

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) » [STORYMOJA FESTIVAL 2014 TO HONOUR GHANAIAN POET KOFI AWOONOR](#)

Storymoja Festival 2014 to honour Ghanaian poet Kofi Awoonor

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2014 - 00:00 -- BY PETER NGILA

To a lot of readers, September is a great month because they will interact with authors from all over the world at the Storymoja Festival. In its seventh year, the festival is the brainchild of Muthoni Garland, and has been championing promotion of arts, with special attention to children's and general literature and reading.

The 2014 Storymoja festival, with the theme Imagine the World, will have a number of artists and storytellers under one roof. Through the festival, you will have the exceptional chance of interacting with world-renowned authors like Prof Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature winner, and the 2014 winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing, Okwiri Oduor.

"All Kenyans should expect a showcase of literature and artists in general from the country and beyond," says Alex Kandie, the head of media at Storymoja.

Over the years, the festival has been graced by many artists, including Pulitzer Prize winning poet Yusef Komunyakaa; Booker Prize winning author from Nigeria, Ben Okri; renowned conservationist, Dr Paula Kahumbu (*Hands Off Our Elephants*); director of UNEP, Achim Stein; Ushahidi founder, Ory Okolloh; author of *It's Our Turn To Eat*, Michela Wrong; business specialists, Alykhan Satchu and Sunny Bindra; Olympic medallist Catherine Ndereba; Chinese historian and author Jung Chang, whose book *Wild Swans* has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide; and the controversial Miguna Miguna

This year boasts of tremendous increase in artists, from 100 to 170, and in number of days to five from the previous four, to cater for the relatively big number of art lovers.

Last year's festival turned tragic with the death of poet Prof Kofi Awoonor during the terrorist attack at the Westgate Mall, a day before the end of the festival. According to Kandie, Awoonor's death shook the other artists in attendance that they couldn't carry on with the festival.

"It was disturbing for the artists. They had got used to interacting with Kofi, only to suddenly hear he was no more."

Despite the attack, it's refreshing to see several of last year's guests coming back. Kandie explains the return of the likes of Kwame Dawes and Teju Cole as 'honorary'.

"Last year's artists are coming back in honour of Prof Awoonor. Still, many of them felt they didn't get enough of the festival. They have a lot to deliver to the public."

In this year's education programme, students and pupils from all over the country will benefit greatly as it has been extended to three days from the previous two days. There will also be 27

creative writing and publishing masterclasses, which will be moderated by top authors from Kenya and beyond, including Ken Walibora (Kenya), Chuma Nwokolo (Nigeria), Tony Mochama (Kenya), and Beverly Nambozo (Uganda). These classes will help writers of all ages to perfect their art. There will also be classes on film and poetry. Participants can also learn how to start and become better at blogging in a workshop conducted by Bloggers Association of Kenya (Bake), and IT expert and e-book author, Alexander Nderitu.

A number of books will be launched during the festival including, *The Sad Artist and Other Stories* by Ndiritu Wahome and Prajwal Parajuly's *Land Where I flee*. Readers can also buy books on sale at discounted prices, and even have them autographed by the authors.

The Storymoja festival will also entail lots of fun with performances by the sensational Sauti Academy, alongside Berry Heart from Botswana, and UK's Dizraeli. Sauti Sol will also bring in more flavour at the *Jaza Matatu na Vitabu Music Concert*, aimed at harvesting books for needy schools.

The 2014 Storymoja festival will have a lot on offer on literature, film, music, and arts at length.

From tomorrow till Sunday, all roads will lead to the Kenya National Museum in Nairobi.

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