

The Sirenes Festival: An Imaginative Project Linking our Community with Local Schools



Led by the University of Rennes 2 and in particular the UFR Social Sciences, the first objective of the festival is to welcome and introduce secondary school students to the university-level context and encourage them to continue their studies and discover the world of research. The project also aims to involve students in the discovery or appropriation of places of culture on the campus through the reading of imaginary works. Science fiction, fantasy and the fantastical genres are at the heart of the project, with their ability to interest a varied range of audiences, and in particular youth.

The Sirenes project, which began in 2022 (under the name of *Ouest Hurlant*), was borne with the goal of making higher education more inclusive. Students and the general public have access to the festival's content, which is free for all.

The new edition of the festival will be held **from Wednesday, April 10 to Saturday, April 13 2024**, on the Villejean campus around the theme of 'Interweaving and blending'.

This year, the festival will have the honor of being hosted by **Yasmine Djebel**, author of the acclaimed **Sirem and The Cursed Bird** mythical fantasy novel inspired by the cultures of North Africa, and **Saul Pandelakis** author of the masterful Science-Fiction novel **La Séquence Aardtman**, illustrator, teacher-researcher in design in Toulouse Jean-Jaurès.

Benin is the French-speaking country highlighted this year, and authors **Ayélé Ayika Goram and Iman Eytayo** will be on hand to speak at two dedicated round tables. In addition to these headliners, the festival's 70+ guests include other international names, such as German author **Andreas Eschbach**, American author **Rivers Solomon**, English illustrator **Gary Chalk**, who has illustrated numerous children's and fantasy books as well as role-playing games, and Italian author **Francesco Verso**, author and publisher of positive science fiction.

The artistic direction is provided by Xavier Dollo, also a publisher, author and bookseller.

The program for the 4 days is as follows:

- **Wednesday, April 10:** Professional day (devoted to professional meetings with authors and numerous specialists involved in publication processes), organized by Stéphanie Nicot, Literary advisor and Series director.
- **Thursday, April 11 and Friday, April 12:** School days (with participation from secondary school classes from all over the region).
- **Saturday, April 13:** A day open to the general public (with round tables, conferences, school short story competitions, school literary prizes - school workshops, festival anthologies, cinema, comics, role-playing games, and shows).

At the heart of the Villejean campus, **a bookshop village** will be open to all for the duration of the festival, where book lovers will be able to get their books signed by authors at the stands of partner bookshops *La Courte Echelle*, *Critic* and *L'établi des mots*. A number of publishers' stands, including Argyll, Goater and ActuSF, will also be on hand.

The Sirenes 2024 Awards ceremony will take place on Thursday, April 11 at 11:00 am at Le Tambour Auditorium.

12 March 2024