

PRESS RELEASE

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JERWOOD ARTS

Jerwood Arts and Arts Council England announce the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships 2019/2020



Anthony Joseph, Hafsa Aneela Bashir and Yomi Sode. Images: Mirren Kessling

Hafsa Aneela Bashir, Anthony Joseph and Yomi Sode have been selected as the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellows for 2019/20. Each poet receives £15,000, and is given a year of critical support and mentoring. The Fellowship will give the poets the time and space to focus on their craft, exploring and fulfilling their potential, with no expectation that they produce a particular work or outcome.

Hafsa, Anthony and Yomi illustrate the breadth of what poetry can be today. Through activism, theatre and other disciplines the three poets express their practice through a multitude of ways, opening poetry up to a wide range of audiences. Each has produced outstanding work to date and has been chosen for their potential at these critical points in their individual careers, when the support provided from the Fellowship could make the most difference.

They were selected from a strong field of nominees by poet Malika Booker; poet, editor and Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellow 2017/18 Jane Commane; Jan Kofi-Tsekpo, Relationship Manager, Literature for Arts Council England; Jon Opie, Deputy Director of Jerwood Arts; Debris Stevenson, Grimepoet; and Nathalie Teitler, Project Manager for Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships. Nominations were made by a pool of over 200 specialists nationally including poets, publishers, editors, literary development agencies, artists, funders and festival organisers.

'As selectors we were very impressed with the quality and breath of the submissions. The incredible work we saw pushed the boundaries of poetry into unimaginable spaces, by being experimental, cross arts, community focussed, risky, and necessary. We are delighted to have selected these three exceptional poets who particularly encapsulate and exemplify these qualities in their poetic practice.' Malika Booker

Hafsa Aneela Bashir is a poet, playwright and performer based in Manchester, who published her first collection last year. Her work blends narrative, free verse and lyric poetry, exploring relationships between the

private, public and political. Her lyrical activism reflects a strong desire to effect social change drawing on spoken word and her mother tongue of Urdu. During her Fellowship year she wants to explore film, the relationships between imagery and text and different platforms in which her poetry can be transmitted. She is interested in starting a collective with women at its heart, to promote the significance of every person's voice and support the importance of the arts.

Anthony Joseph is a poet, novelist and musician who lives in London. His work is part of the diasporic avant garde, straddling the interstice between the rhythms of Caribbean creole and the experimental aesthetics of surrealism, jazz and language poetry, while challenging notions of form and identity. He wishes to extend his experimental poetry through the medium of film, and will be using the Fellowship to explore skills which will allow him to make a film exploring notions of fatherhood in the future, shifting his poetry from page to the screen.

Yomi Sode is a poet and playwright based in London who plays an active role in the spoken word scene, primarily as the founder of the successful BoxedIn night in Shoreditch. His poetry is as much narrative and dramatic as it is lyric; it is interrogative and challenging, while nudging readers to think, feel and listen. He aims to use this year to refine his poetry, having spent the last few years immersed in his theatre work. Through his own poetry, and Boxedin, he is trying to make people enjoy poetry in a different way, and sees the Fellowship as a way to continue and extend this.

The poets now join the three inaugural Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellows – Raymond Antrobus, Jane Commane and Jackie Hagan – who have shown how transformative a year can be. Each of these poets has significantly developed their practice, and themselves, significantly through the support of the Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships.

Raymond Antrobus has gone on to win the Ted Hughes Award, be London Book Fair Poet of The Fair, and be shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection and the Griffin Poetry Prize, amongst other achievements. In 2019 he became the first ever poet to be awarded the Rathbone Folio Prize for the best work of literature in any genre. Jane Commane launched her first poetry collection, *Assembly Lines* at the Verve Festival in 2018, published by Bloodaxe. She also launched *How to be a Poet: A 21st Century Guide to Writing Well*, which ranked among the top five writing guides on Amazon. She is currently working on her second poetry collection, working title *Municipal*. Jackie Hagan was one of five writers selected by Hat Trick Productions for its *Your Voice, Your Story* development scheme in partnership with Channel 4. In 2018, her one woman show, *This is Not a Safe Place*, showcased at the Hebden Bridge Festival and at the Unlimited Festival, Southbank Centre.

