
2009: A special year for Poetry, and there's more to come



To celebrate their centenary year the Poetry Society is thinking big to create the world's first giant knitted poem...

It's been an extraordinary year for poetry. There's been the public and media excitement surrounding the announcement of Carol Ann Duffy as Poet Laureate, followed by the generous gift of her honorarium to the Poetry Society to establish The Ted Hughes Poetry Award; and the BBC's very popular poetry season. Testament indeed to the place poetry holds in the British consciousness and the key role the Poetry Society plays in keeping it there.

The Poetry Society continues its Centenary celebrations with an array of events looking forward to the poetic stars of the future with the announcement of The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award and a showcase of winners from the hugely popular SLAMBassadors UK competition. The launch at Tate Modern of the anthology *A Century of Poetry Review*, looks back through the Society's hundred-year publishing history, gathering highlights from its famous magazine. Classic poems first published in *Poetry Review* and reprinted here include Rupert Brooke's 'The Old Vicarage, Grantchester'.

On 8th October, National Poetry Day, the Poetry Society celebrates poetry's heroes and heroines at an energetic afternoon of live performance and archive treasures, co-hosted with the BBC at London's Southbank Centre. Carol Ann Duffy and John Hegley are among the performers, as the result is announced of the BBC online poll to find the Nation's Favourite Poet.

The Poetry Society will also unveil the world's first giant knitted poem. From New Zealand to Newcastle up to a thousand people have been hand-knitting the individual letters which are currently being shaped into an eye-catching multi-coloured poem – expected to span 40 feet. The identity of the poem will be kept a secret until 7th October.

Founded 100 years ago, the Poetry Society is the leading voice for poets and poetry in Britain today. Now one of the country's liveliest arts organisations, the Poetry Society is dedicated to finding innovative ways to keep poetry at the centre of our cultural life.

Centenary Events



Knit a Poem – October (date tbc)

To highlight the enormous significance of poetry in our lives, the Poetry Society is upping the scale, to create a giant poem – the world's first giant knitted poem. This fun, mass-participatory project has harnessed the enthusiasm of up to a thousand contributors worldwide, who have been knitting the individual multi-coloured letters of a secret poem.

“Readers sometimes need reminding about the amount of work that goes into writing a poem,” says Poetry Society Director Judith Palmer. “I hope people will see the hours that have gone into the knitting, and reflect on the poet’s sleepless nights crafting the text.” She adds, “knitting and poetry have much in common. Both are built up row by row, line by line: and if you go wrong you need to go back and unravel it.”

The patchwork of knitted letters will take shape throughout September; with the identity of the final poem being kept strictly under wraps until its final construction and unfurling on 7th October. (NB; date could be subject to change due to weathercondition)

Templates for the letters were designed by award-winning artists Rachael Matthews and Louise Harris of ‘modern haberdashers’ Prick Your Finger. Participants have enjoyed reading ‘poems for knitters’ by poets such as Gwyneth Lewis, Pablo Neruda and Jo Shapcott, which are published weekly on the Poetry Society website.



Lemn Sissay © James Ross

Prize Giving Ceremony for the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2009 – 8th October

Running since 1998, this is the leading national poetry prize of its kind. It seeks to unearth, promote and support young poetic talent from across the UK and beyond. The award is open to any young person aged 11-17.

This year over 6,000 budding writers submitted entries – the largest number in the competition’s 12 years. Judges Lemn Sissay and Selima Hill have the difficult task of choosing a winner from a fascinating spread of poems dealing with issues from global warming, citizenship and the credit crunch to explorations of belief, mortality, romance and relationships.

Foyle Co-ordinator Lucy Wood says “This is a very exciting year for the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award. We are delighted with the quality and number of entries – the biggest ever - which clearly demonstrates the growing interest in poetry and the wealth of young poetic talent. This prize-giving ceremony will be a chance to celebrate the stars of the future and offer a platform for getting these new voices heard”.

The winners will be celebrated at the Southbank’s St Paul’s Roof Pavilion on Thurs 8th Oct, 12.30 – 14.30 (invite only). The 15 Foyle Young Poets of the Year will have their poems printed in the 2009 Foyle Anthology, and win a week-long residential at one of the prestigious Arvon Centres led by Lemn Sissay and Caroline Bird or a residency in their school by a leading poet. The 85 commended poets will receive Youth Membership of the Poetry Society and a selection of poetry collections from partner publishers.

