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## Press Release

[Under embargo until 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011]

FOYLE  
YOUNG  
POETS  
OF THE YEAR AWARDED

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# The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award winners announced:

National Poetry Day,  
6<sup>th</sup> October 2011



Safrina Ahmed, Foyle Winner, 16, Birmingham

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*“This award shows that literally thousands of young people are writing poetry, and with such strong and vigorous voices.”*

**Imtiaz Dharker, judge of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2011**

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Judge Glyn Maxwell, who himself won a national award at 15, which “*changed everything*”, knows the importance of recognition at this crucial stage and commented how “*these poets are not just looking inward but outward to their social environments and understand themselves in a very mature way*”.

This year the Award for young poets aged 11-17 celebrates its highest number of entrants since its launch in 1998, attracting **7,215 submissions** from around the world. Poets Imtiaz Dharker and Glyn Maxwell selected the 15 overall winners and 85 commendations, and were particularly struck by the unflinching way these young poets explored their world:

“*These young people are saying ‘If I’m going to be a poet, I have to step up and face these things’.*” Glyn Maxwell

And step up they did, taking on a wide range of themes, from the philosophy of Kant to the world of Facebook. Common to all winning poets is a fierce search for understanding and a wisdom that belies their age.

The youngest of the Overall Winners, Robert Marston aged 11, gave a moving exploration of solitude:

***I took sadness to a boxing match.  
He pushed the door open slowly with one finger  
Dragging his feet, it sounded like  
a snake hissing as it died.***

‘Sadness’ by Robert Marston (11 years)

There is an equally startling presence in Joel Lipson’s poem, which portrays a chilling imaginary playmate:

***I never stopped repeating your name,  
Even when I grew. I hushed you into the corner of my mind  
Where you froze, and expanded.  
Blood boy. Blood boy. I can see you now,  
Seeking something awful in the snow.***

‘Playing in the Snow’ by Joel Lipson (16 years)

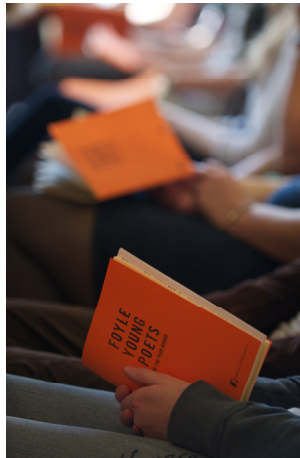
The poems also display a wonderful playfulness, as Safrina Ahmed's poem demonstrates:

***Kant is Japanese and has a cremated heart. He asks if I'm married although my hands are full of wild sea creatures.***

'Layers of Kant Reveal:' by Safrina Ahmed (17 years)



Imtiaz Dharker, Judge of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year 2011 © Simon Powell



The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Awards Ceremony 2010



Glyn Maxwell, Judge of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year 2011 © Kate Eshelby

All 100 winning poets will attend a prize giving ceremony at **Royal Festival Hall** in London on **Thursday 6th October (National Poetry Day)** where they will meet judges Imtiaz Dharker and Glyn Maxwell. 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 (age dependent). All 100 winning poets will become Youth Members of the Poetry Society, the UK's leading poetry organisation.

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## Overall Winners

Safrina Ahmed, 17, West Midlands , 'Layers of Kant reveal:'  
Matt Broomfield, 17, Shropshire, 'Schizo'  
Eleanor Coy, 14, Buckinghamshire, 'if it's important to you'  
Alexandra Cussons, 17, London 'Sewing Pattern'  
Flora de Falbe, 15, London, '4pt suicide note'  
Polly Fullerton, 17, Berkshire, 'Burnout Ballad'  
Joel Lipson, 15, Cambridge, 'Playing in the Snow'  
Robert Marston, 11, Middlesex, 'Sadness'  
Jessica Mayhew, 16, Hertfordshire, 'I want the words...'  
Emma McNairy, 17, North Carolina, 'Variation on César Vallejo's "Black Stone on a White Stone"  
Phoebe Stuckes, 15, Somerset, 'Reeling'  
Emma Townley-Smith, 17, California, 'Composition'  
Jenny Walker, 17, Cumbria, 'Chips'  
Elisabeth Wilson, 15, Suffolk, 'Desert'  
Laura Wanamaker, 17, Massachusetts, 'Chatham, MA'

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# Editor's Notes

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## The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award

Established in 1998, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year is now the key award for young writers aged 11-17. The competition is free to enter and poems can be on any theme, and of any length. It receives entries from over 7000 young people each year.

