

# VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL 2023 FULL PROGRAMME

## POETRY

## SPOKEN WORD

## WORKSHOPS

## YOUNG POETS

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	<b>VERVE Birmingham Schools Slam Final hosted by Spoz Poet and Feat. Emma Purshouse &amp; Dreadlock Alien.</b>	Opening #VERVE2023 is our second Birmingham Schools Slam Final! We've invited fifteen local Primary Schools to bring a team of their best poets to this exciting competition hosted and facilitated by Brummie gem and VERVE Poetry Press poet Giovanni 'Spoz' Espostol. But there's more! Our judges will consist of two local poets well versed (get it!) in the art of making poetry with children - Emma Purshouse & Dreadlock Alien. Both poets will deliver a short and entertaining set of their work and act as judges. Come and support the poetry stars of the future in their first ever poetry slam!	£5.00	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome



### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
7:30 PM - 10:00 PM	<b>VERVE Poetry Night Special - Spoken Word and Music Night hosted by Sam J Grudgings</b>	Introducing the festival special of our quarterly VERVE Poetry Night, with all its usual fun, energy and bombast, its plentiful <b>featured poets</b> and its numerous <b>open mic</b> slots. Joining regular host Sam J Grudgings are poetry powerhouses, <b>Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, Muneera Pilgrim, Kirsty Taylor</b> and <b>Malaika Kegode</b> . And this wouldn't be a special without the special addition of some live music! We are thrilled to welcome Bostin Brass Band who'll be blowing up an upbeat, jazz/funk/ska storm at regular intervals throughout the night. We know you're gonna love this vibrant, lively night. <b>Arrive early to sign up for the open mic. Names will be drawn from a hat just before we begin!</b>	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	<b>Helen Calcutt Workshop: Owning it.</b>	'Why not say what happened?' - Robert Lowell Drawing on themes from her next collection, Helen's workshop will encourage you to write honestly from life's experiences, and see them as the power within you - not the pain. So often we see trauma and struggle through the lens of grief. But, creatively - especially through words - we can start to 'own' these parts of ourselves, in an empowering and wholesome way. Writers will be guided through a series of exercises designed to uplift, challenge, and set them on an exciting new path in their work. 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	<b>Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan Workshop: Writing as Resistance</b>	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
3:30 PM - 5:30 PM	<b>Helen Mort Workshop - Metaphors We Live By</b>	<b>- finding themes and images that inspire you.</b> Helen Mort's latest collection <i>The Illustrated Woman</i> (Chatto, 2022) uses the metaphor of tattooing to explore the agency we have over our bodies and the difference between how we want to be seen and how others may see us. In this workshop we will look at how successful metaphor and similes can do more than just bring your poems to life, they can help structure your thinking and the way you approach a sequence or a collection. We'll read and discuss a range of contemporary work, from Natalie Diaz to (Sunday Headliner) Zaffer Kunial and explore creative prompts in a supportive environment.	£16.50/ £12.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM	<b>Will Harris Workshop - Sounds of Words / Words of Sounds</b>	A communal workshop playing with - and stretching - the links between objects, words and sounds, in which we'll share stories, listen closely to things, and stay as close as we can to the non-sense within. A workshop to enjoy with the Forward First Book Award winning author of <i>RENDANG</i> (Granta, 2020).	£16.50/ £12.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	<b>Friday Headline Event: Jay Gao, Will Harris, Denise Saul</b>	Our regular Friday evening poetry headline event features three incredible contemporary poets. Edinburgh born US based Jay Gao's impressive debut full collection <i>Imperium</i> (Carcaret, 2022) follows his New Poetry Prize-winning pamphlet <i>Katabasis</i> . Will Harris' debut collection <i>RENDANG</i> (Granta, 2020) won the Forward First Book Award and his follow-up <i>Brother Poem</i> will be available to purchase early at VERVE! Denise Saul's debut full collection <i>The Room Between Us</i> (Pavillion, 2022) has been short-listed for the TS Eliot Prize. Hosting these three wonderful poets for readings and discussion is <b>Cynthia Miller</b> , co-founder of VERVE Poetry Festival and prize-winning author of <i>Honorifics</i> (Nine Arches, 2021).	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
9:00 PM - 10:00 PM	<b>VERVE Poetry Film Night</b>	This year we are having our first poetry film night at VERVE! What's better than sitting in the dark with your feet up being drawn into the visual masterpieces that await you as a result of our December 2022 open call? We can't wait for this new event at VERVE and hope you will join us for a cosy night of film poetry fun!	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	<b>Helen Mort Young Poets Workshop - Having Fun With Poetry: A Writing Workshop for 13-19 year olds</b>	It's easy to get bogged down in metaphors and punctuation, poetic form and technique. So in this workshop with Helen Mort, we'll simply be having fun with poetry. Helen will offer poems, prompts and ideas for returning to the joy of writing and reading poetry. You'll leave the session with some new work and some ideas for how to keep playing with your writing. <b>This workshop is run in partnership with The Poetry Society.</b> After the workshop finishes, we encourage you to go to the Young Poets Takeover and Young Poets Café to hear from your peers and get to meet other young writers. NB This workshop is aimed at 13-19 year olds and will contain material and exercises suitable for that age group. If you're younger than 13 and want to take part please contact hbowell@poetrysociety.org.uk to organise parental consent.	FREE but book early to secure your place!	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
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### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH (CONTINUED)

