

## Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England select three creatively ambitious poets for new £45,000 poetry Fellowships

The inaugural Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships, which reward creatively ambitious and generous poets with three bursaries totalling £45,000, have been awarded to Raymond Antrobus, Jane Commane and Jackie Hagan.

A collaboration between Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England, the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships offer a significant new professional development opportunity for poets, made possible through a bequest from Mr Joseph Compton in 1964.

The year-long Fellowships invest in the process and practice of making poetry, rewarding individuals who are making, or are capable of making, a significant contribution to a community of poetry. A distinctive part of the Fellowships is that they provide an open space for poetic practice, with no expectation of published work or performed events as a result of the award.

Over the Fellowship year, the poets will also have access to mentors and critical friends to help realise their vision, as they develop and enhance their practice. The initiative will award three bursaries biennially for three editions between 2017 and 2022.

Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England worked with 250 nominators nationally, including poets, publishers, editors, literary development agencies, artists, funders and festival organisers. Their nominations led to 190 applications, resulting in a culturally and professionally diverse longlist of 65 poets from which a shortlist of eight was selected for interview.

The selection panel included writer, critic and academic David Dabydeen, poets Kate Fox and Mimi Khalvati, Gemma Seltzer, Relationship Manager (Literature), Arts Council England and Shonagh Manson, Director, Jerwood Arts.

The successful Fellows were selected from a strong field of nominees who reflect the growing depth and breadth of poetry activity across the country, from grassroots to academic level, with a persistent theme of entrepreneurship, and a growing trend of hybrid styles which intersect with a variety of art forms.

Born in Hackney, East London, page and spoken word poet **Raymond Antrobus** explores deafness, diaspora and language (oral, written and sign) which fuses with his practice as a teacher of performance and creative writing.

Originally from Coventry and now based in Warwickshire, **Jane Commane** is a page poet and editor whose work interrogates the complexities of class, ideas of place and identity, and examines the current troubled climate of austerity Britain.

Manchester-based page and performance poet **Jackie Hagan** uses a range of techniques, including puppetry and humour, to reach audiences who ordinarily might not engage, and to bring down barriers around people's otherness, championing oddness and confronting prejudice.

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**Raymond Antrobus said:** *“Poetry in the UK needs more Fellowships like this. It not only takes the talent of the poet seriously, but poetry itself. This opportunity has come to me at an exciting time: when people are realising how broad the category of poetry is and its value. More importantly, this Fellowship has won me time. I have been scraping by for the last 10 years and I haven’t had the privilege to prioritise my own work. The Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship is the first grant I have won which allows me to prioritise my craft as a poet, rather than as a teacher or community leader. I hope being one of the first recipients of the Fellowships gives me the opportunity to trail blaze.”*

**Jane Commane said:** *“The Fellowship is permission to take your work seriously, by gifting the time and resources to make that concentration on the quiet work - the craft of poetry - possible. Poetry has a really important role in how we respond to and interpret the world about us; there’s no doubt we’re living in strange and challenging times as a country, and as a world. I will be thinking and writing about poetry’s role in terms of history in the making, and how poetry can be a voice for change, documentation and response to our age. People and place mean a great deal to me, so no doubt the Midlands, and canals, rivers, cities and roads will be themes that find their way into some of this too.”*

**Jackie Hagan said:** *“I feel validated and accepted into a community that I sometimes feel too wonky, un-London and broken-toothed to be part of. I’m currently threadbare, so I want to get my bones full of hope, and enough space around my head so that I am capable of archiving the lives of the current disabled underclass with insight, humour and accuracy. There’s so much work to be done in the world and I know I can do it well, but then rent day comes and so I do loads of work for money. Having a Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowship means I can have a Ready Brek glow to go into the scary bits of towns and make a difference.”*

**Sarah Crown, Director of Literature, Arts Council England, said:** *“Many congratulations to Jackie, Jane and Raymond, whose talent, ambition and generosity are being recognised here. The Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships offer them an unprecedented opportunity to create groundbreaking work and make a real impact within the poetry sector, as well as highlighting the vibrancy of the scene within the UK today. We’re delighted that our collaboration with Jerwood Charitable Foundation is able to provide much-needed funding for poets ready to take the next step in their career.”*

**Shonagh Manson, Director, Jerwood Charitable Foundation, added:** *“Working with Arts Council England to dream up an opportunity all about poets and poetry has been an immense privilege. As a panel, we were taken aback by the quality of submissions, and humbled by the sheer vivacity of the poetry community. It’s a community of self-starters who are making their own opportunities where often there are none. While this is commendable, I am proud that we have been able to award three inaugural bursaries with substantial financial support. Through the programme I hope we can inspire further support for this crucial and often under supported art form.”*

The Fellowships start in August 2017.

