

VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL 2019 FULL PROGRAMME

POETRY

SPOKEN WORD

WORKSHOPS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM	Poetry Parlour with Andrew McMillan <small>(* open mic opportunity)</small>	The third Verve Poetry Festival kicks off with our Poetry Parlour. Join us for a poetry event featuring open mic slots and very special poet Andrew McMillan. His debut collection <i>physical</i> was the first ever poetry collection to win The Guardian First Book Award and his second collection, <i>playtime</i> , is a PBS Autumn 2018 Recommendation. This event is sponsored by the University of Worcester.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
8:30 PM - 10:30 PM	RAP Party	The R.A.P (Rhythm And Poetry) Party. What might eloquent voices from contemporary poetry and spoken word movements have to say about hip-hop's past, present and future? Come chill and find out at Inua Ellams' Rhythm And Poetry Party... a nostalgic, no-clutter, no-fuss, night of hip-hop-inspired poems and favourite hip-hop songs.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM	Carrie Etter, Amy Key, Jane Yeh	Our Friday evening poetry headline features three renowned contemporary poets. Amy Key's second collection <i>Isn't Forever</i> is published by Bloodaxe in 2018 and was a Poetry Book Society Wild Card choice. Carrie Etter is a distinguished poet and academic who has been shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry. Her fourth collection, <i>The Weather in Normal</i> , was a Poetry Book Society Winter 2018 Recommendation. Jane Yeh was named a Next Generation poet by the Poetry Book Society in 2014. Her third collection of poems is forthcoming from Carcanet in March 2019 and we are thrilled to have advance copies on sale. This event is supported by the University of Birmingham.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
8:30 PM - 10:30 PM	The YoniVerse presents: Golden Tongue <small>(* open mic opportunity)</small>	The YoniVerse presents 'Golden Tongue' a poetry night focused on amplifying the voices of South Asian women. It gives them a space to share their stories, and gives everyone else a place to come listen, engage, and be part of a big energetic poetry experience! The YoniVerse is a poetry collective by South Asian women, for South Asian women. We believe in owning our narratives, in celebrating the diversity of our diaspora and identities. Most of all, we believe in being loud. We bring you finger-licking good samosas and heart-warming spoken word poetry. Headlining are the core collective members, Shagufa Iqbal, Amani Saheed, Afshan D'Souza, and Shareefa Energy, who will be joined by the talented Rupinder Kaur and Nafeesa Hamid. Afterward, singer songwriter, Amrit Kaur Lohia will be gracing the stage with her trademark fusion blend of Punjabi folk, RnB and Soul. Expect the sharing of incredible poetry, food, and music. Everyone is invited!	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Carrie Etter Workshop	Welcome to the Prose Poem: As interest in prose poetry reaches new heights with the publication of <i>The Penguin Book of the Prose Poem</i> , this seminar will explore the form with an array of exciting examples, address its distinctness from flash fiction, and offer an exercise to help you compose your own. Carrie taught The Poetry School's first course on the form in 2005 and has been teaching Sudden Prose: The Short-Short Story and Prose Poem at Bath Spa University since the same year.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room One at The Old Rep Theatre
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Bernadine Evaristo Workshop	A practical writing workshop exploring narrative poetry and verse fiction. You'll look at how to write poetry that draws on some of the key elements of fiction such as characterisation, plot, setting and dialogue.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room Two at The Old Rep Theatre
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	Verve Poetry Festival 2019 Competition: Community	The Verve Competition winners reading, commissioned poets performing and a new Verve book launch, all in one lively event! Come hear poets reading from the brand new Verve Poetry Press anthology of poems on the theme of 'Community'. All hosted by competition judge, Joelle Taylor.	FREE (must be booked - four per person)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	The First Verve Annual Performance Lecture in association with the Poetry School	In this debut performance lecture, poet Anthony Anaxagorou will deconstruct, using a variety of artistic and academic modes, some of the ways 'performance poetry' has been defined in both traditional and contemporary periods. He will ask what makes the performance of a poem distinct from its reading, and whether there is perhaps something more insidious behind such terminologies that denote class, race, and otherness. Referencing the work of John Cage, Saul Williams, Audre Lorde, Kate Tempest, Adrian Mitchell, and many more, this talk will set out to unpack the bulging suitcase of poetic performance, and ask to what extent we are all, as writers and readers, participating in a kind of a mass social, affective performance. The Annual Verve Performance Lecture invites a poet, not necessarily a seasoned lecturer, to create a 50min presentation fusing academic discourse with poetry and spoken word, on a subject of their choosing. Brought to you in association with the Poetry School. This event is supported and co-produced by The Poetry School.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	YoniVerse Collective Workshop	The YoniVerse (a spoken word collective of South Asian womxn) will host a writing workshop to accompany the magical night that is Golden Tongue! This is a chance for writers of ALL levels to connect, grow, and support the work of poets in the city. The workshop will take you on a series of writing exercises to explore writing techniques, share your work in a nurturing and fun environment, to discuss ideas, and engage with the work of other poets, and of course to eat laddoo.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room One at The Old Rep Theatre

