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## Bidisha to chair 2018 Forward Prizes for Poetry

**The writer, critic and broadcaster Bidisha is to chair the jury of the 2018 Forward Prizes for Poetry, which will be awarded at the Southbank Centre on 18 September 2018.**

The Forward Prizes for Poetry, now in their 27<sup>th</sup> year, are among the most prestigious literary awards in Britain and Ireland. Past winners include Seamus Heaney, Alice Oswald, Ted Hughes and, in 2017, Sinéad Morrissey, Ocean Vuong and Ian Patterson.

**Bidisha** said: *"I look forward to The Forward Prizes' announcements every year and to seeing the winners rising to ever greater national and international prominence, and artistic brilliance, in the years that follow. The prizes are invaluable in finding the most essential, exciting voices, highlighting the contemporary poets who are at the top of their game and whose words will travel far and reach many readers.*

*The poetic community of today is borderless, open and buzzing with international voices. As a passionate poetry reader, critic and writer I am delighted to be working in an age when it's undoubtedly having a moment and so many brilliant poets, both emerging and longstanding, are being heard.*

*I'm honoured to be the chair of judges for prizes I've admired for so long. Together, my fellow judges and I represent a wide range of passions as readers, writers, critics and creators. For me, The Forward Prizes are not just about trying to find 'the best' but about taking time and savouring the process of delving into, discovering and being enlivened by a great community of voices. I know this will be a joyful process and I can't wait to get started."*

Awards are made in three categories for poetry published between October 2017 and September 2018. The three prizes – £10,000 for Best Collection, £5,000 for Best First Collection and £1,000 for Best Single Poem – are unique in honouring both established names and new voices. They have been sponsored since 1992 by the content marketing agency, Bookmark, which traded until 2016 as Forward Worldwide.

Alongside Bidisha, the jury comprises poets **Mimi Khalvati**, **Niall Campbell** and **Chris McCabe**, director of the National Poetry Library, plus **Jen Campbell**, poet, author and vlogger. Their choices will decide the contents of the 27<sup>th</sup> annual *Forward Book of Poetry*, published in September 2018.

**Susannah Herbert**, executive director of the Forward Arts Foundation, the charity that runs the Prizes, said: *"This year's Forward Prizes' judges are hungry to discover new poems and to share their discoveries through the awards and the anthology. Their collective experience of communicating what's special about contemporary poetry will bring new readers to the works they champion."*

**For further information, images and all media enquiries, contact:**

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## Notes to Editors

1. **The Forward Prizes**, now in their 27<sup>th</sup> year, are among the most sought after accolades in the UK and Ireland for both established and emerging poets. With a total value of £16,000, the prizes are divided into three categories: 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).
2. **Recent winners** of the Forward Prize for Best Collection include: 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, and Michael Symmons Roberts *Drysalter* (Cape Poetry). Over the same period, the Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection has been awarded to Ocean Vuong for *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (Cape Poetry) 2017, Tiphonie Yanique for *Wife* (Peepal Tree) 2016, Mona Arshi for *Small Hands* (Liverpool University Press) 2015, Liz Berry for *Black Country* (Chatto & Windus) 2014, and Emily Berry for *Dear Boy* (Faber and Faber) 2013.
3. **Forward Arts Foundation**, which runs The Forward Prizes for Poetry and co-ordinates National Poetry Day, is a charity that promotes poetry in the public realm, celebrating poetic excellence and widening its audience, with the support of **Arts Council England**. Find it at [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org) @forwardprizes and @poetrydayuk.
4. **Bookmark**, the world-leading content and communications company, has sponsored the Forward Prizes for Poetry since they were first awarded in 1992. Bookmark creates engaging, shareable content in multiple formats and languages: with offices in the UK, Canada, the US, Peru, Chile and China, its clients include Patek Philippe, Air Canada, American Express, LATAM, Dyson, Lindt, Standard Life and Tesco. Until 2016, Bookmark traded as Forward Worldwide. See @BookmarkContent and bookmarkcontent.com.
5. **Bidisha** is an author, arts critic, film-maker and broadcaster for BBC radio and TV, Channel 4 and Sky. She presented the flagships arts programmes The Strand (World Service) and Night Waves (BBC Radio 3) as well as being a regular critic on Newsnight Review, Front Row and Saturday Review, which she has also guest presented. She has presented numerous arts documentaries for BBC radio and TV and is a regular critic and columnist for *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. She is the author of two novels as well as two travelogues from the Middle East and from Italy. Her most recent book, her fifth, is *Asylum and Exile: Hidden Voices of London*, based on her long term outreach work with asylum seekers and refugees. Her poetry has been published by *Wasafiri* magazine, Seagull Books, Saqi Books, English PEN and Young MWA magazine and she also writes on poetry for *Poetry Review* and BBC Arts. She is a trustee of the Booker Prize Foundation, looking after the UK's most prestigious prizes for prose fiction in English and in translation. She has just directed her first film, *An Impossible Poison*, a dramatisation of text from a selection of her poetry, which premiered in Berlin in late 2017.

**Jen Campbell** is a vlogger, poet and short story writer. Her latest book *The Beginning of the World in the Middle of the Night* is published by Two Roads, and her first children's book *Franklin's Flying Bookshop* is published by Thames & Hudson. She is the author of the *Weird Things Customers Say in Bookshops* series and *The Bookshop Book*. Her regular talks about books on [youtube.com/jenvcampbell](https://www.youtube.com/jenvcampbell) are followed by more than 36,000 booklovers. She has been a judge for the Costa Book Awards and the Somerset Maugham Award, is the recipient of an Eric Gregory Award and is currently Vlogger in Residence for The Poetry Book Society.

**Niall Campbell** is a poet from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. His first collection, *Moontide*, (Bloodaxe, 2014) was awarded the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award and Saltire First Book of the Year. *First Nights*, poems from *Moontide* alongside new work, was published by the Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets in 2016.

**Mimi Khalvati** has published eight collections with Carcanet Press, including *Child: New & Selected Poems*, a Poetry Book Society Special Commendation, and *The Meanest Flower*, shortlisted for the T S Eliot Prize. She founded the Poetry School, has received a Cholmondeley Award, a major Arts Council Writer's Award and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her most recent collection, *The Weather Wheel* (Carcanet 2014), was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation and Book of the Year in *The Independent*. Her *Very Selected Poems* is published this year by smith|doorstop books.

**Chris McCabe** is the Poetry Librarian at the National Poetry Library at Southbank Centre. He has published four poetry collections, most recently *Speculatrix* (Pinned in the Margins). He has recorded his work for the Poetry Archive, and was shortlisted for The Ted Hughes Award 2013 for his collaborative book with Maria Vlotides, *Pharmapoetica*. He is writing a series of creative non-fiction books that aim to discover a great lost poet in one of London's Magnificent Seven cemeteries and his first novel, *Dedalus*, is forthcoming from Henningham Family Press in 2018. With Victoria Bean he is the co-editor of *The New Concrete: Visual Poetry in the 21st Century* (Hayward Publishing, 2015).



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