



Left: Foyle 2021 artwork by James Brown.
Above and right: Yomi Sode (photo: Jolade Olusanya) and Clare Pollard (photo: Justine Stoddart).

**PRESS
RELEASE**
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New voices of 'beauty, fire and resilience... ring out clear and urgent'

The Poetry Society announces the winners of The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2021

“Judging this year’s Foyle Young Poets of the Year was an absolute honour. After a period in which the burdens of the pandemic have often fallen so heavily on young people, we were moved by the beauty, fire and resilience of these poems.” – *Clare Pollard and Yomi Sode, Judges, Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2021*

Run by The Poetry Society and generously supported by the Foyle Foundation, this has been an exciting 23rd year for the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award. Since 1998, the Award has been finding, celebrating and supporting the very best young poets from around the world. The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award is firmly established as a leading competition for young poets aged between 11 and 17 years old.

An amazing 14,408 poems from 6,775 young people were entered. Young people from 109 countries entered the competition from as far afield as Argentina, Egypt, Kenya, South Korea and the Seychelles, and every corner of the UK.

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From these poems this year's judges **Clare Pollard** and **Yomi Sode** selected 100 winners, made up of 15 top poets and 85 commended poets. Clare and Yomi, said:

“Judging this year’s Foyle Young Poets of the Year was an absolute honour. After a period in which the burdens of the pandemic have often fallen so heavily on young people, we were moved by the beauty, fire and resilience of these poems. These poets write out of diverse backgrounds, landscapes and experiences, and this has translated into a rich variety of form and language. Here are poems about youth, gender, poverty, love, struggle, politics, culture, family. Poems brimming with rightful anger and hard-won hope. But it is the vivid images that have stuck most forcefully in our minds: ‘a fat chalk of canned coconut milk’; the ‘tender sloppiness’ of daisy-chains; ‘limescale curling around a plug hole as a dragon’s tail’; dust’s ‘gleam’ in the spotlight; the smell of ‘Chick King’; ‘cracked plastic cups at children’s parties’. These are poems that fully inhabit this present moment.

“We are humbled to welcome all those who participated this year into the community of poets, and know that the voices of this year's winners will ring out, clear and urgent, over the coming years.”

Winners of the award receive a fantastic range of prizes to help develop their writing. The top 15 poets are invited to attend a residential writing course at the Arvon residential centre, The Hurst in Shropshire, in February 2022. There they spend a week with this year’s judges, Clare and Yomi, focusing on improving their poetry and establishing a community of writers. All 100 winners of the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award receive a year’s youth membership of The Poetry Society and a goody bag full of books donated by Foyle’s generous sponsors. The Poetry Society continues to support winners throughout their careers providing publication, performance and development opportunities, and access to a paid internship programme.

The top 15 poems will be published in a printed winners’ anthology (also available online) from March 2022. The 85 commended poems will appear in an online anthology. Both anthologies showcase the talent of the winners and are distributed free to thousands of schools, libraries, reading groups and poetry lovers across the UK and the world.

The Top 15 Foyle Young Poets of the Year 2021, are:

Evie Alam, 14, South Shields
Ahana Banerji, 17, Putney, London
Alex Dunton, 15, Cambridge
Hollie Fovargue, 17, Peterborough
Dhruti Halambi, 13, Cupertino, California, USA
Erin Hateley, 16, Dartford London
Jenna Hunt, 16, Great Yarmouth
Anja Livesey, 13, Nottingham
Lulu Marken, 15, Tunbridge Wells
Sarisha Mehta, 11, Staffordshire
Briancia Mullings, 17, Bedford
Giovanni Rose, 17, Tottenham, London
Daniel Wale, 16, Coventry
Ran Zhao, 15, Hong Kong
Chenrui Zhang, 16, Nottingham

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At the Foyle Awards ceremony, two teachers will also be celebrated as Teacher Trailblazers, following impressive testimonials from students for their work helping to inspire poetry in the classroom. This year's Teacher Trailblazers are Ms Alycia Pirmohamed from East London Arts & Music, and Mrs Catherine Burton, from King Edward's School, Bath.