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH (CONTINUED)

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Burning Eye Presents: Getting Published Workshop	Whether you want to write poetry for the page or the stage, Burning Eye Books editors Bridget Hart and Clive Birnie will demystify the complexities of the poetry world. This session will provide you with a practical guide to progressing your poetry career and will include inspirational case studies and exercises.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room Two at The Old Rep Theatre
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Theresa Lola, Rachel Long, Momtaza Mehri	Four trail-blazing voices, award-winning poets and pillars of the UK poetry community will read their work and discuss what it means to be a woman poet of African descent in the current climate of unprecedented interest in African literature. Presented in partnership with the Brunel International African Poetry Prize. The event will be hosted by Bernardine Evaristo.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
3:00 PM - 5:30 PM	Anthony Anaxagorou Workshop	This workshop session asks: when is a poem finished? How do you know what to take out and what to keep? Anthony Anaxagorou will look at various ways in which you can approach editing a poem without subtracting from its essence. The words you employ and the way in which you organise them are what eventually determines a poem's success.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room One at The Old Rep Theatre
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM	Owen Sheers: To Provide All People	In 2018, the BBC broadcast Owen Sheers' film poem, 'To Provide All People', in a timely reminder to us all of the deep importance of our National Health Service. It is a wonderful film! We are thrilled that Owen has agreed to read and perform large extracts of this incredible work for us at Verve, and to talk about the themes discussed in the poem and the processes behind making it. This will be an incredible and rarely seen poetry experience.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM	Vahni Capildeo, Sumita Chakraborty, Sophie Collins	Our Saturday night poetry headliner features readings by three essential poetic voices from around the world. Vahni Capildeo won the Forward Prize for Best Collection for <i>Measures of Expatiation</i> and was shortlisted for a Forward for <i>Venus as a Bear</i> . Sophie Collins is co-founder and editor of tender journal and author of a brilliant and urgent debut, <i>Who is Mary Sue?</i> Finally, we're delighted that award-winning poet Sumita Chakraborty joins us as inaugural Verve Poet of the Festival. This event is supported by Birmingham City University.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	UniSlam Presents: Maria Ferguson, Roger Robinson, Debris Stevenson, & more	As the UK National University Poetry Slam, UniSlam provides a platform for hundreds of young people to develop their craft and express themselves through poetry. This year, UniSlam comes back to where it was born: Birmingham. And as part of the festival special, you'll hear the winning team and also the winner of the first Verve Prize for Best Individual Performance at the competition. So come and catch some of the most exciting rising stars of poetry perform alongside some of the UK's biggest and most original spoken word artists in this electrifying live poetry event. Showcasing some of UniSlam's most notable alumni, Ife Grillo and Ellen Renton, supporting spoken word legends Roger Robinson, Debris Stevenson and Maria Ferguson.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	UniSlam Workshop: Shut up and write!	Writers' block getting in your way? Inner critic doing your head in? Or could you just use a bit of fresh inspiration? Join Vanessa Kisuule and Toby Champion for this collaborative, welcoming workshop designed to help you shake off the dust, approach poetry in new ways and most importantly, get writing! Run in association with UniSlam, the UK National University Poetry Slam.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room One at The Old Rep Theatre
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Vahni Capildeo Workshop	Award-winning poet Vahni Capildeo leads a workshop on eco-poetry, a subject close to her heart. Join this visionary poet in delving deep into writing about the environment, geography and space. For all levels and not to be missed!	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room Two at The Old Rep Theatre
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	The Proletarian Poetry Showcase	Going now for over four years and having featuring some 150 poets proletarianpoetry.com featured poems which address what it is like living in today's febrile political climate. They cover themes such as football, capitalism, politics, refugees and war. The website is run, and the event will be hosted, by Peter Raynard, who has invited Amir Darwish, Rishi Dastidar, Nadia Drews, Anna Robinson, and Julia Webb to showcase their work.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
1:00 PM - 1:45 PM	Verve Poet of the Festival, Solo Reading: Sumita Chakraborty	Verve's very first Poet of the Festival is Sumita Chakraborty, a Forward-shortlisted poet and recipient of a Ruth Lilley and Dorothy Sargent Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation, who visits us from the US. She honours us with a solo reading of her remarkable long poem, 'Dear, Beloved'; a vivid, moving epic about love, grief, and family.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Sabotage: Review Writing Workshop	Charley Barnes, Managing Director of Sabotage Reviews, will run this one-off workshop detailing what makes a stellar (Sabotage) review! Charley will be sampling from previously published Sabotage pieces to show attendees what it takes to write an informed, respectful, but sharp review of prose, poetry, and much more. If you want to take steps into the review world, this workshop will lay the basic foundations for what you need to write, and how.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room One at The Old Rep Theatre
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Jacob Sam-La Rose Workshop	Join renowned poet, passionate educator and facilitator Jacob Sam-La Rose for an inspirational and practical workshop open to writers of all levels. You're sure to leave with new approaches to your own practice of poetry.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room Two at The Old Rep Theatre
2:15 PM - 4:00 PM	Burning Eye Books Showcase	Bristol based backroom press Burning Eye Books brings a group of best-loved and internationally renowned performance poets to Verve. Showcasing the big names and titles of 2017-18 including Toby Champion, Vanessa Kisuule, Scott Tyrrell and Nora Gomringer.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Liz Berry Workshop: Spells and Incantations	What magic can a poem make? What spells can we cast with our words? Join two time Forward Prize-winning poet Liz Berry for a workshop full of poems which seek to make something happen - spells, curses, hexes. Come ready to read, write and make magic. Suitable for poets of all stages.	£20 £13.50 (con)	Dressing Room One at The Old Rep Theatre