*"The Foyle Young Poets Awards are important beckoning points for younger writers. They recognise a poet's first adventures into a public space for their poetry."* Prof. David Morley, National Teaching Fellow, Warwick University. For more information go to [www.foleyoungpoets.org](http://www.foleyoungpoets.org)

## The Foyle Foundation

The Foyle Foundation is an independent grant making trust supporting UK charities which since its formation in 2001 has become a major funder of the Arts and Learning. The Foyle Foundation has invested in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award since 2001, one of its longest partnerships, during this time it has trebled its support and enabled the competition to develop and grow to become one of the premier literary awards in the country. [www.foylefoundation.org.uk](http://www.foylefoundation.org.uk)

## Imtiaz Dharker

Imtiaz Dharker was born in Pakistan, raised in Glasgow, and now lives between London and Mumbai. She is the author of five poetry collections: *Purdah and other poems* (1988); *Postcards from god* (1997); *I speak for the devil* (2001); *The terrorist at my table* (2006); and *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009) (Bloodaxe). She works as a documentary film-maker in India, and is also an artist, having shown solo exhibitions in the UK, India and Hong Kong. Her work has been described by critic Bruce King as "consciously feminist, consciously political, consciously that of a multiple outsider, someone who knows her own mind, rather than someone full of doubt and liberal ironies".

## National Poetry Day

The Poetry Society and Southbank Centre present National Poetry Day Live – celebrating this year's theme of 'Games'. Poets including Jo Shapcott, Simon Armitage, Jackie Kay, Michael Rosen, Imtiaz Dharker, Glyn Maxwell, Jo Bell, and Joelle Taylor will led a celebration of the theme of 'Games' on National Poetry Day, 6<sup>th</sup> October. Joining them will be some rising stars of poetry from the Foyle Young Poets and SLAMBassadors UK. 1pm – 6pm, Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October, The Clore Ballroom at the Royal Festival Hall, London, SE1 8XX. Free entry. School groups welcome. [www.poetrysociety.org.uk](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk).

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## 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 organizations, representing British poetry both nationally and internationally. Today it has nearly 4000 members worldwide and publishes the leading poetry magazine, *Poetry Review*. With innovative education and commissioning programmes and a packed calendar of performances, readings and competitions, the Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages. As well as the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, the Poetry Society runs the National Poetry Competition, one of the world's longest-running and most prestigious prizes for an individual poem, and the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry – the prize founded by Carol Ann Duffy from her honorarium as Poet Laureate.

*"The Poetry Society is the heart and hands of poetry in the UK – a centre which pours out energy to all parts of the poetry-body, and a dexterous set of operations which arrange and organize poetry's various manifestations. It has a long distinguished history, and has never been so vital, or so vitalizing as it is now."* Sir Andrew Motion

## Glyn Maxwell

Glyn Maxwell is an established and critically-acclaimed poet, novelist and playwright. His collection *The Breakage* (1998) was shortlisted for both the T.S. Eliot Prize and the Forward Poetry Prize for Best Collection, and *The Nerve* (2002) won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. He has written a number of plays including *Broken Journey* (Time Out Critics' Choice), *The Lifeblood*, *Any Road* and *The Only Girl in the World*. His radio play, *Childminders*, was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in 2002. He has also written opera libretti, including *The Girl of Sand* with composer Elena Langer, and a libretto based on Euripides' *The Birds* composed by Ed Hughes which performed at the City of London Festival 2005. *Blue Burneau* (1994), his first novel, was shortlisted for the Whitbread First Novel Award. He is currently adapting Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* for Moving Pictures Theatre Company. His latest poetry collection, *Hide Now*, was published in 2008, and shortlisted for the 2008 T. S. Eliot Prize and the 2009 Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year).

# Contacts

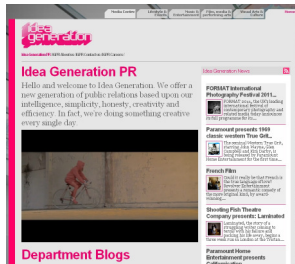
For further information / Use of pictures / Interviews

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[www.foleyoungpoets.org](http://www.foleyoungpoets.org)

For:

- Information
- Previous Winners