

Literary Sensation Pens Short Story For University

Posted on Wednesday 23rd May 2007

Alexander McCall Smith, author of 'The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency' has written a new short story exclusively for the University of Birmingham which he will read to a sell-out audience at the on-campus premiere on Thursday May 24 at 6.30pm.

The best-selling Scottish author will read the "happiest story he's ever written" to a 500-strong audience at the University's Baggs Memorial Lecture, an annual event where eminent speakers talk on the subject of happiness.

The short story is about the world of Mma Precious Ramotswa in Botswana has been written especially for the lecture, which takes place at the University's Medical School. Guests will have the opportunity to meet Alexander at a book signing prior to the event and everyone will also receive a printed version of the new short story.

The Baggs Memorial Lecture began in 1976. Thomas Baggs was an alumnus of the University of Birmingham who went on to become a teacher, journalist and a war correspondent for the Daily Mail before pursuing a successful career in advertising and publicity for the USA automobile industry. When he died in 1973, Thomas bequeathed a substantial sum to the University to provide for an annual public lecture on the theme of "Happiness - what it is and how it may be achieved by individuals as well as nations."

Alexander McCall Smith said: "Happy endings are easy enough: the sunset is always there to be walked into. But a story with a happy beginning and a happy middle - that's something worth trying! In my happiness lecture I propose to tell the happiest story I shall ever write."

This Baggs Memorial Lecture has seen many distinguished speakers tackling the topic of happiness from their personal viewpoint, including Yehudi Menuhin, David Attenborough, Peter Ustinov, Maureen Lipman, David Lodge, Adam Hart Davies and Robert Winston and Sue Lawley.

Alexander McCall Smith was born in Zimbabwe in 1948. He worked as a Professor of Medical Law at the University of Edinburgh, and it was in this role that he first returned to Africa to work in Botswana, where he helped to set up a new law school at the University of Botswana. He is an international authority on genetics and, until recently, was advisor to UNESCO and to the British government on bioethics. He resigned from the University of Edinburgh in 2005 to concentrate on his writing.

'The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency' series was first published in 1998 and has now sold ten million copies in the English language. The series gained two Judges' Special Recommendations from the Booker Prize for Fiction judging panel, made the New York Times Bestseller list and was voted one of the International Books of the Year and the Millennium by the Times Literary Supplement. Alexander's 44 Scotland Street is currently riding high in the book charts.

Ends

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Notes to Editor

This event takes place at the Medical School and is by invitation only. Any members of the media wishing to attend should call the University of Birmingham Communications Office.

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