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The Poetry Society and Southbank Centre hand over National Poetry Day Live to young poets



Laura Dockrill performing at National Poetry Day Live
CREDIT: Hayley Madden

The Poetry Society and Southbank Centre have taken the unprecedented move of putting one of the biggest events of the poetry year into the hands of eight young poets.

Since 2009 two of the strongest forces in UK poetry have worked together to put on a free event at Southbank Centre each National Poetry Day. Over the years the event has featured major poetry stars such as Carol Ann Duffy, Simon Armitage, Roger McGough, and John Cooper Clarke. This year the programme for **National Poetry Day Live** will be entirely devised by a group of eight emerging poets who will be choosing the acts, planning the day and running the event.

This year National Poetry Day takes place on Thursday 2nd October and this year's theme is 'Remember'. The event is part of Southbank Centre's 8th annual **London Literature Festival**, which runs 30th September – 13th October. The 2014 programme, with a liberty-inspired theme designed to bring out the inner rebel in both performers and the public, contains a selection of poetry highlights, including: a rare appearance from Alice Oswald; the critically-acclaimed Kate Tempest; and 'punk poet' John Cooper Clarke.

The young poets given charge of National Poetry Day Live, aged between 18 and 25, have been selected from the Poetry Society's Young Poets Network and its Foyle Young Poets of the Year and SLAMBassadors UK competitions; as well poetry groups, the Roundhouse Poetry Collective and the Barbican Young Poets. The young poets taking part are: **Gabriel Akamo, Megan Beech, Cameron Bray, Mary Anne Clarke, Serena Cooke, Rachel Long, Adham Smart** and **Sophie Fenella Robinski**.

Young Poet, Rachel Long, 25, said:

"To read, write and love poetry is one thing. To be given a budget and a blank sheet of A1 paper to create your very own poetry celebration at a prestigious venue is quite another. Working within a team of talented young poets has been a unique experience. Where else would one have a chance to sit around a table to discuss how we can recreate, for others, the sensation of hearing our favourite poem for first time? It truly is an opportunity to bring poetry to life; an opportunity to learn how to most effectively make poetry make a difference in people's lives. I am enormously proud to be part of making National Poetry Day Live 2014 happen at the Southbank Centre."

Poetry Society Education Manager, Tom MacAndrew said:

"For five years National Poetry Day Live has introduced some of the country's best poets – for free – to a large and varied audience. Often that audience will be seeing live poetry for the first time and so it's slightly terrifying to surrender control of that;

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but at the same time it's hugely thrilling to allow young people the opportunity to put on the event that they want to see. If we want poetry to reach future generations, then young people's voices are the voices that we need to listen to. Hopefully National Poetry Day Live will show that the future of poetry is in very capable hands."

Bea Colley, Participation Producer for Literature & Spoken Word at Southbank Centre said:

"Poetry has always formed a vibrant and important part of our programming at Southbank Centre and the London Literature Festival has a reputation for hosting world-class poets. We are thrilled that this year we are working with a team of young poetry producers to curate National Poetry Day Live, demonstrating our shared commitment to nurturing fresh and exciting talent, and who we hope will be on our London Literature Festival stages in the future."

National Poetry Day Live at Southbank Centre's London Literature Festival will run from 1pm– 6pm on the 2nd October and is open to all members of the public, as well as primary and secondary schools.

National Poetry Day Live is part of a full day of activity at Southbank Centre. In the morning the Poetry Society will announce this year's Foyle Young Poets of the Year, and at 6pm the Society presents 'The Pity', a programme in the Purcell Room of new commissions addressing the legacy of the First World War.

Information about the event is available on the Poetry Society website. www.poetrysociety.org.uk/npd

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Notes to Editors:

THE YOUNG POETS

Gabriel Akamo won The Poetry Society's SLAMBassadors UK competition in 2012 and since then has written and performed for various events, including opening 'Indiana Jones and the Extra Chair' at the Southbank Centre with other emerging poets. Previous performances also include 'Jawdance', 'Tongue Fu', and recording for 'Peace Camp 2012' and 'Goodbye Piccadilly', the London Transport Museum's Centenary exhibition.