TICKET INFORMATION

Festival Weekend Pass **£35 / £25**
Saturday / Sunday Pass **£20 / £16**

Workshops **£20 / £13.50**
Poetry / Spoken Word Events **£6 / £4**

Concession tickets are available to senior citizens, school pupils, students, and people registered as disabled or unemployed.

Our festival passes give you access to all events (excluding workshops). Please book on to free events however, to make sure your seat is secured!

All tickets can be purchased at VervePoetryFestival.com

VENUE INFORMATION

This year Verve Poetry Festival have a new home! But don't worry, we haven't gone far. In fact, we've defied all odds and moved **even closer** (now about 90 seconds) to New Street Station. 2019 sees us take over the entire Old Rep Theatre on Station Street for four days of poetry based tom-foolery. We're still a stone's throw away from Moor Street and about a fifteen minute walk from Snow Hill. If you need help finding your event when you arrive, look out for a Verve volunteer in a predictably fluorescent t-shirt - they will help you on your way!

@VERVEPOETRYFEST #VERVE2019

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Verve is a four day festival in the heart of Birmingham city centre, 5 seconds walk from the shiny New Street Station. We've programmed the very best contemporary poetry all in one building. Hear award-winning poets and local legends sharing the same stage. Attend workshops open to all levels. Experience genre-defying performances. Bring the house down at a spoken word and music gig. Brave an open mic.

Meet your favourite poets and discover new ones. It's the friendly, down to earth, cosmopolitan and deliciously bold festival you've heard everyone talking about. Most importantly, we want Verve to for everyone: whether you've been writing for years or are just starting out; whether you've attended every festival on the circuit or this is your first.

VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH (CONTINUED)

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM	Second City Poets: 'Playground'	'Playground' is a full-length poetry and spoken word show that captures the sounds and experiences of growing up alongside friends and strangers. Featuring performers who went to school in five different countries, 'Playground' highlights not just how universal some of those experiences are but also how adult life features its own kind of playground dynamics: camaraderie, isolation, reprieve and much, much more. The Second City poets are last year's winners of UniSlam, from the University of Birmingham. 'Playground' has been created for Verve.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM	Moniza Alvi, Alison Brackenbury, Jacob Sam-La Rose	Our penultimate event at this year's Verve is our Sunday night poetry headliner, featuring readings and discussion with three poets we're thrilled to feature. Moniza Alvi is one of poetry's national treasures. Her collection <i>At The Time Of Partition</i> (2013) was enthralling and was followed in 2018 by the wonderful <i>Blackbird, Bye Bye</i> . Jacob Sam-La Rose is a force of nature in verse, but is so busy educating and working with young poets that he rarely gets to read himself. We are in for a treat! And what to say about Alison Brackenbury? Nine collections in, we are honoured that she has agreed to launch her 2019 Selected Poems, <i>Gallop</i> (Carcanet) at Verve! This event is supported by the University of Wolverhampton.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre
8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Funkenteleky Verve Special <small>(*open mic opportunity)</small>	Birmingham's most irregular poetry & music night swings by for some extra verve. Featured poets Polarbear, Jasmine Gardosi, Kareem Parkins-Brown and Bethany Slinn intertwine their electric verse with the playing of acclaimed improvising musicians, led by virtuoso saxophonist Xhosa Cole. Join this legendary line-up of local and national performers for a series of daring, one-time-only collaborations. And witness further poetic jeopardy in the inaugural, exhilarating, brief, and portmanteau-happy Verve-teleky Slam - where the musicians are the judges and everyone breaks the rules. Come celebrate Verve 2019 with an unmissable finale of poetry, melody, and zero preconceptions. Anything could happen and the word for this is Funkenteleky. Hosted by Jack Crowe and David Ferris. Tunes spun by Wolva Meme.	£6 £4 (con)	Main Stage at The Old Rep Theatre

POET BIOS A BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL OF POETRY AND SPOKEN WORD

VICTORIA ADUKWEI BULLEY
is a British-born Ghanaian poet whose work has appeared widely in journals including *The Poetry Review*, in addition to BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour. She is an Eric Gregory Award winner, and has held artist residencies in London, the USA and Brazil. Victoria is the director of *MOTHER TONGUES*, a poetry, film and translation project supported by Arts Council England.

MONIZA ALVI
was born in Pakistan and grew up in Herefordshire. She has published nine collections of poetry, three of which have been shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize. Her most recent collection *Blackbird, Bye Bye* (Bloodaxe, 2018) explores grief, immigration and art through an engagement with birds. Moniza received a Cholmondeley Award for poetry in 2002.

ANTHONY ANAXAGOROU
is a British-born Cypriot award-winning poet, fiction writer, essayist, publisher and poetry educator. He has published nine volumes of poetry, a spoken-word EP and a collection of short stories. His work has appeared widely on television and in print. He was won multiple awards, most recently being shortlisted for the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship. He is founder of Out-Spoken, spoken word night and press.

LIZ BERRY
was a PBS Recommendation, received a Somerset Maugham Award and won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award and Forward Prize for Best First Collection for her debut, *Black Country* (Chatto 2014). Her latest pamphlet *The Republic of Motherhood* (Chatto, 2018) was a PBS Pamphlet Choice and the title poem won the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem.

ALISON BRACKENBURY
was born in Lincolnshire in 1953. She now lives in Gloucestershire, where she works as a director and manual worker in the family metal finishing business. Her *Carcane* collections include *Dreams of Power* (1981), *Breaking Ground* (1984), *Christmas Roses* (1988), *1229* (1995), *After Beethoven* (2000) and *Bricks and Ballads* (2004). Her work recently won a Cholmondeley Award. Alison will be launching her forthcoming selected poems *Gallap* (Carcane) at Verve.

TOBY CAMPION
is a UK Poetry Slam Champion and World Poetry Slam Finalist. He has performed on stages across the UK and around the world, from Glastonbury Festival to South Korea's National Assembly. An award-winning poet and playwright, his debut poetry collection, *Through your blood*, was published by Burning Eye Books in 2017 and his work has been broadcast on BBC Radio 2, Channel 4, BBC 1 and more.

