

21 October 2010 *For immediate release*

By popular demand! SLAMBassadors UK championship extends its deadline



With more schools than ever before signing up and poems flooding in, the Poetry Society has extended the deadline of its pioneering performance poetry championship, SLAMBassadors UK, to Friday 10 December 2010 at 5pm.

Launched in June this year, SLAMBassadors UK has been on the look out for some of the most exciting new performance poets aged 12-18 years old. It's easy to enter and young people are being encouraged to simply write a poem or rap around the theme of Identity, film it and send it to the Poetry Society.

To make sure that as many young people take part in the championship as possible, the Poetry Society has been running workshops with leading performance poets in schools in London, Buckinghamshire, North Somerset, Liverpool, Shropshire and Manchester.

SLAMBassadors UK encourages young people to reclaim their voices, edit them and amplify them to the nation. With more schools than ever before signing up and poems flooding in, the Poetry Society has extended the deadline to Friday 10 December 2010 at 5pm.

Since it began, SLAMBassadors UK has had a major impact on some of the young performers taking part, as former participant, Hussain Manawar, recently explained:

"Before Slam I was getting excluded from school and was the BIGGEST underachiever in my year group. I was in all sorts of different types of trouble but you lot gave me a chance to excel and rise about that, and for that I thank you. The work you do I believe to be truly amazing and very inspirational and hope that you keep it up because you made a huge change in my life."

Many others have gone on to release their own CDs, publish first collections or to make their name as rising stars of the spoken word scene. Better still, early winners of the slam are now poet mentors on the project, helping other young people find the right words and the right way to say them.

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For further information

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Any young person can enter – they do not need to belong to a school or to have taken part in one of the free workshops. They simply have to write a poem or rap around the theme, register online, film the poem and send the MP4 to the Poetry Society.

After SLAMBassadors closes on 10 December 2010, a panel of judges will select the winners from the online archives. Check out the Poetry Society's slam website for full details on how to enter, where the workshops are taking place, and to watch footage of the poets and rappers who have already entered: <http://slam.poetrysociety.org.uk>

The Poetry Society thanks: Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation; Find Your Talent, Buckinghamshire Council; Writing on the Wall, Liverpool; Wenlock Poetry Festival; the Walcot Foundation; John Lyon's Charity and North Somerset County Council for their support of SLAMBassadors UK.

– ENDS –

For more information and/or to interview Joelle Taylor, PACE, Chris Preddie, Hussain Manawar or any of the past SLAMBassadors, contact Alan Ward or Lisa Roberts on 020 7420 9880.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- **SLAM is the competitive art of performance poetry, rapping or emceeing** where artists spit their lyrics and poems to a panel of judges.
- **SLAMBassadors UK, the Poetry Society's pioneering performance poetry slam championship**, is now in its ninth year. This national championship is open to all 12-18 year olds living in the UK who write an original 2 minute piece around the theme of Identity – who you are, where you are from or where you are going.
Workshops to inspire, advise and film emerging young poets will run across the UK, from North Somerset to Tower Hamlets, Leeds to Liverpool, Buckinghamshire to Brixton, and every stop in between. A team of established spoken word artists, rappers and poets will go into schools, youth clubs and theatres to root out young talent. They will each work with aspiring young artists – creating a poem and filming it to upload to the SlamCam Youtube Channel, where it will be judged by respected poets and musicians.
- **Joelle Taylor** is based in London, and has worked extensively as a performance poet, spoken word artist and storyteller since 1986. She also has a background in theatre. She has led numerous writing and performance workshops in schools, theatres and art centres. She has toured nationally both as a solo artist and as a member of Atomic Lip, a polyphonic performance poetry group which fused spoken word with popular culture. Once described as 'Poetry you can dance to' by *The Independent*, Atomic Lip produced two pop-poetry videos funded by the National Lottery. She has performed her poetry, stories and plays at venues as diverse as the ICA, Dingwalls, Ronnie Scott's, the Globe, the 100 Club, Glastonbury, the Oval House and Drill Hall Theatre. She has had four full-length scripts produced for theatre. She was the Hot off the Press UK Performance Poetry Slam Champion 2000 and currently hosts Mother Foucault spoken-word night.
Her writing has been published by Scarlet Press and Routledge, and her scripts have featured in several texts about women's theatre. She is currently awaiting publication of her poetry in two separate anthologies. She has taught courses at the Arvon Foundation, as well as appearing as a featured artist there. She recently travelled to Zimbabwe with the British Council, and having won the Power in the Voice slam, also toured Botswana in the summer of 2008. She has worked in a variety of educational settings and has delivered Performance Poetry and Slam INSETS for a number of agencies across the UK.
- **PACE** leads creative writing, rapping and beatbox workshops, with young people channelling their energy into positive and useful skills. PACE has two mix-tapes currently in production featuring tasty collaborations from the likes of Ruff Squad, Universe & Sensor.
- **Chris Preddie (aka Cashman)** lives in London, and was born to parents of West Indian descent. His father settled in Britain in the late 1960's, whilst his mother was born in the UK. Cashman won the Slam Championship in 2006, and is already a celebrated young actor appearing in a variety of short films. He has a passion for acting, emceeing, rapping, writing lyrics, teaching and passing his experiences on to the youth. Chris aims to be a positive role model for young people, and believes we all need the space to express ourselves. Cashman has been working in conjunction with Crimestoppers as their very first Community Champion. Watch 'His Life of Rhyme': a documentary about Chris, his life, his views, his lyrics. (Film by Zan Barberton)
- **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 British poetry both nationally and internationally. Today it has nearly 4,000 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. To find out more about the Poetry Society visit www.poetrysociety.org.uk

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