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon	<b>Jennifer Wong Workshop - Writing Mothers</b>	What do we talk about when we talk about mothers? How does one begin to articulate one's closeness or distance with the mother, and the changing identities and understanding? In this workshop, participants will get to explore new directions in their writing by addressing the complexity and contradictions of mothers or about motherhood. The creative process includes experimenting with different points of view, ways of excavating emotional truth, as well as to play with forms and techniques such as prose poetry, erasure and found poems. We will look at different examples of writing mothers by poets who portray or question motherhood, including the works of Rebecca Goss, Natalie Bolderston, Joanna Ingham, Marie Howe and Ada Limon.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
11:00 AM - 12:10 PM	<b>Poetry Society Young Poets Takeover PLUS young person's open mic!</b>	The Poetry Society's Young Poets Takeovers are a space for up-and-coming young poets and performers to meet one another and share their work on stage. This Takeover will be hosted by <b>Alyyah Begum</b> , and feature headline sets from multiple YPN Challenge winner and University of Birmingham alumni <b>Emily Breeds</b> and Birmingham based YPN Challenge commended poet <b>Adjei Sun</b> . If you're aged 25 or younger, we want to hear from you, too! Bring one poem and arrive early to sign up for our 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. We at Young Poets Network can't wait to meet you!	FREE	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM	<b>Scarlett Ward Workshop - A monster in the shape of a woman</b>	<b>- poetic retellings of mythological female figures.</b> A poetry writing workshop that examines the presentation of women figures in retellings of mythology. From witches to goddesses, female archetypes have served to perpetuate patriarchal stereotypes and dictate the behaviour of women throughout history. In this workshop, we will explore how myths and legends can be utilised to prompt and colour our understandings of, and rebel against, expectations within society, and furthermore can act as a lens through which we can structure modern retellings and reclaim the narrative through poetry. All levels of experience welcome!	£16.50 / £12.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
12:30 PM - 2:30 PM	<b>Kathy Pimlott Workshop - Making the Everyday Sing</b>	In this generative workshop we'll look at how very familiar everyday material - kitchen utensils, shops, routine tasks - can become the launchpad into meditations on love, life, death and everything in between. Poems by poets including Vicki Feaver, Louise Glück and Helen Dunmore will prompt the beginnings of our own new work as reading, writing and sharing, we'll reconsider the ordinary and find the extraordinary running quietly through it.	£16.50 / £12.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	<b>Fourth Annual VERVE Poetry Performance Lecture - Nick Makoha</b>	What do you know about Basquiat? What do you know about Icarus? What do you know about the Entebbe hijacking in 1976? In this year's Performance-Lecture, Nick Makoha fuses these seemingly disparate sources and events into poems in a new piece based around his recent work <i>A Low-Pressure System</i> , which won the Ivan Juritz Prize. He brings Basquiat and Icarus back to life in dream-like dialogues whilst gradually, kaleidoscopically, piecing together these stories' disconnected frames, paralleled against moments from his own life - including fleeing the Idi Amin regime in Uganda - and other historical events, all linked by the motif of flight. <i>The Verve Performance-Lecture (a stylised form of teaching-as-performance, originating from contemporary art practice)</i> , invites a poet who has never been asked to give a lecture before to create a presentation fusing academic discourse with poetry and spoken word on a subject of their choosing. <b>In partnership with Poetry School.</b>	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM	<b>Harana Poetry LIVE! hosted by Kostya Tsolakis</b>	What would a poetry magazine look like if it was put on a stage? Well, this year we have invited the wonderful harana poetry (the online magazine for poets writing in English as a second or parallel language) to help us find out. Magazine editor Kostya Tsolakis has put together an exciting event involving readings, discussions about translation, an editorial introduction, some Harana music and much more. Poets featured will include <b>Leo Boix, Iulia David, L Kiew, Astra Papachristodoulou, Jennifer Wong</b> and <b>Eric Yip!</b> Join us at this exciting event and watch a poetry magazine come to life!	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
2:30 PM - 4:30 PM	<b>Kim Moore Workshop - The Personal is Political</b>	If a poem is described as 'political', this often conjures up the idea of a rant in the shape of a poem, with the control of language slipping away from the poet's grasp. When a poem is described as 'personal', it can bring to mind ideas around what poetry 'should' be about; that certain subjects are not grand enough to deserve poems written about them. In this workshop we will begin breaking down the boundaries between the personal and political to write poems that give a voice to what we really have to say.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	<b>Nick Makoha Workshop - The Prose Poetry Lab</b>	We will be testing language in the poetic realm. Focus will be placed on getting the work to a high standard that is of publishable quality. If you are working on a project this is the one for you. Prose poetry merges the lyrical and metric elements of poetry with the narrative flow of traditional prose. Often perceived as a complicated genre, it offers fresh perspectives and possibilities for the writer. In this masterclass, the award-winning author of the poetry collection <i>Kingdom of Gravity</i> will teach you the essentials of writing prose poems. You will learn how to blend measured and lyrical language with plot-driven narrative. At the end of this masterclass, you will be able to write prose poems that have a lasting impression on your readers.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
4:30 PM - 5:00 PM	<b>The VERVE Long Poem with Wayne Holloway-Smith</b>	We're proud to bring you the first of what will be an annual event at VERVE - our new Long Poem Event, which will feature one of our favourite poets performing brand new longer work - one poem alone on a stage, just them and their poem. Wayne Holloway-Smith, whose stunning pamphlet length poem <i>Lobsters</i> was published by Pakina Press in 2022, will kick this series off by reading us his long poem in progress <i>Rabbitbox</i> and we can't wait!	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM	<b>Saturday Headline Event: Imtiaz Dharker, Helen Mort, Hannah Sullivan.</b>	This year's Saturday evening headline features three incredible poets, all giants in their way on the contemporary UK poetry scene. We're thrilled to welcome Queen's Gold Medalist for poetry Imtiaz Dharker back to VERVE for the first time since 2018. Joining her will be Helen Mort, whose latest collection, <i>The Illustrated Woman</i> , was short-listed for the Forward Prize, and Hannah Sullivan, whose debut full collection, <i>Three Poems</i> (Faber, 2018), won the TS Eliot Prize. Hannah will read from her brand new book, <i>Was it for This</i> . Hosting these three amazing poets for readings and discussion is <b>Jo Bell</b> , 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
7:30 PM - 9:30 PM	<b>Kevin P. Gilday's Saturday Night Stramash.</b>	Join award-winning poet Kevin P. Gilday for a night of riotous entertainment from North of the border. Kevin has curated a Caledonian cabaret of Scottish delights featuring poetry, comedy and music from some of the country's most talented contemporary acts. The show will see performances from powerhouse poet <b>Victoria McNulty</b> , futuristic rapper <b>Texture</b> , comedian <b>Stuart McPherson</b> , musical dynamo <b>Amelia Bayler</b> and stunning new voice <b>Nasim Rebecca Asl</b> - all hosted by the man behind hit fringe show <i>Suffering from Scottishness</i> , Kevin P. Gilday. Like an unpredictable Glaswegian night out brought to life on a Birmingham stage - expect laughter, tears and a few sore heads in the morning.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome

