storyteller and author Órla Mc Govern.



Kindly Supported by Killruddery House & Gardens

Killruddery Family Tales with Lalla Fatima Ait Abderrahman

Date: **Saturday 7 November**
Time: **2pm**
Venue: **Shoot Room, Killruddery Market Square**
Suitable For: **5+ years**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

A unique opportunity to share in some Moroccan storytelling magic with Lalla Fatima Ait Abderrahman.



Sarah McKenna Dunne

A Border Cure

Date: **Saturday 7 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Bray Town Hall (Upstairs)**
Suitable For: **12+ years**
Tickets: **€15**

Tell me. What ails ya? After two years of researching cures in the border, Sarah has a story to tell. It's about strange and wonderful cures, about their future, about growing up during the recession, about friendship, about mental health, about grief, about Cavan. Performed with live musicians.



Naoise Ó Duinn & Sinéad O'Brien

Is Maith An Scéalaí An Aimsir | Time Is A Good Storyteller Workshop

Date: **Sunday 8 November**
Time: **12 – 3pm**
Venue: **Bray Town Hall (Upstairs)**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€25**

Inspired by work Sinéad has done in her award-winning shows, Naoise & Sinéad will help participants weave personal and traditional stories for creative performance.



Niall de Búrca

World Tales

Date: **Sunday 8 November**
Time: **3pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **6+ years**
Tickets: **€11**

More dangerous than the pied piper, Niall de Búrca returns to Mermaid with a feast of World Tales that will cast a spell on all the family. As a kid in the West of Ireland Niall learned tales aplenty. Not to be missed!





Lalla Fatima Ait Abderrahman & Órla Mc Govern

Light & Dark

Date: **Sunday 8 November**
Time: **7pm**
Venue: **Bray Town Hall (Upstairs)**
Suitable For: **16+ yrs**
Tickets: **€15**

Join two accomplished tellers as they tell stories that explore, darkness, light, and where the two might meet and overlap. Stories that explore intention and allegiance. Stories that ask us to question....



Niall de Búrca

Sophie's Tale + Q&A

Date: **Monday 9 November**
Time: **11.30am – 12.30pm + Q&A**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Transition Year Students**
Tickets: **€8 (Teachers Go Free)**

It's 1942 and Hitler controls most of Europe. The Nazi Führer orders all opposition be eliminated and The Final Solution enacted. In Munich a young woman called Sophie starts University and joins her brother and friends in acts of resistance against Nazi rule. The stakes are high.



Cill Stuifín (12A) + Q&A

Date: **Monday 9 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Cert: 12A**
Tickets: **€12/10**

Off the coast of West Clare lies Cill Stuifín, a village long believed to have been swallowed by the sea. In this cinematic documentary, folklorist Aindrias de Staic follows in his late father's footsteps to uncover the truth. Post-screening Q&A with director Kevin L Smith & Aindrias.



SeaScribes

Love, Loss and Loose Threads

Date: **Tuesday 10 November**
Time: **6.30pm**
Venue: **Signal Arts Centre, Bray**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€5 On The Door**

SeaScribes writers group host a storytelling evening with friends at Signal Arts Centre. Myths, music and some funny adventures. Refreshments will be provided.



Colm Keegan

C is For

Date: **Tuesday 10 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **16+ years**
Tickets: **€15**

A genre-defying performance that blends spoken word, storytelling and theatrical monologue with visual art, sound and live performance. The result is a rich, immersive exploration of voice, memory and inheritance.

WICKLOW ARTISTS SALON

Connecting
Conversing
Collaborating

WAS #18: Storytelling from Palestine

Date: **Wednesday 11 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **16+ years**
Tickets: **Free, But Booking Is Required**

This salon welcomes Palestinian storyteller Fidaa Ataya. Fidaa is a traditional storyteller, puppeteer, drama-in-education specialist and actress. She will share how she gathers and narrates stories, the importance of story-telling, and her preservation of the art in her homeland.



Kindly Supported by Wicklow Arts Office

Fireside Tales with Markus Luukkonen & Francis McCarron

Date: **Wednesday 11 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Glenmalure Lodge**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

What better way to spend a winter's night than by the fire in the company of two cracking storytellers? Join Francis & Markus in this unique and evocative setting.



Supported by Wicklow Arts Office & Bridge Street Books

An Evening of Storytelling with Markus Luukkonen

Date: **Thursday 12 November**
Time: **7pm**
Venue: **Bridge Street Books, Wicklow Town**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€15**

Settle in and enjoy an intimate evening of storytelling with Markus, an internationally acclaimed storyteller who has entertained audiences across Europe, as he comes to Wicklow Town.



Kindly Supported by Wicklow Arts Office

Mick Creagh: C'mere Till I Tell Ya A Good One!

Date: **Thursday 12 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Lynham's of Laragh**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

An old-style storyteller with one eye on the past & one on the present, Mick hails from the southwest corner of Co. Laois, from where he draws most of the inspiration for his songs, poems, & good ones.



Folktales From Palestine with Fidaa Ataya

Date: **Thursday 12 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€15**

A very special evening of folktales with storyteller Fidaa Ataya who travels to us especially from Palestine to share her stories. She is an instrumental figure in the revival and preservation of traditional storytelling in Palestine.



The Power of Three: Colin Urwin, Fidaa Ataya & Markus Luukkonen

Date: **Friday 13 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€15**

Three storytelling greats travel from Antrim, Palestine and Finland for what promises to be a unique and powerful evening. Do not miss this opportunity to see master tellers weave their craft.



