



**Irish Novelist, Playwright, and Critic Colm Tóibín to Serve as Chairman of
PEN World Voices Festival, Beginning in 2015**

**Tóibín will also deliver Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture at this year's
Tenth Anniversary Festival, April 28 – May 4**

New York, NY – April 17, 2014 - PEN American Center announced today that acclaimed writer Colm Tóibín will serve as Chairman of the PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature, beginning with next year's Festival. Founded and chaired by Salman Rushdie for a decade, the Festival brings together writers and public intellectuals from around the globe to encourage cross-cultural dialogues on issues central to individual rights and freedoms. Tóibín is known for his play, *The Testament of Mary*, novels *The Blackwater Lightship*, *The Master and Brooklyn*, and his contributions to *The New York Review of Books* and *The London Review of Books*. His work has been translated into thirty languages; he is also the Irene and Sidney Silverman Professor of Humanities at Columbia University.

“I have, from the beginning, been an admirer of the Festival and its mission. I believe that, to achieve our own freedom as readers and citizens, we need to hear from as many literary voices from as many places as possible, in as many tones and textures as possible,” said Colm Tóibín. “It is also essential for writers from all over the world not only to have the right to publish freely, but also to have the right to be heard in as many places as possible.”

"Colm Tóibín is one of the world's great writers, and I couldn't be more pleased to be passing the baton to him," said Salman Rushdie, Founder and current Chairman of the Festival. "PEN World Voices Festival is lucky to have him."

Additionally, Tóibín will deliver this year's Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture on the closing night of the PEN World Voices Festival, Sunday, May 4, 2014. Named for playwright Arthur Miller, an ardent advocate for a writer's right to freedom of expression, the annual lecture is a hallmark of the PEN World Voices Festival. In past years, the Freedom to Write Lecture has been delivered by Orhan Pamuk, David Grossman, Umberto Eco, Nawal El Sadaawi, Christopher Hitchens, Wole Soyinka, and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Tóibín will discuss the importance of freedoms of expression for writers and all citizens, noting “My lecture will deal with silence and the battle against censorship in Ireland in the early years of the twentieth century, in Spain at the end of the dictatorship,

and with literature and the struggle for gay rights around the world.” Following his remarks, Francine Prose and Salman Rushdie will join Tóibín on stage for a conversation.

“Under Salman Rushdie’s leadership, PEN World Voices has made its name as one of the only international literary festivals in the U.S. and one of the most eclectic literary events worldwide,” said PEN America Center Executive Director Suzanne Nossel. “We are proud of what has been achieved and look forward to a second decade of provocation and revelation under the guidance of Colm Tóibín.”

Festival Director László Jakab Orsós added, “To work with Salman has been inspiring and gratifying. With Colm Tóibín coming in as our next Chair, we are embarking on new and exciting uncharted waters, which after ten years is crucial in the trajectory of a literary festival.”

For its tenth anniversary, the PEN World Voices Festival (April 28-May 4) takes its inspiration from a long line of writers who have dared to step out on the edge, risking their positions, careers, and sometimes their lives to speak out against the status quo. The Festival kicks off with an opening night event featuring works exploring a variety of social and political issues important to writers and artists around the globe— featuring Tóibín, Noam Chomsky, Syrian poet Adonis, and African political cartoonist Gado, among others.

Tickets for all Festival events are available at www.penworldvoices.org

Additional highlights include:

