

Ugandan named on 2026 Caine Prize judges' panel

Sheila Atim is a Ugandan-British actress, singer, composer, and playwright on the panel. She brings a rich CV of her own to the panel of judges.

BY BAMUTURAKI MUSINGUZI

The Caine Prize for African Writing has announced its 2026 panel of judges. This year's panel assembles a formidable mix of talent, insight and expertise spanning arts and culture at the highest level. Together, they reflect the Prize's commitment to platforming rich and varied narratives. Joining Chair of Judges Bola Mosuro, is Sheila Atim, a Ugandan-British actress, singer, composer, and playwright. Others on the panel are Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond, Orsod Malik, and Siphiwo Mahala.

Commenting on this year's panel, Elah Wakatama, the chair of the Prize, said: "Over the years, we have been intentional about challenging the idea that there is such a thing as a 'Caine Prize story' and, by extension, an 'African story'. One of the ways we have achieved this is by assembling panels of cultural producers drawn from different disciplines, geographies, generations, and lived experiences, united by one purpose—valorising the best short stories being written today. The result is a shortlist that resists expectation and reflects, as one of our judges Siphiwo Mahala so beautifully put, a 'kaleidoscope of contemporary African voices'."

"As publishers continue to submit work, we invite them to let go of inherited assumptions about what an 'ideal' story looks like. We champion boldness—of form, perspective, genre, and themes—and we urge writers to push beyond the familiar edges of their practice. Bola, Nana, Orsod, Siphiwo, and Sheila are unequivocally aligned in this belief, and they are eagerly waiting for your submissions and the stories that will surprise us all," Wakatama added.

After entries to the Prize close at midnight on February 27, the five shortlisted stories and their authors will be announced on September 1. Mosuro, the Nigerian journalist, broadcaster, and documentary maker, who is this year's chair of judges, brings with her a rich CV. Mosuro started her career in the African development sector, working for the NGO Institute of African Alternatives and as a board member of Akina Mama Wa Afrika. For over three decades, she was a familiar voice for BBC World Service listeners, presenting on Network Africa, Focus on Africa and Newsway.

Mosuro has produced various programmes and documentaries including 'The Story of Africa', a radio history series for the BBC. More recently, she appeared as presenter of the Loftus Me-



Bola Mosuro

Orsod Malik

Nana Brew-Hammond Sheila Atim

Siphiwo Mahala

ROLL OF HONOUR

Previous winners are Sudan's Lella Aboulela (2000); Nigerian, Helon Habla (2001); Kenyan, Binyavanga Wainaina (2002); Kenyan, Yvonne Owuor (2003); Zimbabwean, Brian Chikwava (2004); Nigerian, Segun Afolabi (2005); South African, Mary Watson (2006); Ugandan, Monica Arac de Nyeko (2007); South African, Henrietta Rose-Innes (2008); Nigerian, EC Osondu (2009); Sierra Leonean, Olufemi Terry (2010); Zimbabwean, NoViolet Bulawayo (2011); Nigerian, Rotimi Babatunde (2012); Nigerian, Tope Folarin (2013); Kenyan, Okwiri Oduor (2014); Zambian, Namwali Serpell (2015); South African, Ldidumalengani (2016); Sudanese writer, Bushra al-Fadil (2017); Kenyan, Makena Onjerika (2018); Nigerian, Lesley Nneka Arimah (2019); Nigerian-British, Irenosen Okofe (2020); Ethiopian, Meron Hadero (2021); Kenyan, Idza Luhumyo (2022); Senegalese, Mame Bougouma Diene and Woppa Diallo (2023); and South African, Nadia Davids (2024).

Africa about climate solutions. As a narrator, Mosuro is the host of the ODI/SPARC podcast series 'Dynamic Drylands' focusing on the nomadic peoples and rangelands of Africa. This year sees the launch of her own podcast, 'Breaking Bread with Bola'.