VAHNI CAPILDEO
has published six books and four pamphlets of poetry including *Messiah* (winner of the Forward Prize for Best Poetry Collection in 2016). Capildeo held the Judith E. Wilson Poetry Fellowship and the Harper-Wood Studentship at Cambridge. She is currently a Douglas Caster Cultural Fellow at the University of Leeds.

SUMITA CHAKRABORTY
is poetry editor of AGNI Magazine and art editor of At Length, and holds a doctorate in English from Emory University. She received a Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation in 2017 and was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem by the Forward Arts Foundation in 2018. Sumita will be the first ever Verve Poet of the Festival.

SHRUTI CHAUHAN
is a British Indian poet and performer based in Leicester. She has won slams internationally in Chicago and Mumbai, and has performed across the world. She is an MGCutures bursary recipient and one of 200 British BAME writers featured in *Speaking Volumes* / *Breaking Ground* publication. Shruti is currently developing her debut solo show, *The Sky Diaries*, as a Breakthrough Artist at Curve Theatre.

SOPHIE COLLINS
grew up in Bergen, North Holland, and now lives in Edinburgh. She is co-editor of *tender*, an online arts quarterly, and editor of *Currently & Emotion* (East Centre, 2016), an anthology of contemporary poetry translations, *small white monkeys*, a text on self-expression, self-help and shame, was published by Book Works in 2017 as part of a commissioned residency at Glasgow Women's Library. *Who Is Mary Sue?* is her first poetry collection.

AMIR DARWISH
is a British Syrian poet & writer of Kurdish origin who lives in London. Born in Aleppo & came to Britain as an asylum seeker in 2003. Amir has an MA in International Relations of the Middle East from Durham University, UK and a BA in history from Teesside University, UK. He published his work in the UK, USA, Pakistan, India, Finland, Turkey, Canada, Singapore & Mexico. Currently, he is doing an MA in creative and life writing at Goldsmiths University, London.

RISHI DASTIDAR
has been published by Financial Times, New Scientist and the BBC amongst many others. His debut collection *Ticker-Tape* is published by Nine Arches Press, and a poem from it was included in *The Forward Book of Poetry 2018*. A member of Malika's Poetry Kitchen, he is also chair of the London writer development organisation Spread The Word.

NADIA DREWS
grew up in San Francisco and Greater Manchester mizzle. She is a former Farrago Poetry Slam Champion who protests through songs and plays including the pub-staged 'I Love Vinegar Vera (What becomes the Broken Hearted)'. She has made a movement into poems and is currently working on a collection for Culture Matters to be published later this year.

INUA ELLAMS
was born in Nigeria and is an award winning poet, playwright & founder of the Midnight Run. *Identity, Displacement & Destiny* are recurring themes in his work in which he mixes the old with the new, traditional with the contemporary. His books are published by Flipped Eye, Akashic, Nine Arches & Oberon.

SHAREEFA ENERGY
is a London based spoken word artist, performance poet, writer, and workshop facilitator. Shareefa Energy has broken many stereotypes of women who grew up in the Muslim community and pushed boundaries. She released her debut spoken word EP 'Reasoning with Self' produced by Meandou in 2015. Her poetry featured on Channel 4 for National Poetry Day 2015. She is also the founder of the 2014 storytelling spoken word play 'Wombs Cry'.

CARRIE ETTER
American expatriate Carrie Etter has published four collections of poetry, most recently *Imagined Sons* (Seren, 2014), shortlisted for the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry, and *The Weather in Normal* (US: Station Hill; UK: Seren, 2018), a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. She also writes fiction, essays, and reviews. She is Reader in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University and also teaches for The Poetry School and Poetry Swindon.

Bernadine Evaristo
British-Nigerian writer Bernadine Evaristo is the award-winning author of eight books of fiction and verse fiction that explore aspects of the African diaspora including *Girl, Woman, Other* (Penguin 2019). She founded the Brunel International African Poetry Prize in 2012 and *The Complete Works* poets of colour development scheme 2007-2017. She is Vice Chair of the Royal Society of Literature and Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London.

