

**NEWS RELEASE | Strictly embargoed until 2115 on Tuesday 20 September, 2016**

## **Vahni Capildeo wins 25th Forward Prize for Best Collection**

*“Language is my home, I say: not one particular language” – Vahni Capildeo*

**Forward Prize for Best Collection (£15,000)**  
*Vahni Capildeo for *Measure of Expatriation* (Carcanet)*

**Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000)**  
*Tiphonie Yanique for *Wife* (Peepal Tree Press)*

**Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000)**  
*Sasha Dugdale for ‘Joy’ (PN Review)*

**Plus:** *Forward Arts Foundation’s 25th anniversary marked with the launch of the first ever Forward Prizes Studentship, given to support young poet Shukria Rezaei*

Winners of the Forward Prizes for Poetry 2016 were announced tonight, with Vahni Capildeo winning the £15,000 prize for Best Collection for *Measure of Expatriation*.

Sponsored since their launch in 1992 by the content marketing agency, Forward Worldwide, the three awards – Best Collection, Best First Collection and Best Single Poem – are Britain’s most coveted poetry prizes, celebrating the best new poetry published in the British Isles. Previous winners include some of the best-loved names in contemporary poetry: Thom Gunn, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Carol Ann Duffy and Kathleen Jamie.

*Measures of Expatriation* is Vahni Capildeo’s fourth collection. Born in Trinidad, she has lived in the UK since 1991, winning a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University, where she studied Old Norse before working as an etymologist for the Oxford English Dictionary. She is at ease in a number of languages – including the Spanish, French, English and creoles of her childhood – and she writes in her winning book: “Language is my home, I say: not one particular language.”

**Malika Booker, chair of the five-strong jury, said:** “Vahni Capildeo’s *Measure of Expatriation* is a work that amazes. We found a vertiginous excitement in the way in which the book grasps its subject: the sense of never quite being at home. This is poetry that transforms. When people in the future seek to know what it’s like to live between places, traditions, habits and cultures, they will read this. Here is the language for what expatriation feels like.”

**William Sieghart, the prizes’ founder, said:** “The Forward Prizes winners in this, our 25th year, are all writers who push at the limits of language and re-define the possibilities of poetry. I welcome the judges’ decisions to celebrate work that excites them, that delights in finding new ways to express what it is to speak and listen in an age of global English. Across the world, the language of the media and of politics has shown itself to be depleted: unexamined slogans and clichés dominate public discourse. Against this background, the attention that Vahni Capildeo, Tiphonie Yanique and Sasha Dugdale give to the moral and musical weight of every word they use is inspiring. They will be new voices to many readers, they represent change, courage and purpose. We are proud of them.”

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The prizes were awarded at a special ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall in London's Southbank Centre, with readings from each of the shortlisted collections, introduced by the prizes' founder **William Sieghart** and the chair of this year's judging panel, the writer and multidisciplinary artist **Malika Booker**. The panel also comprised poets **George Szirtes** and **Liz Berry**, with singer/songwriter **Tracey Thorn** and **Don Share**, editor of Poetry magazine.

Tiphonie Yanique was awarded the Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000) awarded for *Wife* (Peepal Tree Press). Born in the Virgin Islands, Yanique is a novelist, short-story writer and professor in the MFA program at the New School in New York City, where she is the 2015 recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award. Her collection of poems, *Wife*, was published in October 2015.

**Malika Booker, on behalf of the judges, said:** "Tiphonie Yanique's *Wife* is above all a generous and witty book, an agile exploration of the many relationships within marriage. She has written a delightful exploration of the tensions and complexity of matrimony, in language that's deceptively simple."

Sasha Dugdale was awarded Best Single Poem for 'Joy', first published in PN Review. Dugdale – a poet, playwright, and translator - was born in Sussex, England. She is the editor of Modern Poetry in Translation.

**Malika Booker, on behalf of the judges, said:** "Sasha Dugdale's 'Joy' is an extraordinarily sustained visionary piece of writing. A poetic drama, complete with stage directions, it is addictive writing, compelling and tender. It presents the death of William Blake, as retold by Catherine, his widow. As she re-tells and re-experiences his death, she re-experiences their life together, her sense of herself and her own creative potential."

A special announcement was also made to mark the Forward Arts Foundation's anniversary celebrations, with the launch of the first **Forward Prizes Studentship**. It will support a young poet from Afghanistan: **Shukria Rezaei**, 18, knew no English on arrival in the UK from Afghanistan four years ago but has since won several awards for her poetry.

The Studentship will enable Shukria to stay on an extra year at Oxford Spires Academy, where she will work as a teaching assistant, mentor younger students and encourage the creative and critical reading and writing of poetry throughout the school. Money raised to support her will also enable Forward Arts Foundation to extend the pioneering poetry work with migrants, refugees and other disadvantaged children which has been piloted by Shukria's teacher, the poet Kate Clanchy, and her colleagues at Oxford Spires Academy. Support for the Very Quiet Girls Poetry project is welcomed via the Just Giving page: [www.justgiving.com/forward-artsfoundation](http://www.justgiving.com/forward-artsfoundation).

The ceremony marks the start of a season of nationwide poetry celebrations, culminating with National Poetry Day on Thursday 6 October, with a theme of Messages for 2016.

Shortlisted poets are included in the recently released **Forward Book of Poetry 2017**, which also contains more than 50 poems highly recommended by the judges. Meanwhile, a special title, **100 Prized Poems: Twenty-five years of the Forward Books**, has been released to mark the prizes' momentous anniversary year, featuring a roll-call of both canonical names – Carol Ann Duffy, Don Paterson, Derek Walcott – and fresh voices – Kate Tempest, Kei Miller and Emily Berry.