### OPEN MIC



### STREAMED



### BSL INTERPRETED



### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH

Time	Event	Description	Price	Location
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	<b>Jay Gao Workshop - Writing Trees &amp; Arboreal Poetics</b>	In this workshop we will explore how poets have responded to the verdant variousness of trees. We will think about trees ecologically, but also consider how trees might define limits of poetic thought, image and form - ways of writing otherwise about trees and woods. Learning from poets including Gerard Manley Hopkins, Francis Ponge, C.D. Wright, Jason Allen-Paisant, and Anthony (Vahni) Capildeo, we will stumble through the dense woods of language together, learning to draw upon our relationship with trees in order to write into a poetics of the arboreal.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM	<b>Liz Berry Workshop - Family Tree</b>	How can we use poems to tell the stories of our family? Join Liz Berry for a workshop about lifting your family history to the light with sensitivity and nuance. Sharing poems, discussion and practical writing activities, you'll explore how to preserve your family's history with care and meaning. Poets of all stages welcome.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM	<b>The VERVE Poetry Festival Competition Event: Protest, hosted by Kim Moore</b>	The Verve Competition on the Theme of Protest opened for entries from Nov 14 2022 to Jan 2 2023, judged by the wonderful Kim Moore. 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 Kim herself and will be a fun and lively affair, featuring poets of all kinds and levels of experience. Always a festival highlight!	FREE	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
12:30 PM - 2:30 PM	<b>Burning Eye Books Workshop - How to Become a Published Poet</b>	Burning Eye editors <b>Bridget Hart</b> and <b>Clive Birnie</b> demystify the process of becoming a published poet. The workshop will include practical guides and case studies looking at what different editors and publishers look for and how to approach them. Whatever your level you will come away ready for the next step on your poetry journey whether that be having your first poem published, publishing a pamphlet or a full collection.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	<b>Jenny Mitchell Workshop - Poetry and Freedom</b>	Award-winning writer Jenny Mitchell will facilitate a supportive, creative session that looks at how we write about the elusive concept of Freedom. Why would we want/need to do this? What might it give the writer and reader? Is it even more important to think about Freedom in a world that is so filled with chaos? Participants will be given challenging examples of work by established poets to discuss, and prompts to stimulate their own writing.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	<b>100 Queer Poems: Hosted by Andrew McMillan and Mary Jean Chan</b>	Hear poets from the acclaimed 100 Queer Poems (Vintage, 2022) anthology - including editors Andrew McMillan and Mary Jean Chan - read their own and other work from this important recent anthology! Featuring <b>Jay Gao, Rachel Mann, Goloosh Nour</b> & <b>Gregory Woods</b> in the flesh, as well as US based poet <b>Chen Chen</b> appearing on zoom!	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	<b>Imogen Stirling presents Love The Sinner</b>	Hailed as a 'lyrical genius' by Benjamin Zephaniah, Imogen Stirling's writing crackles on and off the page. This award-winning performance poet teams up with composer and multi-media artist <b>Sonia Killmann</b> , to present <i>Love The Sinner</i> : a modern retelling of the seven deadly sins. At once a mirror and rallying cry, the performance sees a loose alliance of extraordinary characters struggle to comprehend their identities in a world obsessed with self-betterment. <i>Love The Sinner</i> premieres as a stage adaptation in Spring 2023, produced and directed by the world-renowned Vanishing Point Theatre Company. This duo set is a stripped back version of the upcoming theatre show. Poetry, electronic music and storytelling intersect to create a vibrant live experience.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	<b>Gregory Leadbetter Workshop - Writing In Concert with the Wild.