MARIA FERGUSON
has been a resident artist for Roundhouse and Battersea Arts Centre, and commissioned by Royal Academy of Art and Radio One. Her debut show, *Fat Girls Don't Dance*, won the Saboteur Award for Best Spoken Word Show 2017 and is published by Oberon Books. She is currently working on her debut poetry collection and new show, *Essex Girl*.

JASMINE GARDOSI
is a multiple slam champion, BBC Slam finalist and Birmingham Poet Laureate finalist. Having previously appeared on BBC Radio 3's *The Verb*, BBC Asian Network and at Glastonbury Festival, she has received an Honorable Mention from *Button Poetry* as Outstanding International Entry in their 2017 video contest.

NORA GOMRINGER
is one of Germany's best known and loved contemporary poets. Her writing blurs the boundaries between performance and page poetry, as well as often intersecting with other art forms, from film to music and visual art. She's won a number of awards for from the Jacob Grimm German Language Prize in 2011 to the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann Award in 2015.

IFE GRILLO
is a 20-year-old poet and campaigner from Hackney. His poetry explores the ugly-beauty of everyday life while making you laugh and think. He's a Hammer&Tongue National Finalist, a Genesis Slam Champion, a Roundhouse Youth Slam Finalist and won an Individual award at the 2018 UK University Slam Championships. He won the 2016 World School Debating Championships and is the former Vice-Chair of the British Youth Council.

NAFEESA HAMID
is a British Pakistani poet and playwright based in Birmingham. Her work covers taboo themes such as sex, domestic violence and mental health, using personal experience as a basis for her writing. She has featured at *Outspoken* (London), *Poetry is Dead Good* (Nottingham), *Find the Right Words* (Leicester) and *Hit The Ode* (Birmingham). *Besharam* is Nafesa's debut collection from Verve Poetry Press.

SHAGUFTA IQBAL
is an award-winning artist and poet who uses arts to reach out and engage with audiences who feel their experiences are not reflected within traditional and mainstream arts. *Disoriented* by Gal Demer as a poet whose work "leaves you validated but aching - her narratives are important, heart-wrenching and relatable." Her poetry collection *Jam Is For Girls, Girls Get Jam* (Burning Eye) has been recommended by Nikesh Shukla as 'a social political masterclass.' She is the founder of The YoniVerse Collective.

RUPINDER KAUR
is a Birmingham born Punjabi poet and biomedical science student with an immense love for South Asian arts. She sees writing and reading poetry as a way to liberate the soul. Rupinder is known for speaking her mind and this is reflected in her poems. In *Rooh*, her debut poetry collection from Verve Poetry Press, she takes us on a poetic journey that transcends borders and arbitrary boundaries.

AMY KEY
had her first collection, *Luxe*, published by Salt in 2013. Her second book-length collection, *Isn't Forever*, a Poetry Book Society Wild Card Choice, was published by Bloodaxe in June 2018. From Spring 2018 - Spring 2019 she is joint poet-in-residence, alongside Rebecca Perry, at Halsway Manor, the National Centre for Folk Arts.

VANESSA KISUULE
is a writer, performer, burlesque artist and general empress of blag based in Bristol. She has won over 10 slam titles, most recently the Roundhouse Slam 2014, Hammer and Tongue National Slam 2014 and the Nigerian Poetry Slam in New York. She occasionally does rap battles under the moniker of Shanda Rhymez. She has released two poetry collections with Burning Eye Books - *Jayriding the Storm* (2013) and *A Recipe for Sorcery* (2017).

AFSHAN D'SOUZA-LODHI
is the Editor in Chief of ICS Network. Afsan is an award-winning writer of plays and poetry, and was recently commissioned to write and direct a short film for Channel 4. Afsan's debut poetry collection on desire comes out soon. As well as her own writing, Afsan is keen to develop other younger and emerging artists and sits on the boards of Manchester Literature Festival and Brighter Sound.

AMRI KUAR LOHIA
Born into a Sikh family in Tottenham, Amrit Kaur is a singer-songwriter, Sarangi player and vocalist in genres of Punjabi folk, R&B and soul. She also plays the Mbira (Zimbabwe) and Dilruba. Based in London, she tours internationally as a performer, educator and social entrepreneur.