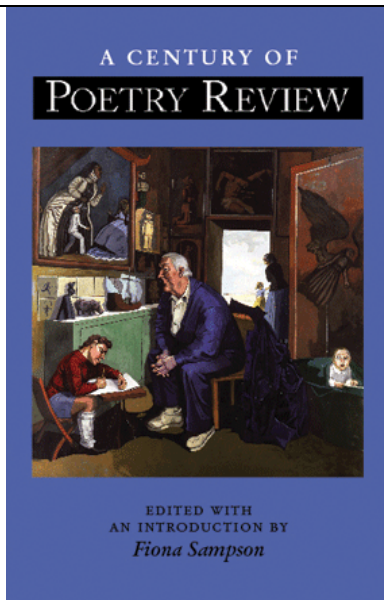


National Poetry Day Live! – 8th October, Royal Festival Hall

The Poetry Society marks National Poetry Day at London's Southbank Centre with a centenary celebration devoted to our poetic heroes and heroines. As the BBC announces the winner of the poll to find the Nation's Favourite Poet, drop in to share the excitement with an afternoon of free public events featuring live poetry performances, film and audio archive, interactive wordplay and poetic knitting.

Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy will read a new poem, live at 2.30pm. Other performers include John Hegley and Dreadlock Alien.

This Poetry Society Centenary event is held in association with the BBC and the Southbank Centre. 2-5pm, Clore Ballroom, Royal Festival Hall, London SE1. admission free. Later that evening, Alan Yentob will host a glitzy evening reception overlooking the Thames, combining celebrations for the Poetry Society's centenary and the conclusion of the BBC's Poetry Season. We'll be honouring the poet chosen as the 'Nation's Favourite', and leading poet Simon Armitage will read a new poem commissioned by the Poetry Society for the occasion.



A Century of Poetry Review – Launched at Tate Modern, 22nd October

The anthology, *A Century of Poetry Review*, published to mark the Society's centenary, gathers a compendious selection of poems and essays the magazine was first to publish. From Rupert Brooke and Thomas Hardy to today's famous names, such as Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott, the anthology plots the story of poetry through the past hundred years, and features poets including TS Eliot, Ezra Pound, WH Auden, Philip Larkin, Robert Frost, Stevie Smith and Jackie Kay. Edited by *Poetry Review's* current editor, Fiona Sampson, this attractive book, with a Paula Rego cover, is published by Carcanet Press at £14.95

A Century of Poetry Review is selected as a Poetry Book Society Special Commendation for the autumn 2009 quarter; and will be launched at Tate Modern on 22 October.

Published by the Poetry Society, *Poetry Review*, is the oldest and most widely read poetry magazine in the UK, with a reputation as one of the leading literary periodicals in the world. Previous editors include Mick Imlah, Andrew Motion and the indomitable Muriel Spark who upon becoming editor in 1947 transformed it into the indispensable protagonist in contemporary poetic practice it is today.

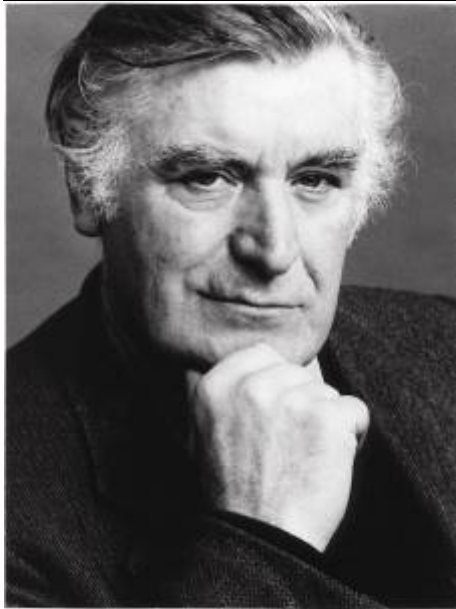


The National Poetry Competition 2009 - Poets have until 31 October to enter

The National Poetry Competition is Britain's top single-poem competition, and attracts entries from Nantwich to Nairobi. Past winners include Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, Jo Shapcott, Ian Duhig and Tony Harrison. The competition judges poems anonymously, ensuring that the award often generates vigorous debate and shock wins for previously unknown writers.

Weighing up the merits of up to 10,000 poems will be judges Daljit Nagra, Ruth Padel and Neil Rollinson.

The winners and commendations will be revealed at the Savile Club in London's Mayfair on Tuesday 30th March 2010.



