

VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL 2022 FULL PROGRAMME

POETRY

SPOKEN WORD

WORKSHOPS

YOUNG POETS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	VERVE Birmingham Schools Slam Final: Hosted by Spox Poet and Feat. Birmingham Poet Laureate Casey Bailey	Opening #VERVE2022 is our first Birmingham Schools Slam Final! We've invited twelve local Primary Schools to bring a team of their best poets to this exciting new competition hosted and facilitated by Brummie gem and Verve Poetry Press poet Giovanni 'Spox' Esposito! But there's more! Our judges will consist of three Young Poet Laureates from the area: Fatma Mohiuddin (Birmingham), Erin Gascoigne-Jones (Staffordshire) and Faith Taylor (Worcestershire) selected and encouraged by regional poetry champions Poetry On Loan. Each laureate will also deliver a set of their work. Come and support the poetry stars of the future through their first ever slam!	£5.00	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
7:30 PM - 10:00 PM	Dancing to Music You Hate - and other poets and poems: hosted Jasmine Gardosi	Poetry. Beatbox. Celtic dubstep. Dancing To Music You Hate is Jasmine Gardosi's debut show about gender identity, coming to terms with queerness, and finding the words. Prepare for an hour of explosive dubstep bass-lines and soaring folk violin which blow apart the boundaries of gender and musical genre alike. Watch Jasmine converse, argue and compete with a live band of instrumentalists as she cracks open the binary with boldness, humour and celebration. Joining her are Alternative Dubstep Orchestra's Damo Wilding and DJ C@ in the H@, trumpeter/techno artist Sam Wooster and Ire-ish's multi-instrumentalist Jobe Baker-Sullivan. The show also features BBC Young Jazz Musician 2018 saxophonist Xhosa Cole. The first half of the night includes a musical open mic along with special guest poets Luke Kennard and Jonathan Bernard . [See website for details of how to sign up for open mic]	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Scarlett Ward Bennett Workshop:	Space & space - the infinity of a blank page. How can we as poets approach the examination of 'Space,' as in the galactic, and 'space' which occupies the small gaps or silences in between the spoken and unspoken, through the relationship between word and page? Participants will be invited to explore unique ways of structured storytelling that not only contemplates the narrative of the universe, but also considers the influence of breath, shape, pulse, and sensation upon the page. All levels of experience welcome!	£16.50/ £12.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Naush Sabah Workshop: Epistolary Poems	If your poems were letters, who would you write to? In this workshop we'll read epistolary poems from across the ages and write our own—to an audience of one particular person perhaps, or a city, a precious object, a god... We'll write our poems by hand with beautiful writing instruments, in vibrant inks, and we'll wax seal them to take away and post—or keep. This workshop will be a hands-on experience of creating poems as aesthetic, material objects as well as things made of shape and sound, so come ready to talk and read and make together.	£16.50/ £12.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
3:30 PM - 5:30 PM	Workshop: Perform your poetry with Jasmine Gardosi	Jasmine will take you through a variety of exercises to help you bring out the best in your poems through performance. No two poets perform the same, and you will learn your individual powers as a performer by trying different techniques to draw out the qualities in your individual poems, and by exploring the multiple tools at our disposal. Poets are asked to bring 1-2 of their own poems with which they would like to work on. Open to all abilities and experience levels.	£16.50/ £12.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan Workshop: Writing as Resistance	In this time of worldwide violence, oppression, capitalism, racism, misogyny, militarism and more, resistance feels urgent and necessary, but it can also be difficult and overwhelming to know where to start. In this workshop we will explore writing as a medium of disrupting elite discourses, imagining alternative worlds and making space for us to define ourselves for ourselves, instead of being "crunched into other people's fantasies" of us (Audre Lorde).	£16.50/ £12.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM	Nina Mingya Powles, Phoebe Stuckes, Jack Underwood	Our regular Friday evening poetry headline event features three incredible contemporary UK poets. Nina Mingya Powles' debut collection, <i>Magnolia</i> (Nine Arches Press, 2019) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Book of Poetry in 2020. Phoebe Stuckes, four times winner of the Foyles Young Poets Award, released her debut collection, <i>Platinum Blonde</i> , in 2020 with Bloodaxe. Jack Underwood followed up his debut collection, <i>Happiness</i> (Faber, 2015) with a follow-up in 2021 called <i>A Year In The New Life</i> , which has been short-listed for the TS Eliot Prize. Hosting these three wonderful poets for readings and discussion is Emma Dai'an Wright , publisher and founder of Birmingham based indie The Emma Press.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
8:30 PM - 10:30 PM	Pen-Ting VERVE Special hosted by The Repeat Beat Poet.	The UK's freshest hip hop & poetry night is coming to Birmingham and featuring Suhaiymah Manzoor Khan & Otis Mensah! Join us as Pen-Ting brings you the best of UK-based poetry and hip hop with vibes higher than London rent and tastier bars than the Cadbury factory, all wrapped up in a night that's committed to combatting harmful social narratives by platforming Black and marginalised voices. It's hip hop politics, poetry and speaking truth to power. Good vibes included. [See website for details of how to sign up for open mic]	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM	Liz Berry Workshop: The Poetry of Amulets	"To love is the great amulet that makes this world a garden." – Robert Louis Stevenson How might we use poems – those we love and those we write – to make charms and amulets to guide and protect us? Join poet Liz Berry to read, write and use craft (of all kinds!) to create your own poetic charms.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Natalie Linh Bolderston Workshop: Fragmentation and Reconstruction	Using the poems she entered for the 2020 Women Poets' Prize as a base, Natalie Linh Bolderston will provide an insight into her writing process and how she generates, curates and pieces together the fragments that make up her work. She will lead writing exercises and provide prompts that reflect some of her own techniques and formal constraints. The creative exercises will help you harness the power of such fragments to construct poems that are more than the sum of their parts.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH (CONTINUED)