THERESA LOLA
is a British Nigerian Poet. She was shortlisted for the 2017 *Bridport Prize* and was joint-winner of the 2018 Brunel International African Poetry Prize. She is an alumni of the Barbican Young Poets Programme. Her debut collection *In Search of Equilibrium* will be released by Nine Arches Press in February 2019.

RACHEL LONG
is a poet & the founder of *Southside - Poetry Collective for Womxn of Colour*, who are housed at Octavian Centre, London. She is colour on the Barbican Young Poets programme.

ANDREW MCMILLIAN
won The Guardian First Book Award with his debut, *physical*. He was the first to ever do so with a poetry collection. Most recently *physical* has been translated into Norwegian (*Aschehoug*, 2017) and a bi-lingual French edition, *Le Corps Des Hommes* (Grasset, 2018). His second collection is *playtime* (Jonathan Cape, 2018). He is senior lecturer at the Manchester Writing School at MMU.

MOMTAZA MEHRI
is a poet and essayist. She won 3rd prize in the 2017 National Poetry Competition and is a co-winner of the 2018 Brunel International African Poetry Prize. She is the current Young People's Laureate for London and a columnist-in-residence at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's Open Space.

KAREEM PARKINS-BROWN
is a poet from North West London whose work has featured at venues across the city like Barbican, Tate Britain and the Royal Academy of Arts. His desert island films are *Megan Grix*, *Carlito's Way* and *Serpico*. He can be found making work from the venn diagrams of black-masculinity, but ultimately he is still finding the answer to, "So, what do you write about?"

POLARBEAR
Steven Camden is a writer from Birmingham who moved to London for a girl. His debut young adult novel *Tape* was published worldwide in January 2014 by Harper-Collins to rave reviews and his second novel, *It's About Love* published in June 2015, was Book of the Month for The Guardian. His third novel *Nobody Real* is published in May 2018. His collection of spoken word stories *Everything All At Once* will be published by Macmillan in July 2018. His debut collection for adults, *The Second City Trilogy*, will be published by Verve Poetry Press in November 2018.

PETER RAYNARD
is the author of two books of poetry. His debut collection *Precarious* was published by Smokestack in April 2018, and *The Combination* a poetic coupling of the Communist Manifesto, published by Culture Matters, June 2018. He is the editor of *Proletarian Poetry*, associate editor of *Culture Matters*, and member of Malika's Poetry Kitchen.

ELLEN RENTON
is an Edinburgh-born poet who has performed her work at venues across the UK including the Scottish Parliament, Leith Theatre and the Roundhouse. In 2016 she released her debut audio collection with backing from the Young Scot Nurturing Talent Fund. As a member of spoken word theatre company *In The Works*, she has co-written two Edinburgh Fringe shows.

ANNA ROBINSON
is a poet from London. Her books *The Finders of London* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014) are published by Enitharmon Press. *The Finders of London* was shortlisted for the Seamus Heaney Centre's Poetry Prize in 2011. Her next title *Whatsname Street* will be published by Smokestack.

ROGER ROBINSON
is a writer who has performed worldwide and is an experienced workshop leader and lecturer on poetry. His one-man shows are: *The Shadow Boxer*, *Letter from My Father's Brother*, and *Prohibition*. He was chosen by Decibel as one of 50 writers who have influenced the black-British writing canon. He is an alumni of *The Complete Works*, was shortlisted for the OCM Bocas Poetry Prize and was highly commended by the Forward Poetry Prize 2013.

AMANI SAIED
is a London-born American-British-Indian-Middle-Eastern-etc spoken word artist. She is a member The YoniVerse Collective and has worked with the Roundhouse, the BBC, and the Huffington Post, among others. Amani's work brings the big issues to your kitchen table. Amani's poetry has been described as 'electric', 'strident', and 'brave'. Her debut collection, *SPUT* has been published by Burning Eye Books.

JACOB SAM-LA ROSE
has several poetry collections, including *Communion and Breaking Silence*. Dominant themes in his work include Black-British/African-Caribbean culture, ritual and tradition, faith, mythology and hybridity. Current work explores coding as a tool or catalyst for authoring poems. Responsible for the Barbican Young Poets programme and a slew of other London-wide, national and international poetry initiatives, Jacob Sam-La Rosa is widely recognised as an indefatigable creative producer, facilitator and mentor.

