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## Judges for the 30th Forward Prizes for Poetry announced



L-R Shivanee Ramlochan, Leontia Flynn, James Naughtie, Pascale Petit and Tristram Fane Saunders

The jury for the 30th Forward Prizes, the UK's most widely coveted awards for new poetry, is announced today (27 Jan 2021).

Broadcaster, journalist and writer **James Naughtie**, will chair the judging panel. He is joined by poets **Leontia Flynn**, **Pascale Petit** and **Shivanee Ramlochan** and by poetry critic **Tristram Fane Saunders**.

**James Naughtie** says: "Poetry matters. We know that our best poets get into our lives and the world around us better than anyone else. **What more challenging backdrop could there be for the 30th anniversary of the Forward Prize than our disordered state?** Whatever they say they're writing about, I know some poets will describe and explain it like no one else can.

I can't wait to read this year's poems."

The Forward Prizes are distinctive for championing new voices and internationally renowned poets alike. The prizes constantly seek out and

celebrate work at the cutting edge of the art form. Over 30 years the Forward Prizes have recognised the likes of Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Alice Oswald, Vahni Capildeo and Claudia Rankine. Most recently, the prize for Best Collection went to Caroline Bird for *The Air Year* an audacious and erotically charged collection named for the hurricane of a new relationship, the time before the first or 'paper' anniversary.

The awards - worth a total of £16,000 - are sponsored by Bookmark, the global content marketing and communications agency, and are run by the Forward Arts Foundation. They comprise the Forward Prize for Best Collection (£10,000), the Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection (£5,000) and the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem (£1,000).

Shivane Ramlochan, a former Forward Prize shortlistee and one of three poets on the 2021 jury says, "Being a shortlistee in 2018 was more than a dream come true: it signified the opening of several doors - wider recognition for my work, fellowship among extraordinary poets, and a vital, generous UK cultural and literary community. The Forward Prizes celebrate good writing, but more than that, **they expand the definition of why poetry matters, and to whom - a national endeavour with international hopes.** I'm honoured to serve the Forward Prizes in this new way, and delighted to see what the next thirty years holds."

The judges' selection of shortlisted and highly commended poems will be published on 16 September 2021 in the 30<sup>th</sup> annual *Forward Book of Poetry*.

The Forward Prizes for Poetry will also be celebrating their anniversary with a new anthology, ***Poems of the Decade: An Anthology of the Forward Books of Poetry 2011-2020***. Gathering one hundred poems by writers and performers who have drawn new audiences to the artform, it highlights poetry as a space for fresh powerful language, feeling and thought.

A previous edition of *Poems of the Decade* featuring poems from 2001-2010, has been an A level English set text on the Edexcel exam board since 2014.

## Notes to Editors:

1. **The Forward Prizes for Poetry** are the most widely coveted awards for new poetry published in the UK and Ireland. The annual ceremony brings poetry's biggest names to perform alongside rising talent before diverse and enthusiastic audiences. Notable alumni include Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes and Claudia Rankine, while Simon Armitage, Jackie Kay, Carol Ann Duffy and Daljit Nagra are among those boosted by early career Forward recognition. The prizes, run by the Forward Arts Foundation since 1992, are sponsored by Bookmark Content. There are three categories: the Forward Prize for Best Collection, the Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection and the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem. Poems from the shortlisted and highly commended books are published in the annual Forward Book of Poetry creating an invaluable overview for poetry lovers and a perfect introduction for new poetry readers.

[www.twitter.com/ForwardPrizes](https://www.twitter.com/ForwardPrizes)

[www.facebook.com/ForwardPrizes](https://www.facebook.com/ForwardPrizes)

[www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry](https://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/forward-prizes-for-poetry)

2. **Judges** (photos available on request)

**James Naughtie**, one of the country's best-known broadcasters, is special correspondent for BBC News. He has also presented every edition of *Bookclub* on BBC Radio and is a former chair of judges for the Booker Prize and the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-fiction. He has published books on politics and music, and two novels, and most recently *On the Road - Adventures from Nixon to Trump*, an account of fifty years of travels in the United States.

**Tristram Fane Saunders** is *The Telegraph's* poetry critic, and the editor of *Edna St Vincent Millay: Poems & Satires*. He has reviewed poetry for *The TLS*, *The Herald* and Radio 4's *Front Row*.

**Leontia Flynn** has published four collections of poetry with Jonathan Cape, most recently *The Radio*, which was shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Prize and won the Irish Times Poetry Prize. She has also received the Forward prize for Best First Collection, the Rooney Prize for Irish literature and the AWB Vincent American Ireland Fund Literary Award. The Lifeboat Press published her pamphlet of Catullus translations, *Slim New Book*, in 2020. She lives in Belfast and is Reader at the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University.

**Pascale Petit** was born in Paris, grew up in France and Wales and lives in Cornwall. She is of French/Welsh/Indian heritage. Her eighth collection, *Tiger Girl* was shortlisted for the 2020 Forward Prize for Best Collection, and a poem from the book won the Keats-Shelley Poetry Prize. Her previous collection, *Mama Amazonica*, won the inaugural Laurel Prize, the RSL Ondaatje Prize, and was a Poetry Book Society Choice. She has been shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize four times, received a Cholmondeley Award and is a RSL Fellow. Trained as a sculptor at the Royal College of Art, she spent the first part of her life as a visual artist.

**Shivane Ramlochan** is a Trinidadian poet, critic and essayist. Her first collection of poems, *Everyone Knows I Am a Haunting*, was published in 2017 by Peepal Tree Press, and her second book, *Unkillable*, is forthcoming from Noemi Press (2022) as part of their Infidel Poetics series. She is the Book Reviews Editor at *Caribbean Beat Magazine*, and works with the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, the Caribbean's largest Anglophone literary festival.

3. **Past winners of the Forward Prize for Best Collection are:** Caroline Bird *The Air Year* (Carcanet) 2020, Fiona Benson *Vertigo & Ghost* (Cape Poetry) 2019, Danez Smith *Don't Call Us Dead* (Chatto & Windus) 2018, Sinéad Morrissey *On Balance* (Carcanet) 2017, Vahni Capildeo *Measures of Expatriation* (Carcanet) 2016, Claudia Rankine *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Penguin) 2015, Kei Miller *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Carcanet) 2014, Michael Symmons Roberts *Drysalter* (Cape Poetry) 2013, Jorie Graham *PLACE* (Carcanet) 2012, John Burnside *Black Cat Bone* (Cape Poetry) 2011, Seamus 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.
4. **Forward Arts Foundation** promotes knowledge and enjoyment of poetry across the UK. A national charity, we change lives by giving people the confidence to create and communicate, we support poets and we strengthen communities.

Our flagship programmes, **National Poetry Day** and the **Forward Prizes for Poetry**, enable all to enjoy, discover and share poetry as performers, writers, listeners and readers.

5. **Bookmark Content**, the world-leading content and communications company, has been the sponsor and key supporter of the Forward Prizes for Poetry since they were first awarded in 1992. Bookmark creates engaging, shareable content in multiple formats and languages: it has offices in the UK, Canada, the US, Peru, Chile and China and its clients include Patek Philippe, Air Canada, American Express, LATAM, Dyson, Lindt, Standard Life and Tesco. Until 2016, Bookmark traded as Forward Worldwide. For more information, see @BookmarkContent and [bookmarkcontent.com](http://bookmarkcontent.com).