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
11:00 AM - 12:10 PM	Poetry Society Young Poets Takeover PLUS young person's open mic!	The Poetry Society's Young Poets Takeovers are a space for up-and-coming young poets and performers to meet and share their work on stage. This takeover will be hosted by Dale Booton , and feature headline sets from former Birmingham Young Poet Laureate Aliyah Begum and award-winning young poet Tom Rowe . If you're aged 25 or younger, we want to hear from you, too! [See website for details of how to sign up for open mic] And join the community! We invite you to stay on afterwards for free refreshments and a chance to meet other young poetry lovers. Some of their incredible poetry. You will be witnessing some of the poets of the future!	FREE	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Jo Bell Workshop: Straight To The Point	In an intensive, lively two-hour session, poetry dynamo Jo Bell (<i>Kith, How To Be A Poet</i>) presents surefire techniques to correct common weaknesses in poetry. Make your poems powerful and clear without losing strength or subtlety; be bold in editing and refine your bag of tricks to hold the reader's interest.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
12:30 PM - 2:30 PM	Fiona Benson Workshop: Magical Thinking	In this workshop we will delve into our own personal treasure troves of magical thinking – excavating superstitions and superstitious sayings, folk tales that are meaningful to us, rituals, ghost stories and urban legends. Learning from poets like Robin Robertson, Sophie Herxheimer, Sarah Howe and Rachael Allen, we will learn to look for a folk strand in poetry, and create some magical first drafts to take away and work on. All levels welcome.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
12:30 PM - 1:25 PM	Third Annual VERVE Poetry Performance Lecture - Stephanie Sy-Quia	In this year's Performance Lecture, Stephanie Sy-Quia will use poetry to think through mixed race identity, female embodiment, and how 'structures of faith' abide in contemporary life – exploring nation states, heteronormative family ideals, and museums as shrines to colonialism. Through a diverse range of poetic and cultural touchpoints – including George Herbert's metaphysical work <i>The Temple</i> , John Donne's love poetry, Ariana Grande's 'God is a Woman', and her own recent collection <i>Ammon</i> – Stephanie will explore how exiled texts and the fractured anecdotal histories of mixed race families can subvert conventional ideologies, asking what do we enshrine and how do these practices 'other' those outside of these traditional structures?	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
1:35 PM - 1:50 PM	Poet on a Podium 1: Sophie Sparham	Sophie Sparham's incredible second collection, <i>The Man Who Ate 50,000 Weetabix</i> (Verve Poetry Press, 2021) cemented her status as a poet who tells it as she sees it and as one who can really connect with people, either written down or on the mic. She can't wait to welcome you to an intimate performance in our cosy Podium Event Space.	£3.00	Podium Event Space - Birmingham Hippodrome
2:00 PM - 3:25 PM	One-off (not) Indie Poetry Press Festival VERVE Special	Jake Wild Hall founded digital festival OQIPP in 2021 with the aim of showcasing work from the best indie publishers from across the UK. We loved it so much, we asked them to come and be in our physical space! This VERVE special event will feature Bad Betty Press, <i>The Poetry Business</i> and <i>Broken Sleep</i> with performances from Eve Esfandiari-Denney , Molly Naylor , Gboyega Odubanjo , Sarah Barnsley , Azad Sharma and Sam Quill .	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
2:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Jack Underwood Workshop: Not Understanding Poetry	Who has ever fallen in love with a poem because they understood it? Poetry is often spoken about as something inaccessible, obscure, difficult to understand, or nonsensical, and as poets we can respond to these negative portrayals defensively, keeping our poems literal, or linear in their thinking. This workshop will explore the limits of meaning and meaninglessness, test and explore how poems can invite creative and imaginative participation rather than offer a passive experience.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Leo Boix Poetry Translation Workshop	Join poet and translator Leo Boix for a creative translation workshop on the Spanish poetry of Argentinian writer Diana Bellessi. During the session you will work as a group to create a new translation of one of Bellessi's poems. As facilitator Boix will be on hand throughout to offer insight into the nuances of the language and culture, and to give suggestions to help shape the English translation that is made. Spanish and non-Spanish speakers are welcome to join this session, a translation guide will be provided as a starting point.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
3:35 PM - 3:50 PM	Poet On A Podium 2: Rushika Wick	Join Forwards highly commended poet Rushika Wick for an intimate and inspiring reading from her debut full collection, <i>Afterlife as Trash</i> , which was published in March this year by Verve Poetry Press. This cosy event has limited spaces so grab your tickets fast!	£3.00	Podium Event Space - Birmingham Hippodrome
