

Julia Donaldson MBE to introduce this year's Foyle Young Poets: Winners of the world's largest poetry competition



Julia Donaldson MBE, Children's Laureate 2011-2013

Awards Ceremony: Southbank Centre, 2nd October 2014

Beloved children's author Julia Donaldson will open the celebrations of **The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2014** this National Poetry Day, 2nd October at Southbank Centre, London.

The London-based young poets' competition, run by the **Poetry Society**, cemented its global appeal this year with a record breaking **13,630** poems sent in by **7,603** young poets from **78** countries, making it the largest poetry competition in the world. Among this year's winners (the 15 top winners and 85 commended poets) are young poets from France, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, India, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Canada and the USA, many of whom are travelling to London for the ceremony. The competition is open to all young poets aged 11-17 writing in English.

Julia's presence at the Awards Ceremony is particularly special for many of this year's winners, who were inspired by books like *The Gruffalo* to pick up a pen themselves: "The Gruffalo was the monster of my bedtime stories and he remains as unexpected now as he ever was. One day I would like to be a children's author and illustrator myself. Julia Donaldson will always be an inspiration" says Kathryn Cussons, 17, from London. Jasmine Burgess, 13, from Oxford adds how "All her books are really sparky and original and inspired me with a love of writing and words".

With such fierce global competition, to reach the top 100 is a truly impressive achievement and marks these as writers as 'ones to watch'. Since the Foyle Award began 17 years ago it has kick-started the career of many of today's most exciting new voices, including Next Generation Poet Helen Mort and Commended Faber New Poet Phoebe Power. The phrase 'Former Foyle Young Poet' is now found in countless professional biographies as alumni continue to make their mark on the wider literary world, their names appearing on bookshelves, at festivals and in the media the world over, from Glastonbury to the *Guardian*.

This year's judges Grace Nichols and Simon Barraclough certainly had their work cut out selecting the winners from the sheer thousands of exciting new voices. Barraclough praised the final selection of 15 top winners and 85 commended poets as "impossible to ignore" and Nichols spoke of the poems' "hauntingly arresting" qualities, "vivid with imaginative detail". The winning poems explore both the mundane and the magical with equal panache. Grace Nichols was impressed by how the details of everyday life are brought into focus in "fresh and original ways" in many of the poems, whilst Barraclough praised how monsters and mythologies receive "bold,

gruesome, vigorous” treatments; with figures such as Moby Dick, Captain Ahab, Prometheus, the Little Mermaid and even General Pinochet making an appearance.

All 100 winning poets will attend a prize giving ceremony at **Royal Festival Hall** in London on **Thursday 2nd October (National Poetry Day)**. The Top 15 Foyle Young Poets of the Year will also attend a residential writing week at one of the prestigious Arvon Centres. All 100 winning poets will receive book prizes and become Youth Members of the Poetry Society, the UK’s leading poetry organisation.

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2014 is generously supported by the Foyle Foundation.

Top 15 Winners

Sophia Tait, 12, West Lothian, Scotland, UK

Sala Fadelallah 13, Cardiff, UK

Magnus Dixon, 13, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, UK

Jasmine Burgess, 13, Cowley, Oxford, UK

Hannah Keyte, 13, Beckenham, Kent, UK

Isla Anderson, 15, Oxted, Surrey, UK

Audrey Spensley, 16, Ohio, USA

Matthew Ridley, 16, Pennsylvania, USA

Rebecca Alifimoff, 16, Indiana, USA

Kathryn Cussons, 17, London, UK

Joseph Davison-Duddles, 17, Stockton-On-Tees, UK

Anne Widdowson, 17, Doncaster, UK

Ila Colley, 17, Kendal, Cumbria, UK

Kyle Lovell, 17, Hythe, Kent, UK

Daniella Cugini, 17, Warwick, UK

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Editor’s Notes

National Poetry Day Live –1pm – 6pm, Clore Ballroom, Royal Festival Hall, 2nd October 2014

National Poetry Day is a nationwide celebration of poetry held on the first Thursday in October. The theme this year is **Remember**. Run by the Poetry Society in collaboration with Southbank Centre, *National Poetry Day Live* runs 1-6pm in the Clore Ballroom, Royal Festival Hall, and is a packed afternoon of free poetry readings, films and performances compered by John Hegley and Joelle Taylor. This year’s line-up (curated by young poets aged 18-25) includes favourites Julia Donaldson and Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze; new kids on the block Hannah Silva and Raymond Antrobus; Next Generation Poets 2014 Emily Berry, Kei Miller and Daljit Nagra, and poets on film Dizraeli, Hollie McNish and Benjamin Zephaniah.

www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/info/npd/

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. 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. 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 with the honorarium the Poet Laureate traditionally receives from HM the Queen.

www.poetrysociety.org.uk

Julia Donaldson

Julia Donaldson, the Children's Laureate 2011 - 2013, is the bestselling author of over 120 books and plays. She was born and grew up in North London. She wrote songs for children's television for many years, and during that time one of her songs became the book A SQUASH AND A SQUEEZE. Her real breakthrough book was fifteen years ago with THE GRUFFALO, which has gone on to become a monster bestseller with over 13 million copies sold. Although she is best known for her picture books, Julia also writes longer novels, plays and songs. Julia now divides her time between Scotland and West Sussex where she lives with her husband, Malcolm, who often joins her on stage for their sell-out sing-along shows.

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

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