

RNA Editorial Feedback Day May 2022 – Agents & Editors Participating

| AGENCY | AGENT | TIME | Biography |
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| Blake Friedmann | Sian Ellis-Martin | 10:00 - 13:00 | Sian Ellis-Martin is an Associate Agent at Blake Friedmann Literary Agency, looking for books from a diverse range of authors in both fiction and non-fiction. She enjoys stories which explore a broad range of topics including love and relationships (in all their forms), mental health, sexuality, coming of age, race, class and gender. She is drawn to absorbing plots with complicated and flawed protagonists who you can't help but root for. Sian is particularly keen to read work from LGBTQIA+ authors, or stories with LGBTQIA+ characters and themes. Sian is not looking for young adult or children's, science fiction, or historical novels set before WW2. |
| DHH Literary Agency | Broo Doherty | 10:00 - 13:00 | Broo Doherty graduated from Downing College Cambridge and then started working in publishing, where she has worked for the last twenty years. She has worked right across the board in publishing houses and as an agent. She handles all genres, excluding children's books, screenplays and sci-fi and vampires, but particularly enjoys crime, women's commercial fiction, literary fiction and quirky non-fiction. In 2017 she was voted Literary Agent of the Year at the Romantic Novelist's Association. Broo is looking for books that either make her laugh or cry, ideally both, and either show her a whole new aspect of the familiar, or take her to unimagined places. |
| LBA Books | Amanda Preston | 1:30-4:30 | Amanda founded LBA Ltd in 2005 and has been an agent for over 20 years. She represents a wide range of Sunday Times best-selling and award-winning authors across fiction and non-fiction. She loves working with authors and their publishing teams to build them into brand names. She works closely with authors on their manuscripts, developing and championing their work, with a view to carving out a long-term writing career for them in the UK and internationally. She is looking for commercial and book-club fiction with great concepts, strong hooks, and characters that she can't stop thinking about. She is always on the search for an epic love story that completely captivates her or a fresh and relatable romcom with a fantastic hook. She is particularly interested in female voices and showcasing underrepresented talent: writers of colour, writers who identify as LGBTQ+, disabled, and/or from a low-income household. |
| The North Literary Agency | Lina Langlee | 10:00 - 13:00 | Lina Langlee is an agent with The North Literary Agency. She represents authors such as Christina Courtenay, Rachel Burton and Sandy Barker. She has been shortlisted for RNA's 'Agent of the Year' award in 2019 and 2020. She is always looking for high concept contemporary rom-coms with great hooks, but she would really welcome historical romance, |

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| | | | high emotion YA, or a strong star-crossed lovers narrative set against a SFF background. |
| Curtis Brown | Viola Hayden | 1:30 – 4:30 | Viola joined Curtis Brown in January 2020, having spent the previous six years as an editor. She is an associate agent and actively building her own list. She is looking for commercial and reading group fiction, but also narrative non-fiction and some memoir. She's keen on novels that reflect the complexities of the female experience: Marian Keyes' warmth, wit and real heroines; Naoise Dolan's razor-sharp observations and whiplash-inducing dialogue; Kiley Reid's light treatment of uncomfortable situations, difficult questions and harsh realities. Stories structured differently like <i>One Day</i> , <i>The Heart's Invisible Furies</i> and <i>The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society</i> are wonderful, but crucially they are substance over style. She loves a good mind-bending crime or suspense novel and is on the hunt for a series character like Jackson Brodie or Jimmy Perez. Lastly, the ultimate escape: historical fiction. Lucinda Riley's <i>Seven Sisters</i> series is magnificent, as are Kristin Hannah's <i>The Nightingale</i> and Bridget Collins' <i>The Binding</i> . |
| Curtis Brown | Lucy Morris | 1.30pm-4.30pm | Lucy is a literary agent at Curtis Brown, where she represents novelists and non-fiction writers including Hazel Barkworth, Chikodili Emelumadu, Shobna Gulati, Elizabeth Lee and Gillian McAllister. She is also a judge for the Women's Prize Trust's Discoveries Prize for an unpublished novel-in-progress. Lucy is currently looking for commercial and reading-group novels written with wit and warmth in the vein of Mhairi Macfarlane, Beth O'Leary and Tia Williams, and thrillers with a high concept and strong emotional roots. She is always drawn to structural conceits and deftly woven plots, writing with purpose – and a sense of mischief. |
| Marjacq | Diana Beaumont | 10:00 - 13:00 | Diana joined Marjacq in 2017. She started agenting with Rupert Heath Literary Agency in 2011 before moving to UTA. Before that she was senior commissioning editor at Transworld. Diana was chosen as one of <i>The Bookseller's Rising Stars</i> of 2012. She was shortlisted for Agent of the Year 2019 by the RNA. Diana represents adult fiction and non-fiction. She is looking for upmarket women's commercial fiction with depth and heart, including reading group, romance, historical, saga, uplift and contemporary stories that are irreverent and make her laugh; accessible literary fiction, high-concept crime fiction and thrillers. On the non-fiction side: memoir, smart, funny feminists, lifestyle and social justice, and is open to anything with a strong, original voice. She also encourages submissions from writers who have been traditionally under-represented. |
| Madeleine Milburn | Hayley Steed | 10:00 - 13:00 | Hayley is a Literary Agent and Book to Screen Agent, |