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM	The Coventry and Beirut Youthful Cities Exchange present Transnational Lag Express	Twelve young writers and artists embark on a fictional train ride from Coventry to Beirut (and back again!) exploring personal and collective journeys through poetry, dance, spoken word, live performance and video. Created in partnership with Coventry City of Culture, Youthful Cities, the British Council and originally performed at the BBC's Contains Strong Language Festival 2021.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
5:30 PM - 6:55 PM	Fiona Benson, Parwana Fayyaz, Kim Moore	This year's Saturday evening headline features three incredible poets, who are contributing groundbreaking new work to the contemporary UK poetry scene. Fiona Benson's third collection, <i>Ephemeron</i> (Jonathan Cape, 2022) is brand new for Verve 2022. Her previous collection, <i>Vertigo & Ghost</i> , (Cape, 2017) won the Forward Prize and the Roehampton Poetry Prize. Kim Moore's first full collection, <i>The Art of Falling</i> (Seren 2015) won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, while her second, <i>All The Men I Never Married</i> was published by Seren in 2021. Parwana Fayyaz's debut collection, <i>Forty Names</i> , (Carcantet 2021) contains her 2019 Forward Prize Best Single Poem winner of the same name, and is an astonishing debut. Hosting these three amazing poets for readings and discussion is Jo Bell , renowned poet and co-author of <i>How to be a Poet</i> (Nine Arches Press, 2017).	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
7:05 PM - 7:20 PM	Poet On A Podium 3: Beth Calverley	You'll see Beth Calverley with her Poetry Machine in our VERVE Poetry Fayre this year. Now hear her poetry! Beth will be reading from her debut collection, <i>Brave Faces & Other Smiles</i> (Verve Poetry Press, 2020), in our cosy Podium Event Space. Don't miss out!	£3.00	Podium Event Space - Birmingham Hippodrome
7:30 PM - 9:30 PM	That's What We Said VERVE Special: Hosted by Bridget Hart and with open mic	For Books' Sake presents: That's What We Said, a queer feminist poetry night led by non-binary and women performers. We aim to curate live poetry events that celebrate the power of queer identities, resilience and joy. Join us for a long overdue party at VERVE this year, with very special guests Rosie Garland , Maz Hedgehog and afshan d'souza-ladhi . [See website for details of how to sign up for open mic]	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Jo Flynn / For Books' Sake Workshop: Writing your Intuition	Join For Books' Sake for a creative writing workshop inspired by intuition, meditation and tarot. We'll be using imagery and poetry to get writing with confidence, although no prior experience of meditation tools or tarot is necessary, just come along and have a go for a relaxing writing session that might just be the start of a great adventure. It's the perfect way to get in touch with your creativity before the evening events begin!	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Kostya Tsolakakis Let's Get Classical! Responding to Greek and Roman Poetry	Love Sappho, Ovid and Catullus? So does Kostya Tsolakakis! In this workshop, Kostya will share his favourite contemporary responses to Ancient Greek and Roman poets, including those by Clare Pollard, Ted Hughes, Leontia Flynn and Jordi Alonso, and encourage you to write your own poems inspired by some of classical antiquity's big poetic hits. Expect lyricism, profanity, terrible gods and dead sparrows.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
11:00 AM - 12:25 PM	The VERVE Poetry Festival Competition Event: Beginnings, hosted by Caroline Bird	The VERVE Competition on the Theme of Beginnings was open for entries in the Summer of 2021, and judged by the wonderful Caroline Bird. This FREE to attend event will feature all the winners and commended poets, as well as four commissioned poets, who will read their poems on our subject and help launch our annual festival anthology. The event will be hosted by Caroline herself and will be a fun and lively affair, featuring poets of all kinds and levels of experience. Dare you miss it? :-)	FREE	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
12:30 PM - 2:30 PM	Kim Moore Workshop: One Train May Hide Another Train	Taking inspiration from Kenneth Koch's poem of the same name – during this workshop we will examine hidden-ness, misdirection and disappearing in poetry. We will look at the use of titles to cast a different light on a poem, poems with a secret or an epiphany folded inside them and poems where the self apparently vanishes, only to reappear in another form.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
12:35 PM - 12:50 PM	Poet On A Podium 4: Kathryn O'Driscoll	The UK's reigning Slam Champion, Kathryn O'Driscoll delights us with poems from her debut poetry collection <i>Cliff Notes</i> (Verve Poetry Press, 2022) which perfectly straddles page and stage. Join her in our cosy Podium Event Space for an intimate and deeply moving performance.	£3.00	Podium Event Space - Birmingham Hippodrome