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For further information, visit [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org) or join the conversation at @forwardprizes #forwardprizes.

**For further information contact:**

Annabel Robinson / Christopher Bone  
FMcM Associates, 020 7405 7422  
[annabelr@fmcm.co.uk](mailto:annabelr@fmcm.co.uk) / [chrisb@fmcm.co.uk](mailto:chrisb@fmcm.co.uk)

**Notes to editors**

1. Shortlists for the 2016 Forward Prizes for Poetry comprised:

**The Forward Prize for Best Collection (£15,000)**

Vahni Capildeo – *Measures of Expatriation* (Carcenet)  
Ian Duhig – *The Blind Roadmaker* (Picador Poetry)  
Choman Hardi – *Considering the Women* (Bloodaxe Books)  
Alice Oswald – *Falling Awake* (Cape Poetry)  
Denise Riley – *Say Something Back* (Picador Poetry)

**The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000)**

Nancy Campbell – *Disko Bay* (Enitharmon Press)  
Ron Carey – *DISTANCE* (Revival Press)  
Harry Giles – *Tonguit* (Freight Books)  
Ruby Robinson – *Every Little Sound* (Liverpool University Press)  
Tiphonie Yanique – *Wife* (Peepal Tree Press)

**The Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000)**

Sasha Dugdale – ‘Joy’ (PN Review)  
David Harsent – ‘from Salt’ (Poetry London)  
Solmaz Sharif – ‘Force Visibility’ (Granta Magazine)  
Melissa Lee-Houghton – ‘i am very precious’ (Prac Crit)  
Rachel Hadas – ‘Roosevelt Hospital Blues’ (Times Literary Supplement)

2. Biographies of the shortlisted poets and samples of their work can be found on [www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry)

3. Biographies of the judges can be found on [www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry)

4. The Forward Prizes, now in their 25th year, are the most coveted accolades in the UK and Ireland for both established and emerging poets. With a total value of £21,000, the prizes are divided into three categories: The Forward Prize for Best Collection (£15,000), The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000) and the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000)

5. Past winners of the Forward Prize for Best Collection are: Claudia Rankine *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Penguin) 2015, Kei Miller *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Carcenet) 2014, Michael Symmons *Roberts Drysalter* (Cape Poetry) 2013, Jorie Graham *PLACE* (Carcenet) 2012, John Burnside *Black Cat Bone* (Cape Poetry) 2011, Seamus

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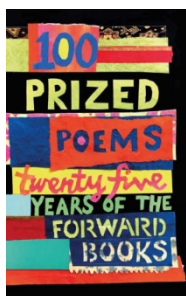
Heaney *Human Chain* (Faber and Faber) 2010, Don Paterson *Rain* (Faber and Faber) 2009, Mick Imlah *The Lost Leader* (Faber and Faber) 2008, Sean O'Brien *The Drowned Book* (Picador Poetry) 2007, Robin Robertson *Swithering* (Cape Poetry) 2006, David Harsent *Legion* (Faber and Faber) 2005, Kathleen Jamie *The Tree House* (Picador Poetry) 2004, Ciaran Carson *Breaking News* (Gallery Press) 2003, Peter Porter *Max is Missing* (Picador Poetry) 2002, Sean O'Brien *Downriver* (Picador Poetry) 2001, Michael Donaghy *Conjure* (Picador Poetry) 2000, Jo Shapcott *My Life Asleep* (OUP) 1999, Ted Hughes *Birthday Letters* (Faber and Faber) 1998, Jamie McKendrick *The Marble Fly* (OUP) 1997, John Fuller *Stones and Fires* (Chatto) 1996, Sean O'Brien *Ghost Train* (OUP) 1995, Alan Jenkins *Harm* (Chatto) 1994, Carol Ann Duffy *Mean Time* (Anvil Press) 1993 and Thom Gunn *The Man with Night Sweats* (Faber and Faber) 1992.

6. Forward Arts Foundation, which runs the Forward Prizes for Poetry and National Poetry Day, is an arts charity that celebrates excellence in poetry and widens its audience by encouraging the enjoyment, discovery and sharing of poems. Support for its activities is provided by Arts Council England and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Find it at [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org) and @forwardprizes and @poetrydayuk.

7. Forward Worldwide have sponsored The Forward Prizes since their inception. A global content marketing agency based in London and Shanghai, creating and delivering best-in-class omni-channel content strategies (digital and print) for blue-chip brands, their clients include Patek Philippe, Tesco, American Express, Fabric, Standard Life, Virgin Atlantic, Singapore Airlines and Lufthansa. [www.forwardww.com](http://www.forwardww.com) @tweetfwd.



8. The Forward Book of Poetry 2017 (published by Forward Worldwide with Faber & Faber, £8.99) is also out now, showcasing the best contemporary poems published in the British Isles this year, including the poets shortlisted for 2016's Forward Prizes for Poetry. This anthology, for seasoned poetry lovers and new readers alike, is the 25th in a series that offers an invaluable annual overview of the current state of poetry.



9. To celebrate 25 years of the Forward Prizes and publications, the Forward Arts Foundation is publishing **100 Prized Poems: Twenty-five years of the Forward Books** (Forward Worldwide with Faber & Faber, RRP £9.99). Chosen by William Sieghart, *100 Prized Poems* brings together the best of the poems published over a quarter century in twenty-five editions of the Forward books of poetry, a series highlighting the works commended annually for the Forward Prizes. The roll-call of poets included is a Who's Who of poetry excellence and includes both familiar names – Simon Armitage, Jackie Kay, Derek Walcott - and fresh voices – Kate Tempest, Kei Miller and Emily Berry. This anthology of anthologies is a great way of encountering the richness that new poetry has to offer.

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