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| | | | actively building a list of fiction, and focusing on film and TV adaptation and scripts written by existing clients. She was named a Rising Star in The Bookseller in 2019. Actively looking for: commercial and book-club fiction across all genres including contemporary women’s fiction; uplifting love stories; upmarket general fiction; high concept novels; grounded sci-fi; speculative fiction; gothic novels; horror; feminist reads; magical realism and cross-genre books. |
| The Underline Literary Agency | Robbie Guillory | 10:00 - 13:00 | Robbie is an agent at Underline Literary Agency, where he represents a wide variety of genres. Originally from the wilds of North Norfolk, he now lives in Glasgow. His reading tastes are eclectic. He enjoys sweeping fantasies just as much as tight-knit police procedurals. What is important to him are believable, compelling characters, and strong hooks. I'm currently on the lookout for excellent rom-coms, historicals with a bit of mystery about them, cosy crime with a protagonist you can't help but adore, and folkloric retellings with women front and center. |
| Hardman & Swainson | Hannah Ferguson | 10:00-13:00 | Hannah joined the team at Hardman & Swainson in 2014 after starting out at The Marsh Agency. Among those on her list are bestselling authors Giovanna Fletcher, Sarah Turner, James Bailey and Lorraine Brown. She’s looking for stories that will whisk her away to another place, be it in time, geographically or just into another life that’s different from her own. She’s looking for commercial and upmarket/book club fiction and is especially keen to sign a suspenseful, sweeping love story. She likes original voices and interesting hooks. Big stories and high stakes are particularly appealing. |

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| Simon & Schuster | Molly Crawford | 1:30 - 4:30 | Molly Crawford is a Commissioning Editor at S&S UK where she publishes Sunday Times bestselling authors Colleen Hoover and Elena Armas and many others. She started her career with jobs at Penguin Random House and digital publisher Bookouture, before moving to Transworld. She's looking for vibrant and voice-driven book club fiction, pitch-led and relatable women's fiction, and standout novels for the saga market. She loves stories that transport her, with memorable characters who go on big journeys – whether those be emotional or physical. She'd love to acquire a sweeping love story told in a unique way, like <i>The Versions of Us</i> , or a pitchable rom-com that would sit as naturally on Netflix as it does on her bookshelf, like <i>The Flat Share</i> . She's particularly keen to acquire books that reflect a diversity of experience – be that class, race or ability – and is actively looking for novels that explore the full complexity of human experience. |
| Bookouture | Billi-Dee Jones | 1:30 - 4:30 | I'm Billi, a Publishing Executive at Bookouture which is a digital imprint at Hachette UK. I'm particularly passionate about publishing within the romance genre. My love for romance began outside of work and has continued within my publishing career. During my career, I have also discovered an interest in the impact of TikTok on the romance genre and examining what increases the likelihood of a book becoming popular on the platform. I'm most interested in reading laugh-out-loud romantic comedies and contemporary romances; I'd especially like to read submissions that contain one or more specific tropes, for example, friends-to-lovers or second-chance romance. |
| Hera Books | Keshini Naidoo | 1:30 - 4:30 | Keshini Naidoo is the Co-Founder and Publishing Director of Hera. Having started her career at Waterstones and Book Club Associates, she was one of the founder members of staff at Avon/HarperCollins before moving to Darley Anderson Literary Agency and then Bookouture. She co-founded Hera in 2018 and since then has published authors covering a wide range of genres, from psychological thrillers, detective novels and wartime sagas, to commercial series romance and contemporary romcoms. She loves all genres of women's commercial fiction, and is particularly looking for fiction from underrepresented communities, diverse fiction from an Owned Voices perspective, WW2 sagas and high-concept contemporary romcoms. |
| Dash/Orion | Rhea Kurien | 10:00.- 13:00 | Rhea Kurien is Editorial Director for Orion Dash, the digital-first imprint at Orion. She loves women's fiction, romance, historical fiction and saga, as well as anything that might feature on BookTok. |