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Pascal Petit Workshop: The New Nature Poetry	Climate change is urgent and poets are seeking new approaches to nature writing, ways which are not always white-centric. We can no longer reliably portray the natural world as a source of permanence and solace. We will focus on what the new nature poets are doing in the UK to refresh the tradition, for example, how race affects attitudes to being in nature. We will spend most of the session studying contemporary eco-poems and aim to gain new insights and come away with a set of techniques to try in our own time.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Kat Lyons presents excerpts from Dry Season	Menopause? Seriously? WTF? Join Kat for a performance of poetry from their debut collection from Verve Poetry Press and low-tech excerpts from <i>Dry Season</i> to launch the show's UK tour. Expect honest explorations of perimenopausal chaos and musings on societal ideas of age and gender, as well as poems about love, grief and living through both.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
2:30 PM - 3:55 PM	Diana Bellessi & Leo Boix: To Love A Woman / Amar a una mujer	Join Argentinian poet Diana Bellessi and translator Leo Boix to celebrate the publication of <i>To Love A Woman</i> with Poetry Translation Centre. Bellessi is a groundbreaking writer who has been credited as the godmother of Lesbian poetry in Latin America. Over the decades she has championed feminist and LGBTQ+ issues and themes, and has exerted a strong influence on prominent poets and writers from the 1980's through to the present day. Many of her poems are only now appearing in English. In this dual language event Bellessi and Boix will be reading from <i>To Love A Woman</i> in the original Spanish with English translations, and discussing her life and work.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Carline Bird Workshop: The 'I' in Poetry	<i>I am not the "I" in my poems. "I" is the net I try to pull me in with. – Tori Derricotte</i> Who are you? Who is the speaker of your poems? In this workshop, we'll use the 'I' as a disguise, a net, a shield, an illusion, a dare. We'll write from the point of view of a self we don't recognise yet. We'll stumble off through the forest of the page, further and further from ourselves, hoping to meet a new version walking back to us.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
3:30 PM - 5:30 PM	Kat Lyons Workshop: Reconnecting With The Body	Our bodies are often a site of conflict and discontent. This creative writing workshop will focus on nurturing positive re/connection and bringing the corporeal into the craft of writing. Participants will look at poetry centring the body/body experiences, examine techniques to bring those onto the page, and use writing exercises and discussion to explore their own experiences and relationship to their body. For all genders and levels of writing experience. Suitable for ages 16+.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
4:05 PM - 4:20 PM	Poet On A Podium 5: Sean Wai Keung	Join Glasgow based Sean Wai Keung for a small and enthralling reading with limited seating in our cosy Podium Event Space. Sean's debut full collection, <i>Sikran Glaschu</i> , was published in March by Verve Poetry Press.	£3.00	Podium Event Space - Birmingham Hippodrome
4:30 PM - 6:25 PM	Malika's Poetry Kitchen Anthology: with host Bohdan Piasecki and open mic.	In 2001 Malika Booker and Roger Robinson were young, black poets being overlooked by the poetry establishment, but serious about their work and dedicated to their craft. They invited other poets to join them around Malika's kitchen table in Brixton every Friday night to inspire and encourage each other, share ideas and workshop poems. 20 years later, Malika's Poetry Kitchen still meets on Friday nights and celebrates its first two decades with an anniversary anthology, <i>Too Young, Too Loud, Too Different</i> , featuring new poems from more than 60 members of the MPK family. Join Fahad Al-Amoudi , Kostya Tsolakakis , director Jill Abram and Khairani Barokka to hear some of the poems they have cooked up around the Kitchen table in what will be a lively and celebratory event! [See website for details of how to sign up for open mic]	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
6:35 PM - 6:50 PM	Poet On A Podium 6: Elaine Beckett	Faber pamphleteer Elaine will read from her astonishing debut full collection <i>Sea Creature Regrows Entire Body</i> (Verve Poetry Press, 2021) in our last cosy Podium event of the weekend. Join her!	£3.00	Podium Event Space - Birmingham Hippodrome
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	Ian Duhig, Rachel Long, Pascale Petit	Our final headline event of the weekend brings three vital poets together to read and talk about their work. Pascale Petit's eighth collection, <i>Tiger Girl</i> (Bloodaxe Books, 2020), was shortlisted for the Forward Prize and for Wales Book of the Year. A poem from the book won the Keats-Shelley Prize. Her seventh collection, <i>Mama Amazonica</i> (Bloodaxe Books, 2017), won the inaugural Laurel Prize for eco-poetry, and the RSL's Ondaatje Prize. Ian Duhig is a Cholmondeley Award recipient and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature whose <i>Selected Poems</i> were published by Picador in 2021. Rachel Long's debut collection, <i>My Darling from the Lions</i> (Picador 2020 / Tin House 2021) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection, The Costa Book Award, The Rathbones Folio Prize, and the Jhalak Prize. This wonderful line-up will be hosted for us by Jonathan Davidson from Writing West Midlands and founder of Birmingham Literature Festival. What a way to end our festival!	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