</b>	In this workshop we'll explore the poem as a wild place, and the relationship between poetry and the wild life beyond ourselves and our control. How can the will of the poet work in concert with the wild, and these two ideas - of the wild and the will, commonly assumed to be diametrically opposed - be brought into a productive, mutually enlivening relationship in poetry? How can order act in concert with spontaneity? How does the making of a poem allow for the undetermined, unexpected, or unknown? What possible relationships between poetry and the natural world remain open to us, in a time of ecological crisis? Through close reading and guided writing, this workshop will offer participants ways to find their own answers to these questions.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room One at Birmingham Hippodrome
3:30 PM - 5:30 PM	<b>Andrew McMillan Workshop - Beyond 100 Queer Poems</b>	Using some of the poems from the acclaimed 100 Queer Poems anthology (Vintage, 2022), join co-editor Andrew McMillan to do some writing and breathe new life into your work. Andrew McMillan's three collections are physical, playground and <i>pandemonium</i> all published by Jonathan Cape.	£22.50/ £16.50	Workshop Room Two at Birmingham Hippodrome
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM	<b>Burning Eye Books Showcase hosted by Clive Birnie &amp; Bridgit Hart</b>	Bristol based Burning Eye Books are the UK's top indie publisher of performance poetry. Returning for their third VERVE showcase, we are delighted that Burning Eye editors Bridget Hart and Clive Birnie will introduce four poets whose latest books were published in Autumn / Winter 2022 and who, together, are some of the best voices on the UK Spoken Word scene. We are thrilled to welcome <b>Leyla Josephine, Mark 'Mr T' Thompson, Louise Fazackerley &amp; Sally Jenkinson</b> to the festival!	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	<b>Sunday Headline Event: Zaffer Kunial, Gregory Leadbetter, Jenny Mitchell</b>	Our final headline event of the weekend brings three wonderful poets together to read and talk about their work. Birmingham born Zaffer Kunial's second collection <i>England's Green</i> (Faber, 2022) has been short-listed for the TS Eliot Prize and follows his prize-winning debut collection <i>Us</i> (Faber, 2018). Brummie resident Gregory Leadbetter's second collection, <i>Maskwork</i> (Nine Arches, 2020) was longlisted for the Laurel Prize and follows this astonishing debut <i>The Fetch</i> (Nine Arches, 2016). Jenny Mitchell's prize-winning first two collections, <i>Her Last Language</i> (Indigo Dreams, 2019) and <i>Map of a Plantation</i> (Indigo Dreams, 2021) have recently been followed by a third, <i>Resurrection of a Blackman</i> (Indigo Dreams, 2022). This amazing line-up, a real treat, will be hosted for us by <b>Jonathan Davidson</b> from Writing West Midlands who is also founder of Birmingham Literature Festival.	£6.50/ £4.50	Patrick Studio Theatre - Birmingham Hippodrome



**ALL DAY OPEN MIC**  
SATURDAY 18th FEB 11am-5pm OPEN TO ALL  
BRING YOUR BEST POEM!



# POET BIOS A BIRMINGHAM FESTIVAL OF POETRY AND SPOKEN WORD

Via Thorp Street Entrance, Birmingham, B5 4AT

BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

15TH-19TH FEBRUARY 2023



A Birmingham Festival of Poetry & Spoken Word

VERVE

## TICKET INFORMATION

All tickets have physical or digital options.

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

Poetry / Spoken Word Events £6.50 / £4.50

Workshops £22.50 / £16.50

Concession tickets are available to senior citizens, school pupils, students, and people registered as disabled or unemployed. All digital events and Zoom workshops are at concession rates.

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

All tickets can be purchased via <https://vervepoetryfestival.com>

## ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

2023 and we're back, taking over a large chunk of the Birmingham Hippodrome. We are thrilled to return with our hybrid form of festival - allowing all to enjoy, whether you will be with us in the flesh or watching and participating online. All events will be BSL interpreted and streamed to our online audience, as well as being available to view for one month after the festival! Our workshops will have parallel zoom versions in the run up to the festival. And our famous VERVE Poetry Festival Bookshop is now also online at [vervepoetryfestival.com/shop](https://vervepoetryfestival.com/shop) for all your poetry buying needs! We can't wait to welcome you! We know you're going to love #VERVE2023!