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| Orion | Celia Killen | 10am-1pm | Celia Killen is an Editor at Orion Fiction. She works on commercial and book club fiction across all genres, and is particularly drawn to warm, witty storytelling with a distinctive voice and a compelling hook. At the moment, she is especially enjoying witty women's fiction, romcoms and regency. |
| Bonnier - Embla | Hannah Smith | 1:30 - 4:30 | Hannah Smith, Editorial Director at Embla Books (Bonnier Books UK). Embla books launched in August 2021, with all titles instant Amazon bestsellers. We're a quality commercial fiction imprint with a tailored digital-first approach. Bringing together the best of traditional and innovative publishing we're a small list with big ambitions. I am a passionate editor of commercial fiction across all genres (having previously also worked at commercial publishers Aria and HQ, HarperCollins). I'm actively looking for historical fiction in the vein of Lucinda Riley and Mandy Robotham, as well as romances with strong heroines from all backgrounds – I want to see commercial fiction more representative of various backgrounds, race and cultures. |
| HQ | Katie Seaman | 1.30-4.30 | Commissioning across both HQ Fiction and HQ Digital, I'm looking for stories with an emotive hook to draw the reader in and I love a feel-good romantic comedy that makes me snort-laugh. Recent books I'm proud to have published include Jesse Sutanto's hilarious debut novel about a blind date gone wrong, Dial A For Aunties, which won the Comedy Women In Print Prize 2021; Did You Miss Me? from Sophia Money-Coutts – a heart-warming rom-com about what happens when the one who got away comes back; and Jessica Ryn's uplifting reading group novel shining a spotlight on the hardships facing carers, The Imperfect Art of Caring. I'm always keen to find funny and fresh romantic comedies with a strong USP and top of my wishlist is an epic love story that leaves a tear in my eye and a big smile on my face, perhaps even with a unique structure like One Day or a high-concept, like This Time Next Year. |

These sessions are for RNA members only. Please list all the Industry Professionals you would like to meet with in your application email – you may request multiple sessions. However, no member will be allocated more than **three** feedback meetings and will only be offered more than one if there is space in the allocation to do so. It is unlikely you will be allocated all the meetings for which you apply. The cost per meeting is £20 which will be charged AFTER meetings are allocated.

Feedback meetings will take place remotely, via video call, on 12th May 2022. You can see from the Agent and Editor details above whether professionals are offering morning or afternoon appointments. Please make sure you are available for the relevant time slot before you apply.

Applications should be made by email to alisonmay@romanticnovelistsassociation.org

Your email should give:

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- the name under which your RNA membership was registered;
- the name(s) of the Industry Professionals you would like to meet with (in order of preference if you have a preference), and;
- should be sent from an email address that is monitored regularly and which you are happy for us to pass on to any professionals with whom you are offered a meeting.

Applications will not be accepted before **8am on Thursday 7th April 2022** and applications will close at 8am on Friday 8th April. Applications received between 8am on Thursday 7th April and 8am on Friday 8th April will be processed in order of arrival, allocating one appointment only in the first instance. Nobody will be allocated a second meeting before all applications received during this initial period have been processed.

It is likely that all appointments will be filled in this initial application window. Applications will only be reopened if this is not the case. If applications are reopened at any point RNA members will be notified by email.

Applicants should not expect to hear the outcome of their application until week commencing 11th April. They will be notified of any feedback meetings they are being offered by email. Applicants will be required to make the payment for their meetings by credit or debit card (via the online payment link that will be provided) within 5 days of being notified of their appointments and send in their submission by email no later than 25th April 2022.

The submission requirements will be: a cover letter introducing your novel and yourself, a synopsis of no more than 1 side of A4 (12pt font, single spaced) and the opening of a novel (up to a maximum of **2500 words**, 12pt font, double spaced) in .doc, .docx or .rtf format. **Please do not send your submission in with your initial application email.**

Why are we offering feedback meetings rather than pitch meetings?

It's often said that a writing career is a marathon not a sprint, and that's good advice. This is a long term undertaking with many twists and turns along the way. But it's also really bad advice, because a marathon, like a sprint, has a finish line. And it's really easy to think about your writing journey as a single race towards publication, or towards a particular level of sales, after which everything is rosy and the job is done. Nothing could be further from reality.

In reality you might get signed by agent really quickly, but then that agent might not be able to sell your manuscript, or your next manuscript or the manuscript after that and eventually you decide to part ways and you're back at the foot of a cliff you thought you'd already scaled. Or perhaps you write what you think is a great story but you can't find a publishing home, so maybe you self-publish and you find a few readers but not enough, yet, to make a living so you graft and you try again and again and again and perhaps book number seventeen does really well and you're hugely in demand all of a sudden and you accept what seems like a great deal with a big publisher, but then book eighteen doesn't do quite as well and they don't want book nineteen after all. Or maybe you have a meeting with an editor who really likes you and enjoyed your manuscript but knows it isn't something they can buy right now, but in a couple of years time that editor has an idea for a commission and they remember an author they talked to at an event a little while ago whose voice would be just perfect for this project.

By thinking of these meetings as feedback sessions rather than pitch meetings we're emphasising the reality of a career as an author. It's really unlikely that there will be one magical defining moment where everything goes right and you make a breakthrough that sets you up for your whole career, so don't put that pressure on one ten minute conversation. What one conversation can do is give you some pointers on how to develop your story, some ideas about where your voice might fit into the market, and it can allow you to make a personal connection with an editor or agent you might not otherwise get the chance to meet. All of those are things that are genuinely valuable to building a long term career as an author.