"I am honoured to be this year's chair of judges for the Caine Prize, joining a long list of luminaries who've presided over Africa's most prestigious literary award," Mosuro said, adding, "Over the past 25 years, the Prize has spotlighted exceptional authors with unique voices and styles, many of whom have gone on to forge wonderful literary careers. The Caine Prize has acted as a springboard—propelling them to a continent-wide and global stage."

the panel, also brings a rich CV of her own. Her film credits include *The Woman King* (Sony) which earned her a BAF-TA Rising Star nomination and the Chopard Trophy at Cannes. Other films are *Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness* (Marvel), *Mufasa and Pinocchio* (Disney), *Bruised* (TIFF Rising Star Award), *Dust Bunny* (Thunder Road Pictures), and *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* (A24).

Atim's television work includes the upcoming *Blade Runner 2099* (Amazon/Alcon), *The Underground Railroad* (Amazon), *The Irregulars* (Netflix), *Harlots* (Hulu), and *The Pale Horse* (BBC/Amazon).

On stage, Atim has appeared in a *Shakespeare* trilogy at the Donmar Warehouse, *Othello* at Shakespeare's Globe, and *Constellations* at the Donmar, winning the 2022 Olivier Award for Best Actress. She also starred in *Girl From the North Country* (Old Vic/Noël Coward), earning the 2018 Olivier Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Musical alongside multiple major nominations.

In addition to acting, Atim is a composer and a writer, with several film and television projects in development. She holds an MBE for services to drama.

Ekua Brew-Hammond, a Ghanaian-American author and editor of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry for children, teens, and adults, also constitutes the panel.

Her works for young people include the Young Adult novel 'Powder Necklace' and the children's picture book 'Blue: A History of the Color as Deep as the Sea and as Wide as the Sky'. For adults, she edited 'Relations: An Anthology of African and Diaspora Voices' and wrote 'My Parents' Marriage: A Novel'.

Orsod Malik, a Sudanese curator of exhibitions and archives, writer, independent researcher, and executive director of the Stuart Hall Foundation, is also part of the panel. He currently serves as a Trustee at The Common Guild, a visual arts organisation in Glasgow, Scotland.

Malik's work explores transnational cultural and political entanglements in historical narratives to consider the possibility of shared histories. He is particularly interested in the relationship between social movements, aesthetics, and public education, and their com-

veloped programmes for several cultural organisations including the Stuart Hall Foundation, International Curators Forum (ICF), Black Cultural Archives, Institute of International Visual Arts (miva), Prince Claus Fund and the British Council.

Mahala, a multi-award-winning South African writer and academic, plying his trade in English and isiXhosa, completes the panel. He is a graduate of the University of Fort Hare, holds a Master's degree in African Literature from Wits University and a PhD in English Literature from the University of South Africa. He is the author of the novel, *When a Man Cries* (2007), which he later translated into isiXhosa as *Yakhal' Indoda* (2010). His short story collections include *African Delights* (2011), *Red Apple Dreams and Other Stories* (2019), and *The Missing Pages* (2025).

Mahala wrote two critically acclaimed plays, *The House of Truth* (2016) and *Bloke and His American Bantu* (2021). His monograph *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of the Intellectual Tsotsi* (2022) won the Creative Non-Fiction Award at the South Africa Literary Awards in 2023 and the 2024 Book of the Year at the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Awards. For two years, he served as the Chair of Judges for the fiction panel of the Sunday Times Literary Awards. He is an Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Johannesburg.

Coveted prize

The judges will meet in September to select and announce a winner from the five shortlisted authors. Each writer shortlisted for the Caine Prize will be awarded £500 (Shs1.7 million), and the winner will receive a £10,000 (Shs35.9 million) prize. If a work in translation is chosen as the winning story, the prize will be split 70 percent to the author and 30 percent to the translator.

The five shortlisted stories will be compiled into the official Caine Prize anthology and published alongside stories from the live workshop to be held this spring.

The Caine Prize for African Writing is an annual award for African creative writing. The Prize is awarded for a short story by an African writer published in English (indicative length 3,000 to 10,000 words). The African winners of