@VERVEPOETRYFEST #VERVE2023



**DREADLOCK ALIEN**  
aka Richard Grant, is a Birmingham based slam and performance poet. He is a former Birmingham Poet Laureate (2005-6) who, in recent years has increasingly acted as comper at arts events, such as the recent Shambala Festival. He also does CPD sessions for teachers.



**NASIM REBECCA ASI**  
is a Glasgow-based poet and journalist, originally from Tyne and Wear. Her poetry has appeared in magazines including Poetry Wales, Gutter and Modern Poetry in Translation. In 2021 she was awarded a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award for Poetry, and in 2022 was shortlisted for the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award. Her debut pamphlet *Nemidooman* will be published by Verve Poetry Press in time for VERVE 23!



**AMELIA BAYLER**  
does a fun mixture of stand up and musical comedy. She won best newcomer at the Scottish Comedy Awards 'Up-and-comer' - The List 'Queen of gesticulations, queen of the millennial aesthetic, queen of the emotional guy punch, Amelia Bayler's star is truly on the rise.' - ScotsGay



**ALIYAH BEGUM**  
is a nineteen-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 currently studying English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford.



**LIZ BERRY**  
was born in the Black Country and now lives in Birmingham. Her first book of poems, *Black Country* (Chatto 2014), 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. Her third book, *The Home Child*, will be brand new at VERVE 23!



**CLIVE BIRNIE**  
is a poet & artist from Partishead. He founded Burning Eye Books in 2012. His most recent pamphlet, *Palimpsest*, was published by Verve Poetry Press in 2020.



**LEO BOIX**  
is a bilingual Latino British poet, translator and journalist. He has published two collections in Spanish, *Un lugareño* 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, *Balad of a Happy Immigrant*, was published by Chatto and Windus in 2021.



**BOSTIN BRASS BAND**  
have played soul-music through the streets of Birmingham for the best part of a decade. A New Orleans style brass band based in Birmingham. From their beginnings as a marching band in Digbeth, the group have taken their own brand of Brummie infused second-line around the country to wow audiences in school playgrounds, mardi gras parades, concert halls and international jazz festivals.



**EMILY BREEDS**  
was a commended Foyle Young Poet in 2016. She has since won multiple Young Poets Network Challenges, the BBC Proms Poetry Competition 2017, and was longlisted for the National Poetry Competition 2018. Emily placed second with the University of Birmingham at UniSlam 2020, and coached them to victory in 2021.



**HELEN CALCUTT**  
is a poet, choreographer, and dance artist. Her writing appears in *The Guardian*, *The Huffington Post*, *Poetry London*, *Poetry Wales*, *Poetry Scotland*, *Wild Court*, *The London Magazine*, and many others. She is the author of three volumes of poetry. Her latest, *Somehow* (Verve Poetry Press, 2020) was a PBS Winter Bulletin pamphlet and a Poetry School Book of the Year. Helen was one of the six poets selected to write and perform for the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games, Birmingham 2022.



**MARY JEAN CHAN**  
is the author of *Fleche* (Faber, 2019) which won the 2019 Costa Book Award for Poetry and was shortlisted in 2020 for the International Dylan Thomas Prize. In 2021, *Fleche* was a Lambda Literary Award Finalist. Chan recently co-edited *100 Queer Poems* (Vintage, 2022) with Andrew McMillan. Chan currently serves as Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing (Poetry) at Oxford Brookes University. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Chan lives in Oxford.



**CHEN CHEN (via Zoom)**  
is an author, teacher, & editor. His second book of poetry, *Your Emergency Contact Has Experienced an Emergency*, is new from Bloodaxe Books. His debut, *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities* (Bloodaxe, 2019), was longlisted for the National Book Award and won the Thom Gunn Award, among other honours. Chen is also the author of five chapbooks, including the forthcoming *Explodingly Yours* (Ghost City Press, 2023).



**IULIA DAVID**  
was born and raised in Bucharest, Romania, and lives in East London. Her work appeared in various magazines and journals and her debut pamphlet, *Blueprint*, was published by Green Bottle Press in September 2022.



**Imtiaz Dharker**  
is a poet, artist and video film maker, awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2014. Her six collections, all published by Bloodaxe Books, include *Over the Moon* and the latest, *Luck is the Hook*. Her poems have featured widely on BBC radio, television, the London Underground, Glasgow billboards and Mumbai buses. She has had eleven solo exhibitions of drawings and also scripts and directs video films, many of them for non-government organisations working in the area of shelter, education and health for women and children in India.



**LOUISE FAZACKERLEY**  
Winner of BBC Radio New Voices award, European Slam Finalist and support artist for punk legend Dr. John Cooper Clark, Louise is a true, Northern powerhouse. Welcome to her world of darkly humorous poetry. Previous poetry collections include *The Lolitas* and *The Uniform Factory* (Verve Poetry Press), *Bird St* (The Secret Writers Club) and audio book, *Council House Poetry* (Nymphs & Thugs). Louise will read from her recent Burning Eye Books collection *The Pleasure Dome*.



