



REFLECTION AND RECALIBRATION

# the BOCAS Lit FesT

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**MORE THAN A LITERARY FESTIVAL**

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**Celebrating a decade  
of achievement**

[WWW.BOCASLITFEST.COM](http://WWW.BOCASLITFEST.COM)





# 10 Years of Achievement

We've always been writing in the Caribbean but before Bocas, no one had really created a space — at home — with the power to put regional writers on a pathway to the international publishing industry.

— MARINA SALANDY-BROWN



## Reflections on the 10-year journey

In 2021, the NGC Bocas Lit Fest celebrated a decade of outstanding service and achievement in the sphere of literature and the literary arts.

As title sponsors of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, we at NGC look upon the journey of the past ten years with great pride and a deep sense of accomplishment. This has been one of our flagship CSR investments, and we are happy to celebrate this milestone anniversary with the Bocas team.

Today, we at NGC are looking to deepen our impact beyond energy, supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals through our green agenda and more future-focused CSR investments. The work of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest fully aligns with our new purpose, as it supports UN targets in education, arts and culture, empowerment and economic development, among others. This alignment strengthens our commitment to this festival, as well as our conviction that

with the Bocas team, we stand in good company to build a better tomorrow for our country and the wider region.

In this issue of *Gasco News*, we are pleased to feature extracts from the Bocas Lit Fest 2020 Annual Report, which reflects on highlight achievements from the festival's history and gives insight into its current structure and future plans.



A DECADE OF OCM BOCAS PRIZE-WINNING BOOKS (2011 - 2020)

## *A Decade of Impact*

Hosted **13**  
events outside of T&T, taking  
our writers to the world

Delivered  
**72** different workshops  
and master classes for  
emerging and advanced  
writers hosted in Trinidad,  
Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana and  
St. Lucia

Awarded  
**TT\$1.42M**  
in prize money and  
long-listed **136** books in  
**4** literary prizes  
administered by the BLF  
and funded by our sponsors

Published and distributed  
**9** fully illustrated  
children's storytelling books  
featuring  
**155** stories

**831** different events  
**750** writers -  
readings, discussions,  
debates, performances,  
film screenings, book  
launches, poetry slams;  
adult storytelling  
and more

First Citizens National  
Poetry Slam

**934** poets auditioned (2013-2020)  
**258** semi-finalists (2014-2020)  
**83** finalists (2014-2020)  
**27** winners (1st - 3rd places)

**TT\$400,000**  
in prize money  
**51** Slam events to-date

From 2013,  
engaged with over  
**150,000**  
students in **250+**  
secondary schools  
as part of an annual  
nationwide spoken  
word tour in collaboration  
with the 2Cents  
Movement

**17** NGC Bocas Lit Fests:  
9 in PoS,  
1 in South/Central  
3 in South  
4 in Tobago

The Lit Fest has  
significantly  
elevated the NGC  
brand both locally &  
internationally having  
achieved  
**TOP 20** status



# What We Do



## Annual Literary Festival

The annual NGC Bocas Lit Fest, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, became two virtual festivals. The original dates of 1-3 May became our first attempt at an online festival. It included the announcement of the winners of the current BLF-founded prizes, a tribute to the late Kamau Brathwaite, readings, book launches and Pavement Poets. A second, seamless, online festival followed from 18-20 September, live-streamed on the BLF website, via YouTube and on Facebook. It comprised 18 events over 23 hours, featured 80 new and star authors, prizewinning books, readings, discussions, Extempo, poetry, storytelling, Stand and Deliver, the important New Talent Showcase, as well as other entertaining and informative elements.

## Prizes

Richard Georges, a Trinidadian-born poet living in the Virgin Islands won the 10th coveted OCM Bocas Prize and Amanda Choo Quan of T&T was victorious in the second year of the emerging writers prize, the Johson and Amoy Achong Caribbean Writers Prize (JAWWCP) for non-fiction.

Our prizes award, promote and have advanced the careers of both established and new Caribbean writers. The late Kamau Brathwaite was the recipient of the Bocas Henry Swanzy prize for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Literature.



RICHARD GEORGES



AMANDA CHOO QUAN



## Publishing

In 2020 the Bocas Lit Fest collaborated with the Caribbean Futures Institute to publish *Reclaim, Restore, Return: Futurist Tales from the Caribbean*, a free e-book for the 2020 NGC Bocas Lit Fest that received fine reviews. A special Peekash Press anthology, marking the 10th anniversary of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, *Always Coming Home: Caribbean Writers and Their Journeys Through the World*, features all ten overall OCM Bocas Prize winners and some of the leading Caribbean writers who participated in the festival since 2011.

Peekash Press, our publishing imprint, will explore e-books as a publishing model for this region, along with audiobooks and print on demand facilities, in partnership with other Caribbean territories.