The official hashtag for the Fellowships is: [#ComptonPoetry](https://twitter.com/ComptonPoetry)

Ends

## Media contact

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### Notes to editors

#### Project credit:

A collaboration between Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England with funds from the Joseph Compton bequest.

#### Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships

The Jerwood Compton Fellowships is a programme through which Jerwood Arts supports individual artists whose practice encompasses poetry in the broadest artistic sense. The Fellowships run biennially for three editions between 2017 and 2022 supporting a total of nine artists, with no expectation of published or performed work. The Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships support creatively ambitious and generous practitioners who have the potential to make a significant contribution to the poetry community.

The Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships are made possible using accrued interest from a bequest made by Mr Joseph Compton in 1964 to the Arts Council together with funds from Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England. **For more information on the Fellowships, visit:**

[www.jerwoodarts.org/projects/jerwood-compton-poetry-fellowships](http://www.jerwoodarts.org/projects/jerwood-compton-poetry-fellowships)

#### Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellows 2017-2018

**Raymond Antrobus** is a British Jamaican poet and poetry educator born in Hackney, East London. His work has been published in a range of publications, including Poetry Review, POETRY (US), The Rialto, Magma, The Deaf

Poets Society. Raymond is one of the world's first recipients of a Creative Writing and Education MA (Goldsmiths University) and is the former lead educator on the Spoken Word education programme. His latest publication is *To Sweeten Bitter* (Out-Spoken Press, 2017). Raymond is also the co-curator of one of London's most popular Spoken Word and poetry shows, Chill Pill.

**Jane Commane** was born in Coventry and lives in Warwickshire. Her first collection of poems, *Assembly Lines*, is due from Bloodaxe in 2018. Her poetry has featured in anthologies and magazines, including Anon, And Other Poems, Bare Fiction, Tears in the Fence and The Morning Star. In 2016, she was chosen to join Writing West Midlands' Room 204 writer development programme. A graduate of the Warwick Writing Programme, Jane is editor at Nine Arches Press, co-editor of Under the Radar magazine and co-author (with Jo Bell) of *How to Be a Poet*, a creative writing handbook and blog.

**Jackie Hagan** is an underclass, queer artist who downs cut-price lager from her false leg. Raised in Skelmersdale and now based in Manchester, Jackie invented stump-puppetry and undercuts taboos with warm wit. Her first play 'Cosmic Scallies' is being co-produced by Graeae Theatre Company and The Royal Exchange. Jackie's first solo show 'Some People Have Too Many Legs' won a clutch of awards. Her new solo show 'Jumble Soul' recently won an Unlimited Commission. Jackie represented the UK at FLUPP International poetry slam and was the focus of a C4 documentary. She has delivered over 2,000 workshops and is committed to the broken, forgotten and vilified.

#### Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships: Shortlisted candidates

The shortlisted candidates were Anthony Anaxagorou, Sasha Dugdale, Salena Godden, Khadijah Ibrahim and Yomi Sode.

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### **Project Background**

In 1964, a bequest was given by Mr Joseph Compton to the Arts Council, with the aim of helping poets and of bringing poetry to a wider audience. Using accrued interest from the bequest and funds from Jerwood Charitable Foundation and the Arts Council, the new Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships will offer a significant new development opportunity for poets.

**Joseph Compton** (1891-1964) was a member of the Arts Council of Great Britain, Chairman of the National Book League (the forerunner of The Book Trust), he ran the English Festival of Spoken Poetry and was a Director of Education in London. He was also one of the first directors of the Poetry Book Society. He produced a *Collection of poems and rhymes for children* (Methuen, 1931) and a supplement of new poetry edited by Roy Fuller was published by the Poetry Book Society in his memory in 1964. Philip Larkin set up the Compton Lectureship in Poetry at the University of Hull in 1968. It ran for four years and Cecil Day Lewis was the first recipient. Day Lewis paid the following tribute to Joseph Compton in his inaugural lecture: "I think of him chiefly as that invaluable and all too rare thing – the gifted, persevering, persuasive middleman of poetry. Such a person, who can bring together far-apart ends – poet and potential audience – deserves our respect and gratitude."

### **Jerwood Arts**

Jerwood Arts is an independent grant-making foundation and UK registered charity dedicated to imaginative and responsible funding of the arts, with a particular focus on supporting talent and excellence. We work with exceptional, dedicated artists and producers, enabling them to develop and thrive at important stages in their practice, often in partnership with leading UK arts organisations.

[www.jerwoodarts.org](http://www.jerwoodarts.org)

### **Arts Council England**

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries - from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)