Megan Beech was the winner of the Poetry Society's SLAMBassadors national youth slam 2011. She has performed at venues including the Southbank Centre, Latitude and Glastonbury Festivals and the University of Cambridge. Her debut collection *When I Grow Up I Want to be Mary Beard* was published by Burning Eye Books in December 2013.

Cameron Bray is a Mancunian down South. A poet and performer for half a decade now. The last year has seen him join the Barbican Young Poets and the Burn After Reading collective. He has most recently performed at the Barbican Weekender, Pop Up Festival and Curious Festival.

Mary Anne Clarke often appears on the Poetry Society's Young Poets' Network, and has won their Cape Farewell and Edith Sitwell prizes. She has been commended for the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, Ledbury and Basil Bunting awards, and longlisted for the Christopher Tower Prize. She hopes to begin an English degree in the autumn.

Serena Cooke has won numerous poetry competitions and has been published by Miracle E-Zine, Fur-Lined Ghettos, the Young Poets Network and performed her poem 'Green Tears' at the Cape Farewell SWITCH celebration evening. At school, she edits her own literary magazine called *The Little Green Journal*.

Rachel Long is a writer, poet and spoken word artist from London. She has performed at the Royal Festival Hall and the Olympic Stadium. Published by Forward Poetry, The Emma Press and *Goldfish Magazine*, and has previously been commissioned by Apples and Snakes, SPOKE and Cape Farewell. Rachel is a member of the 'Burn After Reading' Collective, and is currently studying an MA in Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths University, London.

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Sophie Fenella Robinski is a poet and a performer from London. She is a member of The Roundhouse Poetry Collective and Burn After Reading Poetry Collective. She has performed her poetry around the UK at venues such as The Roundhouse, The Royal Festival Hall and in July 2013 she was long-listed to be the Young Poet Laureate for London. Her poetry has been published in websites and anthologies and she is due to have a series of poems published in an anthology by Nasty Little Press in the Summer of 2014. She is also the co-founder of *The Patchwork Paper*, and leads workshops on writing and performing poetry for all ages. www.sophiefenella.co.uk

Adham Smart is a poet and linguist from London. He was a winner of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award in 2006, 2008, and 2009, and has had writing in *The Cadaverine Anthology* (Cadaverine Magazine, 2009), *Korsakoff's Paper Chain* (Sidekick Books, 2010) and *The Salt Book of Younger Poets* (Salt, 2011).

(photos available on request)

NATIONAL POETRY DAY LIVE

NPD Live is presented by the Poetry Society and Southbank Centre, London and has run every National Poetry Day since 2009. The programme of events runs 1-8pm at Clore Ballroom, Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Rd, London, SE1 8XX. Admission is free.

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 British poetry both nationally and internationally. With innovative education and commissioning programmes and a packed calendar of performances, readings and competitions, the Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages. It publishes the magazine *The Poetry Review*, runs the National Poetry Competition, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award and the youth performance poetry championship SLAMBassadors UK. A registered charity, the Poetry Society is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. www.poetrysociety.org.uk

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. The site has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. Southbank Centre is home to the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery as well as The Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. The Royal Festival Hall reopened in June 2007 following the major refurbishment of the Hall and redevelopment of the surrounding area and facilities.

Southbank Centre is the home of live literature in the UK, with a thriving, year-round programme of readings, talks and events unrivalled by any other organisation in the capital. www.southbankcentre.co.uk

LONDON LITERATURE FESTIVAL

London Literature Festival 2014 runs from 30th September to 13th October. Now in its 8th year, the festival is part of the Southbank Centre's regular live literature programme and aims to reinvigorate the literature festival model by injecting more commissioned pieces and varied event formats that people couldn't see anywhere else. This year's headliners include: Stephen Fry, Hilary Mantel, Ranulph Fiennes, Alice Oswald, Martin Parr, Kate Tempest, Shami Chakrabarti, Gavin Bryars, Gavin Turk, John Cooper Clarke, Colm Tóibín and Sheila Hancock. Plus a special evening dedicated to the memory of Maya Angelou, chaired by Jon Snow and Moira Stuart and directed by Paulette Randall. www.southbankcentre.co.uk/londonlitfest

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