## What We Do *(continued)*



### Children's Festival

The Children's Festival also celebrated 10 years in 2020. The much loved Storytelling Caravan (targeted to children under 12), evolved into Dragonzilla's Storytime, a series of 18 films of the children's own stories taken from the BLF annual illustrated colouring book, read by well-known storytellers.

The videos were broadcast repeatedly on TV6 and during the September festival. Work has also begun on animating some of the other children's stories created over the last decade.

A Shortstory Writing Challenge invited children to create their own stories. The authors of the top ten then made them into videos. The prize-giving event took place at the National Library and was attended by the Minister of Education, Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, who was very fulsome in her praise for the work of the Bocas Lit Fest over the last decade.

### Youth Programming (ages 12 - 18)

A highlight of our Youth Programming is the popular and lucrative First Citizens National Poetry Slam. In 2020 it was presented as a TV production in partnership with TV6. Youth programming also included the commencement of the Write Away! project sponsored by Scotiabank Foundation, which replaced the Burt Award Young Adult Author Tour.

The project facilitated the development of new digital material for a series of virtual, creative writing workshops presented by Lisa Allen Agostini for secondary schools, in consultation with the Ministry of Education. As part of the Write Away! project, books were distributed to selected, under resourced school libraries, with the objective of providing young people with adequate and appropriate reading material that contribute to their emotional, intellectual and social development.



### The Writers Centre

Home of the Bocas Lit Fest and the 2 Cents Movement, The Writers Centre (TWC) is a space dedicated to writers and literary programmes in Trinidad, one that will help affirm the city's growing reputation as the literary capital of the Anglophone Caribbean. The Writers Centre is an arts-friendly, collaborative, entrepreneurial enterprise ready to serve members of our dynamic community of creative self-starters.





## Year-Round Programming

DURING 2020 WE CREATED MANY NEW OFFERINGS AND PRODUCED AN AVERAGE OF **2.5** VIRTUAL EVENTS WEEKLY INCLUDING:

**Bios and Bookmarks**, the new Sunday one-hour long chat with leading Caribbean authors living everywhere about their newest work.

**Bring your Own Book and Bottle (BOYBB)** a monthly digital international chat-in about books with our book network.

**Writing workshops** — topics included poetry at all levels, getting published and one-and-one masterclasses with prizewinning writers and seminars, including the series Lit's Be Real.

**Survival Kit** — A series of monthly art, music and literature offerings intended to help deal with the depths of the lockdown.

**The Bocas Book Bulletin** — A monthly news roundup of new Caribbean books and writers, prizes and events, published every first Sunday in the Express.

**The 100 Books That Made Us** — This is a long-term project launched in 2020 to establish a definitive popular canon of Caribbean literature.

**Publishing Consultancy** — Offering individuals advice in editing and publishing their books commercially.

**Special Events** — These included a series of hard-hitting panel discussions and film and video productions:

- *Remembering the 1990 Coup*
- *Kamau Brathwaite Birthday; Indian Arrival Day*
- *The Case for Reparations*
- *The filmed PoS literary walking tour, presented by Wendell Manwarren will be launched at the 2021 festival*
- *The 10-year anniversary Peekash publication of the new generation of regional writers will also be launched at the 2021 festival*
- *A Question of Leadership*
- *The Treachery in Every Poem: Celebrating the poetry of Colin Robinson*





## 2020 Achievements

**700%**

MORE PEOPLE SAW THE 2020 FIRST CITIZENS POETRY SLAM!

As the pandemic caused a global pivot, the annual Poetry Slam achieved a **700%** increase in audience numbers from **150** in person at the Old Fire Station in 2013 to **3,500** online views in 2020, plus a undisclosed number of TV views of **5** hours of programming



### REACH OF OUR 2020 PROGRAMMING



**19,256**  
Facebook views



**55,265**  
You tube views



**12,945**  
views of **23** posts on IG

**133**

children aged 12 and under participated in the first Dragonzlla Storytelling Challenge

**98,226**

people were reached by the various elements of the 2020 NGC Bocas Lit Fest Children's Festival.

This included World Read Aloud Day, Dragonzilla's Storytime videos, Dragonzilla's Writing Challenge, colouring book mailouts and **3** animated video

**33%**

of our demographic is now represented by **women** between the ages of **25 to 34 years**





## Outlook 2021

A virtual festival in late April with a series of year-round events

The continuation of workshops to guide novice writers along the pathway to commercial and critical success

The launch of a new prize that recognises and assists writers of Caribbean stories for children that reflect our cultures and traditions, sponsored by UTC

The launch of **Friends of the Bocas Lit Fest** through which local, regional and international supporters can directly contribute to the sustainability of the NGO