**JAY GAO**  
is a poet and author of *Imperium* (Carcanet, 2022). He is a Contributing Editor at *The White Review*. He is a winner of the 2022 Desperate Literature Prize for Short Fiction, the 2021 London Magazine Poetry Prize, and was shortlisted for the 2022 Edwin Morgan Poetry Award. Originally from Edinburgh, Scotland, he earned his MFA at Brown University and is a PhD student at Columbia University in New York City.



**KEVIN P. GILDAY**  
is an award-winning poet, writer and performer from Glasgow. He is the founder of poetry performance collective The Scribbler's Union and was co-founder of much loved spoken word cabaret night *Sonnet Youth*. He is a National Theatre of Scotland Breakthrough Writer, a BBC Writersroom Scottish Voice and one of Scotland's most celebrated contemporary poets. His published five books of poetry, with his most recent, *Anxiety Music*, released by Verve Poetry Press in September of 2022 to universal acclaim.



**WILL HARRIS**  
is the author of *RENDANG* (2020), which won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. In 2022, he co-translated Habib Tanguar's *Consolatio* with Delina Hestam. He helps facilitate the South Bank New Poets Collective with Vanessa Kinville. His second book, *Bother Poem*, will be published by Grants in the UK and Westway in the US in March 2023 and is exclusively available to purchase early at VERVE 23!



**BRIDGET HART**  
is a queer writer based in Bristol. Bridget has performed at a variety of events including Manchester Punk Festival, The 1 in 12 Club, Boomtown Fair, Cheltenham Lit Fest and murky house shows 2010-16. Bridget is the editor of Burning Eye Books and the co-director of For Books' Sake, championing underrepresented writers. Her second poetry collection *Chewing Gum* was published by Small Press Books.



**WAYNE HOLLOWAY-SMITH**  
has published two collections, *Alarum* (Bloodaxe 2017) and *Love Minus Love* (Bloodaxe 2020), which was shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize. He is the winner of the National Poetry Competition (2018) and Geoffrey Dearmer Prize (2016). He edits *The Poetry Review*.



**SALLY JENKINSON**  
was born in Doncaster, South Yorkshire. She has been writing and performing poetry across the UK for more than a decade, and has also written and performed internationally in Sweden, Iceland and Australia. Her work has been featured in *The Morning Star*, *Lighthouse Journal*, *Emerge Lit Journal*, *The #MeToo Anthology*, from Fairacre Press, and on BBC Radio 4's 'Power Lines'. She has recently published *Pantomime Horse*, *Russian Doll*, *Egg* with Burning Eye Books.



**LEYLA JOSEPHINE**  
is a poet, film and theatre maker originally from Glasgow, now based in Prestwick. In 2014, Leyla won Hammer and Tongue's UK National Spoken Word Slam Championship at Royal Albert Hall. Her solo theatre shows have taken the UK by storm. Leyla's short film *Groom* was nominated for a Scottish BAFTA 2022. Leyla's poem 'Good with our hands' was included in Scottish Poetry Library's Best Scottish Poems of 2020. Her most recent publication is *In Public / In Private* from Burning Eye Books.



**L KIEW**  
is a London-based poet of Chinese-malaysian heritage. She works as a charity sector leader and accountant. She holds a MSc in Creative Writing and Literary Studies from Edinburgh University. Her debut pamphlet *The Unquiet* was published by Offroad Road Books in 2019. She was a 2019/2020 London Library Emerging Writer and L Kiew's first collection *More than Weeds* will be published by Nine Arches Press in time for VERVE 2023!



**SONJA KILLMANN**  
is a Glasgow-based international composer and multi-media artist. As a saxophone player, electronic musician, and audiovisual artist, they have performed across the UK and Europe, in cities such as Dnipro (UE), Edinburgh (UK), Gothenburg (SE) and Berlin (DE) and are currently working closely with Cryptic Glasgow as a Cryptic Artist.



**ZAFFAR KUNIAL**  
lives in Hasden Bridge, West Yorkshire, and was born in Birmingham. His debut collection, *Us* (Faber, 2018) was shortlisted for a number of prizes. He was a 2022 recipient of the Yale University Windham-Campbell Prize. *England's Green* (Faber, 2022) is his second book.



**GREGORY LEADBETTER**  
Gregory's books of poetry include *Balanave*, with photographs by Phil Thomson (*Broken Sleep*, 2021), *Maskwork* (Nine Arches Press, 2020) - longlisted for the Laurel Prize 2021 - and *The Felch* (Nine Arches Press, 2016). *Calliban* is forthcoming with Dare-Gale Press (2023). As a critic he publishes widely on the history and practice of poetry. He is Professor of Poetry at Birmingham City University.



