

Katherine Mansfield: A Celebration

A century after her death, and on the eve of her birthday, the France–New Zealand Association will celebrate the indomitable life and innovative writing of Katherine Mansfield (14 October 1888 – 9 January 1923) with an evening of talks, poetry, and music – including a world première – at Reid Hall, 4 rue de Chevreuse, Paris 6, on 12 October 2023 at 7.30 p.m.

Katherine Mansfield, with James Joyce and Virginia Woolf (who said hers was ‘the only writing I have ever been jealous of’), is widely regarded as one of the key literary figures in twentieth-century Modernism, famous for such short stories as ‘Prelude’, ‘At the Bay’, ‘Bliss’, ‘The Garden Party’ and ‘The Doll’s House’, and for her diary and correspondence.

Born in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1888, Mansfield died of tuberculosis at Avon, Fontainebleau, in January 1923 at the age of 34.

To commemorate the centenary of her death, the France–New Zealand Association has invited the 2023 Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellow, Dr Sue Wootton, to come to Paris and speak about Mansfield. A poet, fiction writer and publisher, Sue Wootton is a former physiotherapist and has a particular interest in the intersection of medicine and the humanities. She will follow her talk with a reading of her poetry.

The first Katherine Mansfield Fellow, the poet, playwright and broadcaster Owen Leeming, will begin the evening by recalling his stay at Menton in 1970, and reading an ode, ‘KM’, specially written for the occasion.

A highlight of the event will be the world premiere of a sonata for viola and piano by a close friend of Katherine Mansfield’s, the cellist and composer Arnold Trowell (1887–1966), likewise a New Zealander, who became Professor of Cello at London’s Guildhall School of Music and Royal College of Music.

Other Mansfield-related music, for cello and piano: six pieces which Arnold Trowell dedicated to his ‘dear friend’, and ‘Prelude’, by the Paris-based New Zealand composer Nigel Keay.

This event will undoubtedly mark the centenary in a most appropriate and enjoyable way, and beautiful Reid Hall is the perfect setting for it, in the heart of the Montparnasse area so familiar to Katherine Mansfield.