- *Master/Class*: This conversation series provides insight into the creative process by which a writer puts pen to paper. Participants include Adonis, with Jorie Graham and Khaled Mattawa (April 29); Ivan Klíma with Myla Goldberg (May 1), presented in association with The Public Theater; and László Krasznahorkai with Colm Tóibín (May 4), at the Frederick P. Rose Auditorium at The Cooper Union.
- *Interview Magazine: The Re-Interview*: Interview Magazine and PEN present a one-night only experiment in the fluctuations of identity. Martin Amis and Michael Stipe will be re-interviewed with the original questions posed to them by the magazine three decades ago. They will be asked to answer these questions again today and critique their earlier responses, at The Auditorium at The New School (May 3).
- *33 RPM and a Few Seconds*: Acclaimed Lebanese theater artists Rabih Mroué and Linah Saneh, known for their experimental and controversial works, reconstruct the final moments of a life after a young Lebanese man’s suicide. On April 29, the performance will be followed by a conversation with Shirin Neshat. Co-presented by the PEN World Voices Festival and Performance Space 122, in association with the Asia Society (April 29 & 30).
- *Broken Dreams in Two Acts*: PEN brings together a panel of artistic and academic voices including Timothy Garton Ash, Ivan Klíma, Maxim Leo and Adam Michnik, to mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The discussion will focus on the rebuilding of Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union since the wall fell in 1989, at SubCulture (May 3).

- *Global Food: Over the Edge*: A debate moderated by Frederick Kaufman and featuring Lester Brown, Marion Nestle, and Robert L. Paarlberg will give wide-ranging perspectives on the use of food as a global weapon exploring the growth of agribusiness versus small farms, the future of biotech crops, and the influence of climate change and Wall Street on the global food market, at The Auditorium at The New School (May 1).
- *1971*: PEN American Center continues its work to shine a light on intrusive government surveillance with a screening of Johanna Hamilton's documentary, "1971," about a group of radicals who broke into an FBI office in Pennsylvania and leaked files on the agency's illegal surveillance of law-abiding Americans. Betty Medsger, whose recent book *The Burglary* looks at the 1971 robbery, will join the filmmaker and three of the people involved in the incident for a post-screening discussion, at the NYU Cantor Center (April 30).
- *Dylan Live*: PEN pays tribute to Dylan Thomas with an event featuring a fusion of Welsh and English spoken word, jazz, vinyl, beat poetry, and hip hop. Paul Muldoon, Martin Daws, Daniel Williams, and other poets, musicians, and academics will look back at Dylan's time in Greenwich Village in the 1950's where he recorded his first poetry to vinyl, at the Auditorium at The New School (May 2).
- *In Conversation*: Esteemed author Lydia Davis and Sjón will talk with accomplished Syrian poet and writer Osama Alomar about his recent collection of short stories, "Fullblood Arabian," at the Frederick P. Rose Auditorium at The Cooper Union (May 4).
- *Obsession*: The late-night conversation series returns to The Standard, East Village, exploring the ideas that keep writers awake at night followed by a discussion with an expert on his or her obsession. Writers and their obsessions include Eileen Myles on *Spoilage and Ruination of Other Kinds* (April 29); Emily Bazelon on *Childhood Demons* (April 30); Jennifer Boylan on *Lost Loves* (May 1); Dan Savage on *Plaques and Trophies* (May 2); and Masha Gessen on *Citizen-Victims* (May 3).
- *In Conversation*: Renowned author and Festival founder Salman Rushdie will discuss the importance of freedom of expression with Timothy Garton Ash, a scholar and tireless advocate for free speech and the advancement of literature, presented in association with The Public Theater (May 4).
- *A Literary Safari*: For the fourth year, Festival audiences are invited to wander the halls of Westbeth, the city's oldest and largest artists' community, in search of cozy, apartment-based literary readings by Kevin Barry, Christopher Farley, Justin Go, Frédéric Gros, Barbara Jenkins, Andrés Neuman, Gabrielle Selz, Sue Shapiro, and Linn Ullmann, among others. The evening concludes with a closing night party in Westbeth's legendary gallery (April 29).

About PEN American Center

Founded in 1922, PEN American Center is a fellowship of writers dedicated to defending freedom of expression and persecuted writers and journalists, advancing literature and literary translation, and fostering international literary exchange. It is the largest and most active of the 145 chapters in 101 countries that comprise International PEN (founded in 1921).

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