THE SECOND CITY POETS
are Sean Collett (born in America), Anne Gill (born in Wales), Kimberley Knaggs (born in Vietnam), Hannah Ledlie (born in Scotland) and Hannah Swingle (born in England). Along with Mikey Barnes, various members competed in and won UniSlam 2018 and performed at CUPSI 2018 in Philadelphia. They will also be competing in the Hammer & Tongue 2019 finals. 'Playground' is their first show. They are more than friends and fellow poets - they are family.

OWEN SHEERS
is a widely translated and critically acclaimed poet, author and playwright. His second novel, *I Saw A Man*, was published by Faber & Faber in June 2015. His BAFTA and Grierson nominated film-poem, *The Green Hollow* was published in April 2018 by Faber, who in July also published his BBC film-poem to mark the 70th anniversary of the NHS, *To Provide All People*.

BETHANY SLINN
Who am I? is a question Bethany asks often, from one of her performances to no-one at all. Her poetry asks 'Who are we? And how do I fit into that?' She works across poetry, movement and theatre, having performed throughout Birmingham and the UK, recently writing *Aunt D's 'Queer Words'* for its run at the Edinburgh Fringe.

DEBRIS STEVENSON
Dylectic-Writer, Grime Poet, Working-Class Academic, Pansexual, Ex-Mormon and BASHMENT Dancing Social Activist from the seam between East London and Essex: it's not that simple. Her passion for nurturing and educating poetic communities started with *The Mouthy Poets*. Debris has since been awarded over £250,000 by Arts Council England to develop young talent. Debris is now working on her debut grime-poetry show at the Royal Court Theatre commissioned by 14/18 Now and The Jerwood Foundation.

JOELLE TAYLOR
is an award winning spoken word artist, poet, playwright and author. She has performed across the UK as well as internationally gigging at venues from the 100 Club, the O2 Arena, the Royal Festival Hall to the Royal Court, Buckingham Palace and various prisons. She was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Society Arts in 2015 as well as being named as one of Southbank Centre's Nelson Mandela Change Makers for positively affecting cultural Britain. She is the judge of our 2019 competition on the theme of community.

SCOTT TYRRELL
has been a poet and performer since the turn of the century. An award-winning comedian, creative director and multiple slam-winning poet. He has performed his work at Glastonbury, the Edinburgh Fringe, the Prague Fringe, Kendal Calling, WOMAD, Larmer Tree and the Cheltenham Literature Festival. He has written for TV, radio. He lives in Newcastle with his wife, son, a goldfish, a one-eyed cat and a small fluffy dog. His collection *Honest* was released in summer 2018.

JULIA WEBB
graduated from UEA's poetry MA in 2010. She works for Gatehouse Press and is a poetry editor for Lighthouse. Her work has most recently appeared in *Ambly*, *Coke* and *The Moth*. Her first collection *Bird Sisters* was published by Nine Arches Press in 2016. Her second collection *Threat* will be published by Nine Arches in 2019.

JANE YEH
had her first collection of poems, *Marabou* (2005), shortlisted for the Whitbread, Forward, and Alderbury poetry prizes. Her second collection, *The Ninjas*, was published in 2012. She was a judge for the 2013 National Poetry Competition and was named a Next Generation poet by the Poetry Book Society in 2014.

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VERVE VIP

Verve VIP is our new friendship scheme. A way for us to reward our most ardent supporters - a way for you to help us establish ourselves as a regular and sustainable fixture on the poetry calendar.

What you get: A one off joining fee will get you 3 years' membership of our special poetry club. There will be discounts, special events, trendy badges, sneak previews and more. Plus the special warm feeling of knowing you have helped your favourite poetry festival (or one of them) strengthen and sustain.

What we get: All fees will be ploughed back into the festival, helping us to establish ourselves at our new venue and continue to improve our programme each year. It will also support and sustain our outreach programme beginning in the Spring of 2019.

We will even give you regular updates on what we spend them on. Find more info on our website on how you can become a Verve VIP and for a full list of special benefits.



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