'The Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships offer poets the invaluable opportunity of a year of mentorship, reflection and development at a crucial stage of their practice. I am delighted that Arts Council England is helping to support these three talented poets: their diverse and innovative work showcases the strength and range of poetic practice taking place across the country today.' Sarah Crown, Director of Literature, Arts Council England

'The Fellowships were conceived three years ago to reward outstanding poets. We also wanted to showcase the breadth of poetic practice and open up a conversation about the challenges and opportunities facing poets in the UK today. Hafsah, Anthony and Yomi completely embody the principles of the Fellowships and we are excited for what they might achieve over the coming year. Overall, we were bowled over and humbled by the response from the poets applying for the Fellowships; poetry is alive and well in this country, but also sorely in need of nurturing and support.' Jon Opie, Deputy Director, Jerwood Arts

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For further information about Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships and the rest of the 2019 programme please contact Truda Spruyt and Harriet Clarke at Four Culture:

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Press images can be found [here](#).

Hafsah Aneela Bashir is a writer, playwright and performance poet with an MA in Postcolonial Literature and Culture from the University of Leeds. She is founder and co-director of Outside The Frame Arts, a collective platforming marginalised voices. Her first poetry collection, *The Celox and the Clot*, was published by Burning Eye Books last year. Highlights include being selected as a TOAST16 Poet, having two sold-out one woman shows at PUSH Festival this year and is currently the Royal Exchange Manchester's Supported Artist. She is also a creative lead for ANU Productions with Manchester International Festival 2019, is Longsight's Writer in Residence with Manchester Literature Festival and a 'Leader of Tomorrow' on the Artistic Directors Leadership Programme.

Anthony Joseph is a Trinidad-born poet, novelist and musician. He is the author of four poetry collections and three novels. His most recent novel *Kitch: A Fictional Biography of a calypso Icon* was shortlisted in the fiction category for the 2019 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature, The Republic of Consciousness Prize, and the 2019 Encore Award. As a musician he has released seven critically acclaimed albums. The most recent, *People of the Sun*, was recorded in Trinidad and released in summer 2018. He recently served as the Colm Tóibín Fellow in Creative Writing at The University of Liverpool and currently lectures at De Montfort University, Leicester.

Yomi Sode was born in Oyo State Nigeria and lives in London. He has been performing for over 10 years. Highlights include opening for Saul Williams and The Last Poets, with appearances at Yahoo! Wireless Festival, Latitude, Lovebox, Olympic Village, Sadler's Wells Theatre as well as working with Channel 4 and BBC Radio 1xtra. He runs a successful monthly poetry night in Shoreditch, he is a member of Malika's Poetry Kitchen, he has had work commissioned by The Mayor's Office, BBC World Service/ BBC Africa, various charities and was recently presented at the UN Humanitarian Summit by Gordon Brown.

Yomi founded Boxedin in 2012, a quick fire, free poetry night at Boxpark in Shoreditch. In 2014 he won a place on Nimble Fish's RE: Play programme to begin developing his one-man show COAT. Yomi was selected as one of 10 Poets to join The Complete Works in 2016, a national development programme for advanced Black and Asian writers. He also travelled to New York City as part of British Council's Shakespeare Lives initiative to read his work at the New York Public Library.

In 2017, his play COAT premiered at The Roundhouse, selling out in 24 hours and subsequently toured the UK.

Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships

The Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships are a six-year initiative supporting poets in the UK. The programme runs biennially for three editions between 2017 and 2022, creating a total of nine Fellows. Each receives a bursary of £15,000 and mentoring support. The Fellowships invest in the process and practice of making poetry, with no expectations of published work or performed events as a result of the award, and support individuals whose practice encompasses poetry in the broadest artistic sense. Poets are matched with a core mentor and have further access to a range of advisers and ‘critical friends’ to support their developing practice.

Project credit:

The Jerwood Compton Fellowships are designed and managed by Jerwood Arts, with support from Arts Council England including funds from the Joseph Compton bequest.

Jerwood Arts is the leading independent funder dedicated to supporting UK artists, curators and producers to develop and thrive. We enable transformative opportunities for individuals across art forms, supporting imaginative awards, fellowships, programmes, commissions and collaborations. We present new work and bring people from across the arts together in the galleries at Jerwood Space, London, as well as across the UK.

2019 is a pilot year with new funding programmes alongside established initiatives, including Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries, Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships and Jerwood/FVU Awards. A first round of new Jerwood Bursaries was announced in April, with a second round opening for application on 15 July 2019. The new Jerwood New Work Fund and Development Programmes Fund will be announced in the autumn.

jerwoodarts.org

Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people’s lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual 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 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

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