Foyle Patrons Arlo Parks and Ben Bailey Smith were instrumental in helping to spread the word about the competition. Arlo Parks won the 2021 Mercury Prize for her debut album, *Collapsed In Sunbeams*, and Breakthrough Artist at the 2021 Brit Awards. Ben Bailey Smith is a writer, actor, comedian and musician. His children's books, *I am Bear* and *Bear Moves*, have been critically acclaimed.

– ENDS –

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Notes to Editors

Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award is the largest and most prestigious award for young poets aged 11-17 writing original works in English. It is run by The Poetry Society, with the generous support of the Foyle Foundation. The competition is free to enter and poems can be on any theme, and of any length. Winners are published in an anthology, and benefit from a range of professional development opportunities offered by The Poetry Society. Foyle winners are also offered paid internships, and editorial opportunities via The Poetry Society's online platform the Young Poets Network, www.youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk. **To read case studies of former winners, read the full rules, download lesson plans and enter the competition online, visit foyleyoungpoets.org**

The Poetry Society

The Poetry Society is the UK's leading organisation for poetry. With innovative education and commissioning programmes, and a packed calendar of performances, competitions, and digital projects, The Poetry Society champions poetry for all ages. The Poetry Society was founded in 1909 to promote a "more general recognition and appreciation of poetry". Since then, it has grown into a dynamic arts organisation, representing British poetry both nationally and internationally. It has a thriving worldwide membership and publishes Britain's leading poetry magazine, *The Poetry Review*, and runs influential talent development schemes such as the National Poetry Competition and Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award. The Poetry Society is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and a registered charity. **Visit poetrysociety.org.uk youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk • Find The Poetry Society on Facebook • Twitter @PoetrySociety • Instagram @thepoetrysociety**

The Foyle Foundation

The Foyle Foundation is an independent grant-making trust supporting UK charities which, since its formation in 2001, has become a major funder of the arts and learning. The Foyle Foundation has invested in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award since 2001, one of its longest partnerships. During this time, it has trebled its support and enabled the competition to develop and grow to become one of the premier literary awards in the country. **www.foylefoundation.org.uk**

The Judges

Yomi Şode



Yomi Şode is a Nigerian British writer, performer, and facilitator. He is a recipient of the Jerwood Compton Poetry fellowship 2019. He has read his poems internationally at various festivals, as well as performed his debut solo show (*COAT*) to sold-out audiences. Yomi has been published in *The Rialto*, *The Poetry Review*, *Bare lit* and *10: Poets of the New Generation*, the *Bare Lit Anthology* as well as an essay contribution in *SAFE: On Black British Men reclaiming space*. Yomi is currently working on his first poetry collection and his second show. *Yomi Şode photo: Jolade Olusanya.*

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Clare Pollard



Clare Pollard was born in Bolton in 1978. She currently lives in South London with her husband and two children. Her first collection of poetry, *The Heavy-Petting Zoo* (1998) was written whilst she was still at school, and received an Eric Gregory Award. It was followed by *Bedtime* (2002) and *Look, Clare! Look!* (2005), which was made a set text on the WJEC A-level syllabus. Her fourth collection *Changeling* (2011) was a PBS Recommendation, and her latest is *Incarnation* (Bloodaxe, 2017). Her pamphlet *The Lives of the Female Poets* is published by Bad Betty Press (2019).

Clare's first play *The Weather* (Faber, 2004) premiered at the Royal Court Theatre. She has been involved in numerous translation projects, including co-translating *The Sea-Migrations* by Asha LulMohamud Yusuf (Bloodaxe, 2017) which received a PEN Translates award and was chosen as the *Sunday Times* poetry book of the year. Clare has also translated Ovid's *Heroines* (Bloodaxe, 2013), which she toured as a one-woman show with Jaybird Live Literature. Clare is the current editor of *Modern Poetry in Translation*, co-founded by Ted Hughes, as well as current poetry editor for *The Idler*.

Clare's latest book is an adult non-fiction title for *Fig Tree, Fierce Bad Rabbits: The Tales Behind Children's Picture Books* (2019).

Clare Pollard photo: Justine Stoddart.

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