OPEN MIC

STREAMED

BSL INTERPRETED

POET BIOS A BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL OF POETRY AND SPOKEN WORD



JILL ABRAM has been Director of Malika's Poetry Kitchen since 2010. Her poems have been published widely, including in *Under the Radar*, *The Rialto*, *Magma*, *And Other Poems*, *Harana* and *Ink Sweat & Tears*. She performs her poems in London and beyond, including *Ladbury Poetry Festival*, Paris and the USA. Jill produces and presents a variety of poetry events.



FAHAD AL-AMOUDI is a poet and editor of Ethiopian and Yemeni heritage based in London. His work is published in *Poetry London*, *both maggy* and *Ink Sweat & Tears*. He is a Roundhouse Slam 2019 finalist, an Obsidian alumnus, graduate of the Writing Squad and proud member of Malika's Poetry Kitchen.



SARAH BARNSELY was a winner in the Poetry Society Members' Poems Competition (2018), shortlisted (2018) and longlisted (2020) in the Live Canon Poetry Competition, shortlisted in the Bridport Prize (2018 and 2010) and joint runner-up in the Poetry School/Pighog Pamphlet Competition (2014). She is Senior Lecturer in English and American Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London and lives in Hove with her wife and son.



ELAINE BECKETT'S debut pamphlet *Faber New Poets 13* was published by Faber & Faber in 2016. Her work has appeared in the *Poetry Review*, *Ambit*, *The North*, *The New European* and anthologies, including *Bloodaxe's Hallalujah for Fifty Foot Women*. Elaine has read her work on BBC Radio 3's *The Verb*, and at festivals including the Cambridge, Bridport and Exeter Literary Festivals. Her debut collection *Sea Creature Regrows Entire Body* came out in March.



ALIYAH BEGUM is an 18-year-old poet and performer who was Birmingham's Young Poet Laureate between 2018-2020. She is a commended Foyle Young Poet and her work has been featured on Young Poets Network, in anthologies and on the radio. She has worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the BBC and is studying English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford.



JO BELL was born in Sheffield and grew up on the fringes of the Derbyshire Peak District. A winner of the Charles Causley Prize and the Manchester Cathedral Prize, she was the first Canal Laureate for the UK appointed by the Poetry Society and the Canal & River Trust. She lives on a narrowboat on the English waterways. *Kirk* (Nine Arches Press, 2015) is Jo Bell's second collection of poems and she is also the author of *52* and co-author of *How to be a Poet* (Nine Arches Press).



DIANA BELLESSI is a poet from the province of Santa Fé in Argentina. Born in 1946, she is considered to be the godmother of feminist / LGBTQ+ / Lesbian poetry in Argentina and her work demonstrates a deep commitment to progressive politics, ecological conservation and the social condition of the working class in Argentina and Latin America. Her poetry is seen as groundbreaking for its depiction of lesbian desire and has exerted a strong influence on prominent poets and writers from the 80s and 90s through to the present day.



FIONA BENSON'S collections are *Bright Travellers*, which won the Seamus Heaney Prize, and the *Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize*, and *Vertigo & Ghost*, which won the *Forward Prize* and the *Roehampton Poetry Prize*. Her third book *Ephemeron* is due from Cape in time for VERVE2022. She lives in mid-Devon with her husband and their two daughters.



JOHN BERNARD is a Poet & Rapper based in Coventry who uses his artistry to inspire, influence and invigorate his listeners with meaningful messages. His aim is to provoke positive change and steer his listeners towards realising their potentials. He was a BBC Words First Finalist in 2020 and is founder of the BACE Foundation.



LIZ BERRY was born in the Black Country and now lives in Birmingham. Her first book of poems, *Black Country* (Chatto 2014), a 'sooty, soaring hymn to her native West Midlands' (Guardian) was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, received a Somerset Maugham Award, the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Award and Forward Prize for Best First Collection 2014. Liz's pamphlet *The Republic of Motherhood* (Chatto, 2018) was a Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice and the title poem won the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem 2018.



KHAIRANI BAROKKA is a writer and artist from Jakarta, based in London. She is currently Associate Artist at the National Centre for Writing and Research Fellow at UAL's Decolonising Arts Institute. Okka's books include *Indigenous Species* (Third Axis, Vietnamese translation, AJAR Press) and *Stains and Whispers: D/Deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back* (as co-editor: Nine Arches), and debut collection *Rope* (Nine Arches). Her latest collection is *Ultimatum Orangutan*, also Nine Arches.



CAROLINE BIRD is an award-winning poet. Her first collection *Looking Through Letterboxes* was published in 2002 when she was 15. *Watering Can* (2009) achieved a Poetry Book Society Recommendation and her fourth collection *The Hat-Stand Union* (2013) was described by Simon Armitage as 'spring-loaded, funny, sad and deadly'. She won a major Eric Gregory Award in 2002 and 2020 collection, *The Air Year*, one the Forward Prize for Best Collection.



LEO BOIX is a bilingual Latino poet, translator and journalist. He has published two collections in Spanish, *Un lugar propio* and *Mar de noche*. Boix is a fellow of *The Complete Works* and co-director of 'Invisible Presence'. His English poems have appeared widely and his debut collection of English poetry, *Ballad of a Happy Immigrant*, was published by Chatto and Windus in 2021.



