

20 September 2013 *For immediate release*

The Poetry Society makes a Splash on National Poetry Day!



Museum of Water image by Amy Sharrocks

'Water' is the subject of this year's National Poetry Day, Thursday 3 October, inspired by Coleridge's mariner's famous cry: "Water, water, everywhere".

Be carried along on a **wave of words** as the Poetry Society and Southbank Centre, London present National Poetry Day Live from the Clore Ballroom of the Royal Festival Hall in a day of poetry readings, launches, prizes, performances and happenings. The day will kick off with **100** world-class young poets being celebrated in the **Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award Ceremony**. The Foyle Award is the Poetry Society's competition for writers aged 11-17 which has broken all records to become the most popular in the world; a total **7,478** young poets entered from a staggering **75** countries in total. The 15 Overall Winners and 85 Commended poets are travelling from across the UK and as far afield as Nigeria and the USA to claim their prize.

Compered by **John Hegley** and **Joelle Taylor**, National Poetry Day Live showcases readings from a range of acclaimed poets throughout the afternoon, including **Patience Agbabi**, **Anthony Anaxagorou**, **Hannah Lowe**, **Francesca Beard**, **David Morley** and **John Wedgwood Clarke**. The performances close with a shanty choir and a special reading of sea poems by the brilliant **Simon Armitage** and friends, relayed to the Clore Ballroom from A Room for London, the boat on top of the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Several new Poetry Society commissions premiere throughout the afternoon, including a new film-poem by **Alice Oswald** and **Chana Dubinski** exploring water's most transient states. Filmed on location in Devon by Andrew Brown and Richard Couzins, *Evaporations* took Oswald to a farm cold store, in search of the poet's breath leaving her body as water vapour. We also premiere four film-poems made by **Alastair Cook** offering new perspectives on the UK's historic canal network. Commissioned as part of the Poetry Society's partnership with the Canal & River Trust, the film-poems feature Canal Laureate **Jo Bell's** piece on Staffordshire canals *Lifted*, **Ian McMillan's** ode to Stanley Ferry, Wakefield, *The Water Doesn't Move: The Past Does*, Ian Duhig's *Grand Union Bridge* and **Liz Berry's** haunting *The Black Delph Bride* "inspired by canal songs and murder ballads where a beloved girl all too often meets a sorrowful end in water".

Amy Sharrocks's Museum of Water will be open at the Clore Ballroom throughout National Poetry Day Live. *Museum of Water* is a collection of publicly donated water and accompanying stories. The public are invited to browse the existing collection or

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bring their own donations to the museum. Choose some water, put it in a bottle, and bring it to the museum, saying why it's precious – maybe as a poem. Existing exhibits include a melted snowman, condensation from a Falmouth window, a new born baby's bath water, Norwegian spit, two different breaths and water from a bedside table said to be infused with dreams.

Other Poetry Society activities happen online. The Young Poets Network is collaborating with English National Ballet on two poetry challenges inspired by their forthcoming production of *Le Corsaire* (The Pirate), based on Lord Byron's poem 'The Corsair' (1814). The first challenge will generate lines of poetry about the sea. Neil Rollinson will announce the winner of the Stanza poetry competition on the theme of drought. A range of new Poetry Society teaching resources on the theme of 'Water' will also be available from www.poetrysociety.org.uk to help teachers bring aqueous inspiration to the classroom.

In addition to events on National Poetry Day, 3 October, the watery theme will extend out throughout the month via a series of events at the new Birmingham Library in association with the **Birmingham Literature Festival** including a **Canals & Waterways edition of BBC Radio 4's Poetry Please** on 6 October and **The Kingfisher Corridor**, on 12 October, an event in which Canal Laureate Jo Bell launches colourful new poems from guest poets written to celebrate the people and places of the nation's canals.

– ENDS –

To find out more, or to interview the poets and contributors to National Poetry Day Live, please contact Robyn Donaldson on 020 7420 9886, or email marketing@poetrysociety.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

- **National Poetry Day Live.** NPD Live is presented by the Poetry Society and Southbank Centre, London and this is its fifth year. 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** 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 *Poetry Review*, runs the National Poetry Competition, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award and the youth performance poetry championship SLAMBassadors UK. www.poetrysociety.org.uk
- **The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award.** Founded by the Poetry Society in 1998, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year is the largest and most prestigious award for young poets aged 11-17. It receives entries from more than 7,000 young people each year. With the competition as its focus, the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award also incorporates a year-round programme of activity aimed at encouraging creativity and literacy in young people, supported by teaching resources and additional poet-led opportunities in schools. The scheme also recognises and nurtures best practice in creative writing teaching, identifying committed 'teacher trailblazers' to act as teacher mentors. The Awards are announced at Southbank Centre on 3 October. This event is for invited guests only.
- **The Young Poets Network** offers free online workshops and advice for readers, writers and performers of poetry. It's aimed at young people who have an interest in poetry but may come to YPN without previous experience or support. Contributing poets have included Jo Shapcott, Benjamin Zephaniah, Matthew Sweeney, Imtiaz Dharker, C.K. Williams, Helen Mort, Luke Kennard, Clare Pollard, Ross Sutherland, Jack Underwood and WN Herbert. www.youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk
- **Museum of Water.** Sharrocks's *Museum of Water* visits this year's National Poetry Day Live. *Museum of Water* is a collection of publicly donated water and accompanying stories, an encouragement to consider the many ways in which we access and enjoy water; paddling in the sea, splashing in puddles, drinking from taps. Accumulating over two years in different sites worldwide, *Museum of Water* is an invitation to ponder our precious liquid and how we use it. *Choose some water that is meaningful to you. Find a bottle to put it in. Tell us why you chose this water. We will keep it for you. What will you bring?* www.museumofwater.co.uk
- **Birmingham Literature Festival.** The Canals & Waterways edition of BBC Radio 4's *Poetry Please* is on Sunday 6 October, 2-3.30pm, and The Kingfisher Corridor is on Saturday 12 October, 2-4pm. Both events are at the Library of Birmingham, Centenary Square, Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2EP. Book tickets at www.birminghamliteraturefestival.org or by calling the box office on 0121 245 4455.
- **Canal Laureate.** Poet Jo Bell has been appointed by the Canal & River Trust and the Poetry Society as Canal Laureate for 2013. The Canal Laureate project is part of a wider partnership between the Canal & River Trust and Arts Council England, which aims to attract more visitors to the waterways while surprising and delighting existing communities through exciting and innovative art projects. More information on the Canal Laureate project, including Alastair Cook's new film-poems and other newly commissioned canal poetry, can be found at www.waterlines.org.uk

For further information

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