Kindly Supported by Wicklow Arts Office

An Evening of Storytelling with Eddie Lenihan

Date: **Friday 13 November**
Time: **8.30pm**
Venue: **Wicklow Youth & Community Resource Centre**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€15**

Join us for a special evening of storytelling in Wicklow Town. Eddie Lenihan is one of the greatest seanchaithe (traditional Irish lore keepers & tale spinners) – a national treasure.



Family Storytelling at Bray Library with Lalla Fatima Ait Abderrahman

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **11am**
Venue: **Bray Library, Eglinton Road**
Suitable For: **5+ years**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

Come along to Bray Library for an enchanting family storytelling session with Moroccan storyteller Lalla Fatima Ait Abderrahman.



Storytellers Talk Too Much – A Workshop with Colin Urwin

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **11am – 1pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€25**

Want to enhance your storytelling performance skills with alternative use of language? Or bring a new level of interest and intensity to your storytelling with humour and music? Join highly acclaimed Colin Urwin to find out how.



Kindly Supported by Killruddery House & Gardens

Killruddery Family Tales with Markus Luukkonen

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **2pm**
Venue: **Shoot Room, Killruddery Market Square**
Suitable For: **5+ years**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

A unique opportunity to share in some storytelling magic with storyteller Markus Luukkonen in the cosy surroundings of the Shoot Room.



The Gab Sketchbook Workshop

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **2 – 4pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€25**

The Gab Sketchbook is a storytelling workshop, a place for tellers and potential tellers to play with stories, to tell, listen and learn. It is open to all storytellers, from complete beginners to experienced tellers.



Kindly Supported by Wicklow Arts Office

Niall de Búrca's World Tales

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **3pm**
Venue: **Assembly Hall, Wicklow Town**
Suitable For: **5+ years**
Tickets: **€11**

More dangerous than the pied piper, Niall de Búrca hits Wicklow Town with a feast of World Tales that will cast a spell on all the family.



Eddie Lenihan Tales

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **3pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **10+ years**
Tickets: **€11**

A terrific opportunity to hear one of Ireland's greatest storytellers. Join us for an afternoon of live storytelling with the ever-popular Eddie Lenihan in Mermaid.



Kindly Supported by Wicklow Arts Office

The Madman's Window: Colin Urwin

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Assembly Hall, Wicklow Town**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€15**

A highly acclaimed collection of folk tales that transport the listener to days when battles, shipwrecks, wolves, ghosts, faeries, shape-shifters and oral storytelling were all part of the everyday of the native Glens of Antrim folk.



They Tried to Bury Us Album Launch Tour

Clare Sands

Date: **Saturday 14 November**
Time: **8pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **16+ years**
Tickets: **€22/20**

A new collection of songs that gives voice to the silenced: the endangered curlew; Lí Ban of Lough Neagh; lost words of our native tongue; the Rostrevor oak; those seeking refuge on our shores and the Palestinian poets whose words embody defiance and inspire generations.



Kindly Supported by The Harbour Bar

The Gab Mixtape

Date: **Sunday 15 November**
Time: **2pm**
Venue: **The Harbour Bar (Upstairs)**
Suitable For: **16+ years**
Tickets: **Donations at the door for RNLI Wicklow**

An entertaining afternoon of storytelling with The Gab from Cork, an award-winning collective of storytellers, musicians and performers renowned for their imaginative, participatory and contemporary approach to storytelling.



The Speks

Date: **Sunday 15 November**
Time: **2pm + 4pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **2 – 92 years!**
Tickets: **€11**

The Speks present a lively show of nursery rhymes & sing-along songs set to acoustic Irish music which will have adults and kids jumping in their seats! Their hand-clapping, toe-tapping, hearty-laughing show is about life on Glasses Island – a magical island off Co. Clare.



Kindly Supported by The Harbour Bar

YARN Festival Story Circle

Date: **Sunday 15 November**
Time: **3.30pm**
Venue: **The Harbour Bar, Bray (Upstairs)**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **Donations at the door for RNLI Wicklow.**

Join us for a relaxed story swap bringing our year's Story Circle to a close in the cosy surrounds of The Harbour Bar. No pressure to tell – listeners welcome.



Kindly Supported by The Arts Council

Invisible Threads Screening

Date: **Sunday 15 November**
Time: **7.30pm**
Venue: **Mermaid Arts Centre**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **€15**

Conceived and narrated by Zouhair Khaznaoui and created through an artistic collaboration with Eimear Burke. Join us for the world premiere of this documentary bringing together two years of research exploring story, ritual, landscape and the making of a cross-cultural residency.



Little Bray Writers & Rambling House Collective

Stories, Poetry, Music, Songs

Date: **Thursday 19 November**
Time: **3pm**
Venue: **Shoot Room, Killruddery Market Square**
Suitable For: **Adults**
Tickets: **Free, No Booking Required**

If you'd like to enjoy more storytelling after the festival, join Little Bray Writers & Rambling House Collective for an afternoon of new and well-loved writing, songs & stories, performed by a vibrant group of local talent.

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Thank You!
Go raibh míle maith agaibh!

Arts Council of Ireland
Bridge Street Books
Bray and North Wicklow Area Partnership
Embassy of Morocco to Ireland
Killruddery House & Gardens
Lynham's of Laragh
Municipal District of Bray
Storytellers Union, Marrakech
The Glenmalure Lodge
The Harbour Bar
Wicklow Arts Office
Wicklow County Council
Wicklow Youth & Community Resource Centre
Wicklow Libraries
World Storytelling Café Marrakech
And to all our artists and participants!



mermaid

COUNTY WICKLOW ARTS CENTRE

mermaidartscentre.ie

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