NATALIE LINH BOLDERSTON is a Vietnamese-Chinese-British poet. In 2020, she received an Eric Gregory Award and co-won the Rebecca Swift Women Poets' Prize. In 2021, she was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem. She is an alumna of the Roundhouse Poetry Collective and the London Library Emerging Writers Programme. Her pamphlet, *The Protection of Ghosts*, is published with V. Press. She is now working on her first full-length collection.



BETH CALVERLEY writes, performs and enables poetry. With her nurturing invention, *The Poetry Machine*, she travels to places of work, learning, care and play, helping people to put their thoughts and feelings into words. Beth has worked with the BBC, ITV, Sky, and many more. Her collection, *Brave Faces & Other Smiles*, launched in 2020 with Verve Poetry Press. Benjamin Zephaniah called it "a great collection with an honest, real theme."



AFSHAN D'SOUZA-LODHI was born in Dubai and bred in Manchester. She is a writer of scripts and poetry and was recently commissioned to write and direct a short film for Channel 4 (An Act of Terror) and a radio play for BBC Sounds (Chop Chop). Her essays have been featured in Picador's collection *It's not about the burqa*. Her debut poetry collection, 're-desire' (Burning Eye Books) was longlisted for the Jhalak Prize (2021).



IAN DUHIG became a full-time writer after working with homeless people for fifteen years and has since published eight books of poetry, most recently his 'New and Selected Poems 2021' from Picador. Duhig has won the Forward Best Poem Prize once, the National Poetry Competition twice and been shortlisted four times for the TS Eliot Prize. A Chalmers Award recipient and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Duhig continues to work on projects for disadvantaged groups but also with artists, filmmakers and musicians.



EVE ESFANDIARI-DENNEY is a British-Persian-Roma poet from South London. Her work has featured in *both maggy*, *The Manchester Review* and *Ragweller Press*. Her collection *After* in *Birdsmag* was shortlisted for *The White Review Poets Prize 2021* and her pamphlet was published with *Bad Betty Press*. In 2021 she was the recipient of the scholarship to Faber Academy. She is currently studying an MA in Creative Writing at UEA after receiving the Birch Family Scholarship.



PARWANA FAYYAZ was born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1990. She won the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem for her poem 'Forty Names' in 2019. Her debut collection of the same name was released with Carcanon in 2021 and evokes events in the lives of Afghan women, past and present – their endurance and achievements, told from their points of view. Parwana is a junior research fellow at Cambridge University.



JASMINE GARDOSI is a multiple slam champion, Birmingham Poet Laureate finalist and recent winner of the Out-Spoken Prize for Poetry. Jasmine uses audience participation, beatboxing and manipulation of voice and body in order to explore LGBTQ+ issues, sex education and mental health. Her work has appeared across BBC Radio, including BBC Radio 3's *The Verb*, Radio 4 and BBC Asian Network. Her debut pamphlet *Hurtz* was published in 2019 via Verve Poetry Press.



ROSIE GARLAND writes long and short fiction, poetry and sings with post-punk band *The March Violets*. Her work appears in *The Guardian*, *Under the Radar*, *Speak*, *Interpreter's House*, *The Rialto*, *Elipsis*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Mislexia*, *The North* and elsewhere. Her poetry collection *What Girls do the Dark* (2020, Nine Arches) was shortlisted for *The Polari Prize*. In 2019, Val McDermid named her one of the UK's most compelling LGBTQ+ writers.



ERIN GASCOIGNE-JONES is the current Young Poet Laureate for Staffordshire at only 15-years-old; she enjoys reading and performing and has been writing her whole life. Her work is largely inspired by vulnerability and personal emotions & experiences. She hopes to evoke relatability with her poems and spark creative observations of mental wellbeing.



MAZ HEDGEHOG is a writer, editor and performer working in the spaces between real and unreal, poetry and theatre, self and other. Their work has found its way onto stages and behind mics from Edinburgh to Brighton, working with organisations like MIF, CBBC and Penguin. Fond of fairies and folklore, Maz's work is imaginative, lyrical and occasionally a little surreal.



LUKE KENNARD won an Eric Gregory Award in 2005 for his first collection *The Salex Brothers*. His second collection, *The Harbour Beyond The Movie*, was shortlisted for the 2007 Forward Prize for Best Collection, making him the youngest ever poet to be nominated. In 2014 he was named as one of the Poetry Book Society's Next Generation Poets. His poetry collection *Notes on the Sonnets* (PITM, 2021) won the Forward Prize for Best Collection. His Verve Poetry Press pamphlet, *Truffle Hound*, (2018) didn't win anything but it's super!



SEAN WAI KEUNG is a Glasgow-based poet and performer. His pamphlet you are mistaken won the Rialto Open Pamphlet Competition 2016 and he has also released how to cook and be happy, both with Spaculative Books. He holds degrees from Roehampton University, London, and the University of East Anglia, Norwich, and his debut full collection, *Sikfan Glaschu* (2021) is published by Verve Poetry Press.



RACHEL LONG Long's debut collection, *My Darling from the Lions* (Picador 2020 / Tin House 2021) was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection, the Costa Book Award, The Rathbones Folio Prize, and the Jhalak Prize. She is the founder of Octavia Poetry Collective for women of colour, housed at the Southbank Centre, in London.



