

An Unflinching Gaze

Foyle Young Poets 2009:
Finalists Announced



Bryony Harrower, Foyle Winner, 16, Aberdeenshire

The Foyle Young Poets of The Year Award 2009 - the Poetry Society's prestigious prize for young writers - has received its highest number of entries ever.

As the Poetry Society celebrates its centenary year, record breaking numbers of young poets have once again wowed the judges with their work. The twelfth year of this leading international poetry competition for 11-17 year olds has witnessed over 6,000 young people from across the globe entering their poems.

With themes ranging from love and family to technology and war, these poems are bold and expressive insights into the lives and concerns of young people. "The privilege of reading these poems, of being invited to step into these secret worlds, is something very special," says one of this year's judges poet Selima Hill.

This year the reader can't help but be struck by the number of strong reactions to war with young poets offering imaginative explorations of themes that adults often believe they have no authority on. However, we can see that these young people are astute critics of today, offering a fresh and truthful look at painful issues such as London winner Adham Smart's powerful poem 'good morning palestine'.



Hattie Grunwald, 17, Barnsley



Adham Smart, 17, London



Phoebe Power, 16, Cumbria

good morning palestine (extract)

Adham Smart

the fire we harbour
in frosty canisters
with messages
in children's chalk

leaves you
with the smell
of burning textbooks

Other winning poems include Londoner Phil Coales' 'Computer Love' and Phoebe Power from Cumbria's 'HyperTextTransferProtocol' which wittily and expressively make use of technological language. Thanks to the pervasive use of mobile phones and the internet, a whole new range of words and expressions have become a huge part of young people's vocabulary.

HyperTextTransferProtocol (extract)

Phoebe Power

Every1one of you'll get
AcquiredImmuneDeficiencySyndrome from
social networking, I
prefer my MovingPicturesexpertsgrouphyphenoneaudiolayer3three
player, it's so compact.

All 100 winning poets will attend a prize giving ceremony at Royal Festival Hall in London on Thursday 8th October (National Poetry Day) where they will meet their judges, Lemn Sissay and Selima Hill. The top 15 Foyle Young Poets of the Year will attend a residential writing week at the Hurst Arvon Centre in Shropshire or receive a poet visit to their school. All young poets will become Youth Members of the Poetry Society and will begin or continue a supportive and encouraging relationship with the UK's leading poetry organisation.

These are poems that speak of moments of beauty crystallized in time and horror suspended in the static air. These young poets will follow in the footsteps of their judges, so watch out for them!

Kiss (extract)

Hattie Grunewald

tarmac and dark grey cement flowed over her skin
and her hair was the colour of street lights
and when he looked at her,
the cars rushing past seemed only to be going
at 60 miles a decade.

her mouth tasted of newsagents when he kissed it
her lips smudged his.
eyes like rusty metal,
he kissed her.

After receiving their awards, this year's Foyle Young Poets will be heading to the Royal Festival Hall's Clore Ballroom to enjoy a special programme of poetry performances as part of the Poetry Society's centenary celebrations. Foyle judges Selima Hill and Lemn Sissay join Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy in a stunning line-up of poetic heroes and heroines for National Poetry Day. All are welcome to join this free fiesta of poetry (2-4.45pm), with live performances from John Hegley, Roger McGough and Anjan Saha and Lost Luggage, interactive beachball haiku from Valerie Laws, and rare archive footage of poets such as Stevie Smith, Dylan Thomas and TS Eliot. The Foyle Young Poets will be on the spot as the BBC announces the result of its vote to find the Nation's Favourite Poet, on an extraordinary day toasting poetic talents past, present and future.

Winners

Phil Coales, 17, London
Bradley Cutts, 14, Suffolk
Hattie Grunewald, 17, Barnsley
Dom Hale, 16, Lancashire
Bryony Harrower, 16, Aberdeenshire
Nai Liu, 17, USA
Hannah Locke, 15 Hants
Karina Bailey McNally, 13 Salford

Megan Pattie, 16, Tyne and Wear
Phoebe Power, 16, Cumbria
Adham Smart, 17, London
Phoebe Walker, 17, Northumberland
Melissa Whittle, 16, London
Jonathan Wilcox, 18, Lichfield
Leon Yuchin Lau, 17, Singapore

Editor's Notes

Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award is sponsored by the Foyle Foundation. It meets two of the Foyle Foundation's core criteria for support in Arts and Learning and in particular encourages creativity and literacy among young people at school. These are key success factors for young people to go through life. The Foundation is very keen to work with the Poetry Society to build on what has been achieved so far and to encourage young people both in and out of formal education to become involved with the scheme nationwide

Poet Ian McMillan is the Foyle Young Poets Ambassador.

Lemn Sissay

Lemn Sissay is the author of four poetry collections: *Tender Fingers in a Clenched Fist* (1988); *Rebel Without Applause* (1992); *Morning Breaks in the Elevator* (1999) and *The Emperor's Watchmaker* (2000). He is also the editor of *The Fire People: A Collection of Contemporary Black British Poets* (1998), and his work has appeared in many anthologies. His stage plays are *Chaos By Design*, *Storm*, and *Something Dark*. Examples of his television explorations include a 6-part jazz series for BBC2, and in 2004 he presented the first National Poetry Slam and The New Brit for the BBC. His work has featured in various short films including the British Film Institute sponsored *The Elevator*, featuring Gary Lewis.

A documentary about Lemn's extraordinary life and search for his father, *Internal Flight*, was recently broadcast on BBC1. He has been commissioned to write poems by various bodies including the World Service, and his work has become public art, particularly in Manchester, where his poems appear on buildings and streets. Lemn Sissay reads his work around the world and is featured on many albums, most notably *Leftism* by Leftfield.

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 3500 members around the world, publishes the leading poetry magazine *Poetry Review*, and has an extensive education programme. As well as the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award it runs the National Poetry Competition, one of the longest-running and most prestigious competitions of its kind.

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

Selima Hill

Poet Selima Hill was born in London and grew up in rural England and Wales. She read Moral Sciences at New Hall, Cambridge (1965-7). She regularly collaborates with artists and has worked on multimedia projects with the Royal Ballet, Welsh National Opera and BBC Bristol. She is a tutor at the Poetry School in London, and has taught creative writing in hospitals and prisons.

Selima Hill won first prize in the 1988 Arvon Foundation/Observer International Poetry Competition for her long poem 'The Accumulation of Small Acts of Kindness', and her 1997 collection, *Violet*, was shortlisted for the Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year), the T. S. Eliot Prize and the Whitbread Poetry Award. Her book of poetry, *Bunny* (2001), a series of poems about a young girl growing up in the 1950s, won the Whitbread Poetry Award.

Selima Hill lives in Dorset. Her most recent book of poetry is *The Hat* (2008). Her selected poems: *Gloria*, was also published in 2008.

Contacts

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