

PRESS RELEASE

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Local Author Achieves National Success

Imogen Howson wins Young Adult Romantic Novel Category

Romantic Novelists' Association Awards 2014

Workshop-based Imogen Howson was declared the winner of the Young Adult category of the Romantic Novel of the Year Award this evening.

The announcement, made by Darcey Bussell CBE, was for the author's novel *Linked*. To mark her success Imogen was presented with a star-shaped crystal trophy by Ms Bussell during a glittering ceremony held in the Reading and Writing Room of the Gladstone Library, One Whitehall Place in London SW1.

Imogen's novel then went forward, along with those of the four other category winners – Contemporary, Epic, Historical and Romantic Comedy - to contest the Romantic Novelists' Association's (RNA) most coveted award, the Romantic Novel of the Year. This is the most prestigious award in the RNA's calendar and the winner was announced later in the evening.

The Young Adult Romantic Novel category is for romantic novels where the main characters are teenagers/young adults. Imogen won in the face of fierce competition from Liz Banks, Christina Courtenay, Alex Gutteridge and Marie-Louise Jensen.

Published by Quercus, *Linked* is about Elissa, who used to have it all: looks,

popularity, and a bright future. Now, all she has is nightmarish visions and unexplained bruises. Finally, she's promised a cure, and surgery is scheduled. But on the eve of the procedure she discovers the truth behind her visions - she's seeing the world through another girl's eyes. A world filled with pain and wires and weird machines. Elissa follows her visions only to find a battered, broken girl on the run. A girl - Lin - who looks exactly like Elissa, down to the matching bruises. A twin she never knew existed.

Elissa helps Lin evade the government agents who are ruthlessly tracking her down, but they're struggling to avoid capture. Soon Elissa is forced to turn to the only person who can help: Cadan, her brother's infuriating, arrogant best friend, and new graduate of the SFI space flight academy. Cadan is their one chance at safety. But Lin is too valuable to let go, and Elissa also has knowledge that is too dangerous. The government will stop at nothing to get them back.

The category winners' novels -

* *A Night on the Orient Express* - Veronica Henry
Contemporary Category

* *The Fever Tree* - Jennifer McVeigh
Epic category

* *The Gilded Fan* - Christina Courtenay
Historical Category

* *It's Raining Men* - Milly Johnson
Romantic Comedy

* *Linked* - Imogen Howson
Young Adult

- were read and judged by a respected, highly experienced panel of five independent industry professionals who determined the overall winner of the Romantic Novel of the Year.

This year the five judges included Sarah Broadhurst, *The Bookseller*; Alison Flood, *Guardian.co.uk*; Jane Mays, *The Daily Mail*; Karin Stoecker, ex-Editorial

Director, Harlequin Books and Chris White of Waterstones.

The judges said of Imogen's novel, "It's original and a confident debut. Tons of fun."

For the past 50 years the RNA has set a benchmark in romantic fiction. Its President, Katie Fforde, commented, "The RNA was set up in 1961 to encourage the good writing of romantic fiction in all its many genres. We congratulate all of our category winners. To get this far and compete against some of the best authors in the land is no mean feat."

Cover images for all the above novels, together with author photographs, can be found at:

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/activities/photo_galleries

High resolution pictures of the Romantic Novel of the Year Awards can be found in the media section of our website

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/news/media_centre

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Liz Banks, *Irresistible*, Piccadilly Press

When Mia gets a summer job in a country club, it's a chance to see into the world of privilege and passion. Laid-back, funny Dan keeps her feet on the ground and could be the perfect person to go travelling with when the summer's over. Then there's Jamie, wealthy and sexy, who enjoys messing with other people's lives for entertainment, but she's drawn to him. Despite knowing any relationship with him is a bad idea, somehow she can't stop herself.

Christina Courtney, *New England Rocks*, Choc Lit

British teenager Rain is expelled from boarding school and sent to a US high school as punishment. She wants to dislike it, but then she meets Jesse, the hottest guy ever who plays the guitar in an awesome rock band. One small problem - he already has a girlfriend, little miss perfect Amber Lawrence, who looks set to cause trouble as Rain and Jesse grow closer. But what does it matter? New England sucks anyway, and Rain doesn't plan on staying anyway ... does she?

Alex Gutteridge, *Last Chance Angel*, Templar Publishing

When Jess is knocked off her bicycle she finds herself at the gates of Heaven before her actual destined date. Striking a deal with Darren, the angel of death on duty, she is allowed to return to earth to visit her friends and family, in invisible form, for five days. But saying goodbye is harder than Jess ever imagined, as she learns new things about her friends and family. And, when Darren offers Jess a last chance at life, she is faced with an impossible dilemma.

Imogen Howson, *Linked*, Quercus

For years, Elissa has suffered nightmarish visions and unexplained bruises. Finally, she's promised a cure, and an operation is scheduled. But on the eve of the procedure, Elissa discovers the truth: she's seeing the world through another girl's eyes. A world filled with wires, machines and pain. Elissa follows her visions, only to find a battered, broken girl. A girl who looks exactly like her. A twin she never knew existed. Elissa and her twin Lin go on the run, but even after changing their looks and clothes, they're barely a step ahead of the government agents who are ruthlessly tracking them down. For Lin and Elissa are too valuable to let go, and the dark truth at the heart of it all is too shocking to risk exposing...

Marie-Louise Jenson, *Smuggler's Kiss*, Oxford University Press

Smugglers are cut-throat rascals. At least that's what Isabelle's always been told. But then she's rescued from drowning at sea by the crew of a notorious smuggling ship. To survive she must help her captors - even though she detests what they do. Her principles are thrown into confusion as she discovers that outwitting the king's men fills her with excitement, especially when she's with one mysterious smuggler in particular.

Beth Reekles, *The Kissing Booth*, Corgi

Meet Rochelle Evans: pretty, popular - and never been kissed. Meet Noah Flynn: badass, volatile - and a total player. When Elle decides to run a kissing booth at the school's Spring Carnival, she locks lips with Noah and her life is turned upside down. Her head says to keep away, but her heart wants to draw closer - this romance seems far from fairy tale and headed for heartbreak. But will Elle get her happily ever after?

Note to Editors

About the Romantic Novelists' Association

The RNA was formed in 1960 to promote romantic fiction and encourage good writing and now represents more than 700 writers, agents, editors and other publishing professionals. The Romantic Novel of the Year Award was launched in the same year, and recognises excellence in romantic novels thereby enhancing the standing of the genre.

The RNA has always involved readers in judging the awards. Keen readers are asked to rate nominated books on a number of criteria including romantic content, readability, characters, plot, dialogue, style and ending. These readers' favourites are then presented to the expert independent judges, who decide the overall winners.

The 2013 Romantic Novel of the Year Award winner was Jenny Colgan, for *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*, published by Sphere. Other recent winners include Jane Lovering, Julia Gregson, Freya North, Rosie Thomas, Jojo Moyes and Philippa Gregory.

A list of past winners of RNA awards can be found at www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org