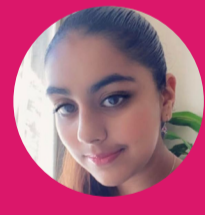
KAT LYONS is a Bristol-based writer and performer. Their work is grounded in everyday politics and their love of storytelling. Kat has been published in journals, facilitates workshops, performs at and produces events, and is touring their first solo show in Spring 2022. Their debut collection featuring her solo show *Dry Season* is brand new from Verve Poetry Press.



SUHAYMAH MANZOOR-KHAN is an educator, poet and writer from Leeds, West Yorkshire. She is the author of the poetry collection *Postcolonial Banter* (Verve Poetry Press, 2019), co-author of the anthology, *A Fly Girl's Guide to University: Being a woman of colour at Cambridge and other institutions of power and elitism* (Verve Poetry Press, 2019) and essayist in *I Refuse To Condemn: Resisting Racism in Times of National Security* (MUP, 2020).



OTIS MENS AH is an alternative hip-hop and spoken word artist and Poet Laureate of Sheffield, UK. Describing his sound as alternative hip-hop, Otis combines clever lyricism and spoken word with his love of hip-hop culture. His work is also a means of challenging dominant models of masculinity, which he claims suppress the discussion of emotions, with negative consequences for mental health.



FATMA MOHIUDDIN is 15 years old and is the current Birmingham Young Poet Laureate. Poetry is something that's extremely important to her as both a means of self-expression and for channelling creativity. She enjoys writing about a wide range of topics, and particularly enjoys focusing on spoken word and using performance as a tool to enhance her poems.



KIM MOORE'S pamphlet *If We Could Speak Like Wolves* was a winner in the 2011 Poetry Business Pamphlet Competition. Her first collection *The Art of Falling* (Seren 2015) won the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. She completed her PhD in Poetry and Everyday Sexism in 2020 and her second collection *All The Men I Never Married* was published by Seren in 2021. Her first creative non-fiction book *What The Trumpet Taught Me* will be published by Smith/Doorstop in March 2022.



MOLLY NAYLOR is a poet, scriptwriter, performer and director. She has published two poetry collections and her third will be published by Bad Betty in spring 2022. She is the co-creator and writer of Sky One comedy *After Hours*. She wrote and performed the acclaimed solo spoken-word shows *Whenever I Get Blown Up I Think Of You* and *My Robot Heart*. Her first graphic novel was published in September 2021.



GBOYEGE ODUBANJO is a British-Nigerian poet born and raised in East London. He is a Roundhouse Resident Artist and his debut pamphlet, *White Yat Live*, was published by Bad Betty Press in 2019 and his second *Aunty Uncle Poems* was published by Poetry Business 2021.



KATHRYN O'DRISCOLL is a spoken word poet, writer and activist from Bath, England. She talks openly about disabilities, mental health, LGBTQIA+ issues and joys and gender politics in her wide range of poems. She is the current UK Slam Champion and a World Slam Finalist. She has a first class degree in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University and her debut collection, *Cliff Notes*, will be released by Verve Poetry Press at #VERVE2022.



PASCALE PETIT was born in Paris and lives in Cornwall. Her eighth collection, *Tiger Girl* (Bloodaxe Books, 2020), was shortlisted for the Forward Prize and for Wales Book of the Year. A poem from the book won the Keats-Shelley Prize. Her seventh collection, *Mama Amazonica* (Bloodaxe Books, 2017), won the inaugural Laurel Prize for eco-poetry, and the RSL's Ondaatje Prize. Four previous collections were shortlisted for the TS. Eliot Prize.



NINA MINGYA POWLES is a writer and zinemaker from Aotearoa New Zealand. She holds an MA in Creative Writing (Distinction) from Victoria University of Wellington. In 2018, Nina was one of three winners of the Women Poets' Prize, and in 2019 won the inaugural Nan Shepherd Prize for Nature Writing and the Landfall Essay Competition. Nina is the founding editor of *Bitter Melon* - a very small press that publishes limited-edition pamphlets by Asian poets.



SAM QUILL'S poems have appeared in *PN Review*, *The Next Review*, *Blackbox Manifesto*, *Poetry Birmingham* *Otherly Journal* and on the LRB bookshop blog, among other places. His debut pamphlet, *Last Decades, Last Orders* is published in January 2022 by Broken Sleep Books. He is currently writing a kind of true crime memoir.



TOM ROWE is a poet from the West Midlands, currently studying English at Cambridge University. He won the Mary Wallstonecraft poetry challenge on Young Poets Network and has been commended in other challenges such as the Bloodaxe Archive poetry challenge on white space.



NAUSH SABAH is Co-founder and Editor of Poetry Birmingham, a visiting lecturer at BCU and a trustee at Poetry London. Her debut micro-pamphlet box set, *Heredity/ASTYNOME*, was published by Legitimate Snack (2020) and a second pamphlet, *Litanies*, came out with Guillemot Press in 2021. Her writing has appeared in the *TLS*, *PN Review*, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Magma*, and elsewhere.