**NICK MAKOHA**  
is the founder of The Obsidian Foundation, winner of the 2021 Ivan Juritz prize and the Poetry London Prize. In 2017, Nick's debut collection, *Kingdom of Gravity*, was shortlisted for the Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection and was one of the Guardian's best books of the year. Nick is a Cave Canem Graduate Fellow and the Complete Works alumnus. He won the 2015 Brunel International African Poetry Prize and the 2016 'toi Derricotte & Cornelius Eady Prize for his pamphlet *Resurrection Man*.



**RACHEL MANN**  
is an Anglican priest, writer and broadcaster. Her debut poetry collection *A Kingdom of Love* (Carcanet 2019) was called 'ambitious and richly complex' (Poetry London), 'a hard-won book of wonders' (Michael Symmons Roberts) and was highly commended in the 2021 Forward Prizes. Her second Carcanet collection is due to appear in 2024.



**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) and 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). Her non-fiction title, *Tangled in Terrain: Uprooting Islamophobia*, was published by Pluto Press last year.



**ANDREW McMILLAN**  
Andrew's debut collection *physical* was the only ever poetry collection to win The Guardian First Book Award. The collection also won the Fenton Aldbrough First Collection Prize, a Somerset Maugham Award (2016), an Eric Gregory Award (2016) and a Northern Writers' award (2014). His second collection, *playtime*, was published by Jonathan Cape in 2018 and won the inaugural Polari Prize. *100 Queer Poems* (Vintage, 2022) is the acclaimed anthology he edited with Mary Jean Chan. He is Professor of Contemporary Writing at the Manchester Writing School.



**VICTORIA MCNULTY**  
Victoria McNulty is a poet and community arts worker from the East End of Glasgow. Her work focuses on history and working class culture. Victoria's 2018 collection *Confessionals* (Speculative Books) was developed into an acclaimed stage show in collaboration with Sonnet Youth. Her second publication *Exiles* (Speculative Books) was adapted as a spoken word feature film directed by Kevin P. Gilday and David Hamman JR (Fair Play).



**STUART MCPHERSON**  
is an award winning stand-up comedian. His 2022 Edinburgh Fringe show 'The Peesh' garnered critical acclaim, being called "an hour of perfectly crafted stand up" (The List). He has starred in BBC Scotland's BAFTA winning comedy *Scot Squad* and co-hosts the *Some Laugh* podcast. "Hilarious" - The Scotsman



**JENNY MITCHELL**  
is winner of the Poetry Book Awards 2021 and joint winner of the Geoff Stevens Memorial Prize 2019. She also won the inaugural Ironbridge Prize, the Bedford Prize and the Gloucester Poetry Society Open Competition. The best-selling debut collection, *Her Lost Language*, is one of 44 Poetry Books for 2019 (Poetry Wales), and a second collection, *Map of a Plantation*, is an Irish Independent 'Literary Find' and on the syllabus at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her latest collection is called *Resurrection of a Black Man*.



**KIM MOORE**  
Kim'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* was published by Smith/Doorstop in March 2022.



**HELEN MORT**  
is a poet and novelist. Her collections *Division Street* (2013), *No Map Could Show Them* (2016) and *The Illustrated Woman* (2022) are all published by Chatto & Windus. She's a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and teaches at Manchester Metropolitan University. She lives in Sheffield.



**GOLNOOSH NOUR**  
is the author of *The Ministry of Guidance and Other Stories* (2020) and *ROCKSONG* (2021), both shortlisted for the Polari Prize. She's performed her work in literature festivals and events across the UK and internationally. Her work has also been published by Granta, Vintage, and Columbia Journal. Golnoosh teaches Creative Writing at the University of Reading. Her most recent publication is a pamphlet of new poems; *Impure Thoughts* (Verve Poetry Press, 2022)



**ASTRA PAPACHRISTODOULOU**  
is a PhD researcher and tutor at the University of Surrey. She is a widely-published author with work featured in UK and international magazines including *The Times*, *Magma Poetry* and *BeeCraft*. Astra is the author of several books including *Sargazing* (Guillemot Press), and her work has been translated into Korean, German, Russian, Slovenian and Spanish.



**MUNEERA PILGRIM**  
Muneera Pilgrim is an international Poet, Cultural Producer, Writer, Community Researcher, Broadcaster, TEDx Speaker and WOW! Festival Speaker. She conducts workshops, shares art, gives lectures, hosts, and finds alternative ways to educate and exchange ideas while focusing on methodologies of empowerment for non-centred people. Her Debut Poetry collection *That Day She'll Proclaim Her Chronicles* was released in November 2021 through Burning Eye.



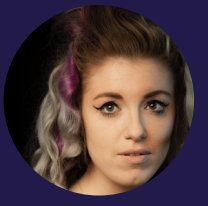
**KATHY PIMLOTT**  
Kathy's debut pamphlet *Goose Fair Night* was published by The Emma Press in 2016, followed by *Elastic Glue* in 2019. Her debut full collection, *The Small Manuscripts*, was published by Verve Poetry Press in 2022. Her work has appeared in many magazines and anthologies. Kathy was born and raised in Nottingham but has spent her adult life in London, the last 45 or so years in Covent Garden.