Ted Hughes photo © Caroline Forbes

The Ted Hughes Award

The Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry, which is launched in October, will be awarded annually throughout the ten years of Carol Ann Duffy's Laureateship. The £5000 prize will be awarded to any UK poet working in any form, who has made the most exciting contribution to poetry that year. Eligible works may include, but are not limited to, poetry collections (for adults or children), individual published poems, poems for radio, verse translations, verse dramas, libretti, film poems and public poetry pieces.

Nominations for the award will be made by Poetry Society members and the winner decided by a panel of three judges appointed by the Poet Laureate. The winners will be announced each year alongside the National Poetry Competition winners. The inaugural prize-giving will be at the Savile Club in London's Mayfair on Tuesday 30 March 2010.

The Ted Hughes Award was made possible by the generous gift of the Poet Laureate's annual honorarium.



Tanisha, Shane, Oshua © Hayley Madden

SLAMBassadors Showcase Event – 15th November

Slam is the competitive art form of performance poetry, rapping and emceeing staged 'acapella style' before a loud and lively audience, and a panel of judges. It is the ultimate in interactive entertainment, fusing performer and crowd together into one voluble force that blends spoken word, beatbox and politics. It gives young people a voice. And a microphone.

SLAMBassadors is running in partnership with BBC Blast in 2009 and six lucky acts between the ages of 13-19 will win the opportunity to meet and perform live with poet Benjamin Zephaniah and musician Scroobius Pip.

The SLAMBassadors championship rolled out across the nation from summer 2009 on the BBC Blast bus. The tour connects with hundreds of young people across the country, inviting them to upload videos of themselves slamming to the BBC's website.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/slambassadors>



The Corneliu M Popescu Prize for Poetry Translation. Winners announced 19 November 2009

A shortlist of eight titles has just been announced for the Popescu Prize for Poetry Translation 2009. Organised by the Poetry Society and sponsored by the Ratiu Family Foundation, the prize is given biennially to a collection of poetry translated into English from another European language.

Judging the books this year are leading poets/translators, Elaine Feinstein and Stephen Romer. The shortlisted titles are:

Mad Women by Gabriela Mistral, translated by Randall Couch, Unfinished Ode to Mud, by Francis Ponge, translated by Beverley Bie Brahic, Against Heaven, by Dulce Maria Loynaz, translated by James O'Connor, Poems, by Oktay Rifat, translated by Ruth Christie and Richard McKane, Courts of Air and Earth, various, translated by Trevor Joyce, Birdsong on the Seabed, by Elena Shvarts, translated by Sasha Dugdale, Rime, by Dante Alighieri, translated by JG Nichols and Anthony Mortimer, Selected Poems, by CP Cavafy, translated by Avi Sharon.

"The shortlist provides an opportunity to journey both inwards and outwards, both in the present moment and in those great poets from the past who can still quicken something in us today". Stephen Romer

The winner will be announced on 19 November 2009 at the Ratiu Foundation, Manchester Square, London W1.



New Poetry Society Commissions

Morrisons Food Laureate

Supermarket chain Morrisons has marshalled the power of poetry to make better cooks of us all with assistance from the Poetry Society. Poets Ian McMillan, John Mole and Peter Sansom created new poems to make basic cooking tips easy to recall – distributed in all 415 stores nationwide.

Tate Etc

Throughout 2009 the Poetry Society has been curating a dozen Poems of the Month for Tate Etc, the magazine of the Tate galleries. Poets including Peter Porter, Roger McGough and Penelope Shuttle wrote poems in response to pieces in the Tate collections by artists such as Picasso, Man Ray and Dorothea Tanning. <http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc>

Churches Conservation Trust

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Churches Conservation Trust the Poetry Society commissioned a poem by Pauline Stainer. Her poem 'A Kind of Quickening' was premiered at the CCT's commemorative service at Westminster Abbey on 16 September.

Look North More Often

Responding to the Mayor of Oslo's annual gift of the Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree, the Poetry Society has created a poetry project for primary schools featuring poets including Kevin Crossley-Holland and Frances Presley. This is the first stage of an exciting partnership with the Royal Norwegian Embassy and Westminster Council bringing poetry to Trafalgar Square.



Morrisons and Look North More Often resource pack images by Gemma Correll

Editor's Notes

The Poetry Society

The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote “a more general recognition and appreciation of poetry”. Since then, it has grown into one of Britain’s most dynamic arts organisations, representing poetry both nationally and internationally. Today it has 3650 members around the world, publishes the leading poetry magazine *Poetry Review*, and has an extensive education programme. It has a long commitment to the commissioning of new work, and runs prestigious competitions including the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award and the National Poetry Competition.

To find out more visit www.poetrysociety.org.uk

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