AZAD ASHIM SHARMA is based in South London. He is the director of the 87press. His work includes *Against the Frame* (Barque Press, 2017) and the forthcoming collections of poetry and prose *Ergastulum* (Broken Sleep Books, 2022) and the forthcoming collections *Bailed Owls* (Nightboat Books, 2023). His poems have been published recently by *Stard Magazine*, the *Asian American Writers Workshop* and *Gutter Magazine*.



SOPHIE SPARHAM is a writer from Derby. She has written commissions for BBC Radio 4, The V&A and The People's History Museum. Sophie co-hosts the poetry night 'Word Wise' which won Best Spoken Word Night at the 2019 Saboteur Awards. In 2020 she became the first poet to perform at the mental festival *Bloodstock Open Air*. Her second collection, *The Man Who Ate 50,000 Weetabix* (Verve Poetry Press) was published in 2021.



PHOEBE STUCKES is a writer from West Somerset. A four time winner of the Foyle Young Poet of the Year Award and a Barbican Young Poet, Her debut collection, *Platinum Blonde*, was released by Bloodaxe Books in 2020 when she also won the Geoffrey Darmer Prize. In 2021 her second pamphlet, *The One Girl Gremlin*, came out with Verve Poetry Press.



STEPHANIE SY-QUIA is a writer, critic, and printer. Her debut, *Ammion*, is published by Granta Poetry and is a Poetry Book Society Winter Recommendation. Her writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *White Review*, *Financial Times*, *Poetry Review*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and others. She is a Ladbury Poetry Critic.



FAITH TAYLOR is the 15-year-old Young Poet Laureate for Worcestershire 2021. Based in Bromsgrove, she has had her work published in several anthologies, and aims to project positivity and hope through her poems.



KOSTYA TSOLAKIS is a London-based poet and journalist born and raised in Athens, Greece. A Warwick Writing Programme graduate, he is founding editor of *Harana Poetry*, the online magazine for poets writing in English as a second or parallel language. His poems have been published in *Stand*, *The Tangerine*, *The Scores*, *Magma*, *Under the Radar* and *Wasafiri*, among others. His pamphlet *Epebos* is out with ignitionpress.



JACK UNDERWOOD is an active presence across the British poetry landscape: as one of the first four poets to be part of the Faber New Poets pamphlets scheme in 2009, a lecturer in English and creative writing at Goldsmiths College, tutor at the Poetry School and regular reviewer for *Poetry London* and *Poetry Review*. His debut collection, *Happiness*, was published by Faber in July 2015, followed by his second, *A Year In The New Life*, in 2021.



SCARLETT WARD BENNETT is a practising poet working from Cannock in Staffordshire. Her debut collection *ache* was published by Verve Poetry Press in 2019 and she is the founder of brand new poetry press, *Fawn*. She received a nomination for Best Spoken Word Poet by Saboteur Awards in 2019 and in the same year won runner up at both Mothers Milk Poetry Prize and Verve Poetry Festival competition, judged by Joelle Taylor.



RUSHIKA WICK is a poet, doctor and children's rights advocate who is interested in how social structures and relationships impact the body. Her work has been published in literary magazines including *Ambit*, *Databled* and *Tentacular* and within anthologies including *Foot-saint* (Tangerine Press), *Alter Egos* (Bad Betty Press) and *Smeared* (Andrews McMeel). Her debut collection *Afterlife As Trash* was published by Verve Poetry Press in 2021 and was highly commended in the Forward Prize.



YOUTHFUL CITIES POETS The young artists who make up the Youthful Cities Poets are: Megan Waters (Coventry), Theolima Ioannou (Coventry), Lewis Driver (Coventry), Alice Richmond (Coventry), Christina Okorie (Coventry), Kelvin Adomako Ampong (Coventry), J.D Harlock (Beirut), Nur Turkman (Beirut), Amina Hassan (Beirut), Yasmina Tabbal (Beirut), Nour Annan (Beirut) and Alfred Jeffrey Naddaff (Beirut).

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TICKET INFORMATION

All tickets have physical or digital options.

Full Four Day Festival Pass £40 / £30
Saturday Pass £25 / £18.50
Sunday Pass £20 / £15

Poetry / Spoken Word Events £6.50 / £4.50

Weekend Workshops £22.50 / £16.50
Friday Workshops £16.50 / £12.50

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 via <https://vervepoetryfestival.com>

VENUE INFORMATION

2022 and we're back, taking over a large chunk of the Birmingham Hippodrome. We are thrilled to return with a new hybrid form of festival - allowing all to enjoy, whether you will be with us in the flesh or watching and participating online. Our key ten events will be BSL interpreted and streamed to our online audience, while all our other events will be recorded, captioned and accessible soon after. Our workshops will each have a number of spaces to attend via zoom, as will our open-mics! And our famous VERVE Poetry Festival Bookshop is now also online at vervepoetryfestival.com/shop for all your poetry buying needs! We can't wait to welcome you! We know you're going to love #VERVE2022!

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