**EMMA PURSHOUSE**  
was born in Wolverhampton, and is a freelance writer, novelist and performance poet. Her most recent poetry collection *Close* is published by Ofa's Press and was shortlisted for the Rubery Book Award in 2019. Also in 2019 Emma was selected to be one of the writers in the 'Common People' anthology (Unbound) and became Wolverhampton's first ever poet laureate.



**DENISE SAUL**  
is the author of two pamphlets, *White Narcissus* (Flipped Eye Publishing) was Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice and *House of Blue* (Rack Press) was PBS Pamphlet Recommendation. She is the recipient of Poetry Society's Geoffrey Dearmer Prize for her poem 'Leaving Abyssinia'. Her first full-length collection, *The Room Between Us* (Pavillion Poetry), a Poetry Book Society Summer Recommendation 2022, has been shortlisted for T S Eliot Poetry prize 2022.



**IMOGEN STIRLING**  
(BBC, Sky Arts, National Theatre of Scotland) is a Glasgow-based artist performance poet, theatre-maker, musician and writer, shortlisted for the Out-Spoken Prize for Poetry 2022. She creates bold, loud, dark, story-led poetry intended for theatres and music festivals. Works include #Hypocrisy (UK tour; Praque, Love The Sinner (Vanishing Point Theatre Company) and WENDY.



**HANNAH SULLIVAN**  
teaches English at New College, Oxford. Her first collection, *Three Poems*, won the T. S. Eliot Prize in 2019. She lives in London with her husband and two sons. Her new collection, *Was it for This*, also Faber, is brand new at VERVE 23.



**ADJEI SUN**  
is a multi-disciplinary artist and organiser based in Birmingham, and commended in a recent Young Poets Network challenge on friendship. Themes of his poetry include mental health, masculinity, love, and social and environmental justice. He began performing poetry at sixteen and has performed locally as well as internationally. Adjei was recognised as one of eight artists and community organisers from around the Commonwealth for As We Speak 22.



**KIRSTY TAYLOR**  
is a writer and educator inspired by her beloved hometown Bradford. She began writing in her early twenties after finding her passion for story telling through poetry and has performed all over the country telling tales about people, class and the realities of Broken Britain. Kirsty was a BBC Verbs New Voice in 2017 and was awarded the Apples and Snakes/Jerwood Arts Poetry in Performance in 2020.



**TEXTURE**  
Texture is a rapper and performer from the darkest timeline. With a background in hip-hop and spoken word, the 2015 Scottish Slam Champion and Edinburgh Fringe veteran weaves complex tapestries of myth, memes and dystopia in his prescient, multi-layered rhymes.



**MARK 'MR T' THOMPSON**  
Poet, performer, educator, Mark trained at Rose Bruford College in Theatre, retraining as a Drama teacher at Goldsmiths College in 2004. He's still acting and teaching while performing his poetry and facilitating workshops on culture, identity and politics. Mark hosted local Black Lives Matter events in 2020 and contributed poetry to commemorations of 'The Battle of Lewisham' and the New Cross fire, helping to immortalise local moments in Black British history. Mark recently published *More Mixed Messages* with Burning Eye.



**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 *Ephesos* is out with ignitpress and his debut full collection is due out with Nine Arches later in 2023.



**SCARLETT WARD**  
is a Queer Staffordshire Poet living with Multiple Sclerosis. She was shortlisted for the Women Poets' Prize and the Spelli Poetry Competition in 2022. She was selected for the room 204 cohort by Writing West Midlands and she came in the top 10% of the Bridgeport poetry Prize. Her recent work was published in *Nine Arches*, *Under the Radar Magazine*, *14 Poems* and *Broken Sleep*.



**JENNIFER WONG**  
was born and grew up in Hong Kong and now lives in the UK. Jennifer is the author of several poetry collections including recently *Letters Home* (Nine Arches Press) which was named the Wild Card Choice by PBS. Jennifer is currently working on a new collection. She also runs an online poetry series called *What We Read Now* and is also co-editing a new Hong Kong poetry anthology with Jason Lee and Tim Tim Cheng, forthcoming from Verve Poetry Press.



**GREGORY WOODS**  
is the author of six collections, all from Carcanet Press, the most recent being *Records of an Incitement to Silence* (2021). His cultural histories include *Articulate Flesh: Male Homo-eroticism and Modern Poetry* (1987), *A History of Gay Literature* (1998) and *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World* (2016), all from Yale University Press. In 1998 he became the first Professor of Gay & Lesbian Studies in the UK, at Nottingham Trent University, where he is still Professor Emeritus.



**ERIC YIP**  
was born and raised in Hong Kong. His poems appear in *The Poetry Review*, *The Adroit Journal*, *Best New Poets*, and elsewhere. He won the 2021 National Poetry Competition and is currently an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge.

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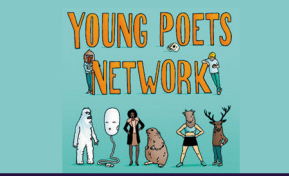
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