

PRESS RELEASE: 28th SEPTEMBER 2017

Thirteen-year-old Syrian refugee named St Pancras International's 2017 poet laureate

- *Young poet, Amineh Abou Kerech, announced as the winner of the 11th Betjeman Poetry Prize at St Pancras International today*
 - *She becomes the third 'St Pancras Laureate'*
- *Celebrated actor, Edward Fox, opened today's prize giving ceremony as part of the National Poetry Day celebrations at the station*

28 September 2017: St Pancras International announced 13-year-old Syrian refugee, Amineh Abou Kerech, as the winner of the 11th Betjeman Poetry Prize today. After beating thousands of entries with her poem, 'Lament for Syria', the prestigious win sees her become the station's third 'St Pancras Laureate'.¹

Held at St Pancras International today to mark National Poetry Day, the celebrity-attended Betjeman Poetry Prize award ceremony saw Amineh read her poem aloud beneath the station's famous statue of poet, Sir John Betjeman. Edward Fox joined the celebrations, reciting a John Betjeman poem to the gathered crowd of competition finalists, families, and poetry fans.

Led by Prize Director and Betjeman's granddaughter, Imogen Lycett Green, and judged by poet, Rachel Rooney and cartoonist and Children's Laureate, Chris Riddell, the annual Betjeman Poetry Prize attracts around 3,000 entries per year from talented 10-13 year olds. Part of the station's calendar of exciting arts and culture events, young hopefuls from across the UK compete to impress the judges with their poetry writing skills to win the coveted prize.

Now living and studying in Oxford, having fled Syrian conflict last July along with her parents and two brothers, Amineh's new role as 'St Pancras Laureate' will see her write three further poems for the station throughout the coming year.



Edward Fox presents Amineh Abou Kerech with Betjeman Poetry Prize as part of the National Poetry Day celebrations at St Pancras International Station

¹ Previous Poet Laureates are Archita Sinha and Lucy Arnold-Forster

Wendy Spinks, Commercial Director at HS1 Ltd. (owners of St Pancras International), commented: “Former Poet Laureate, John Betjeman played a pivotal role in saving the station from demolition in the 1960s, so it is fitting that we mark our gratitude by celebrating new poetic talent through the annual Betjeman Poetry Prize and our National Poetry Day festivities. We welcome Amineh as the station’s third ‘St Pancras Laureate’ and congratulate her on her win.”

Alongside the prestigious awards ceremony, the station came alive with various exclusive free events to celebrate National Poetry Day. In collaboration with poetry collective, Poet in The City, the station hosted sold-out poetry workshops and recitals with respected authors such as Rachel Long, Ariel Silverman, Olivia Amura, Rhea Seedher and Chibeza Mumbi - all exploring this year’s elected theme of ‘Freedom’.

Tales of freedom and travel from Poet in the City’s liberty loving ‘Poetry Buskers’ Dean Atta, Laila Sumpton, Madi-Maxwell-Libby and Rachel Piercey were also shared with the public to mark the day. Whether that meant exploring global travel, embarking on a new adventure, the struggles to seek asylum or stories of returning home, the theme created a captivating atmosphere for all commuters and attendees to enjoy.

Offering convenient shopping and quality bars and restaurants, St Pancras International is a destination in its own right. The station welcomes reviews from visitors on their experience at St Pancras International - click here to visit the TripAdvisor page: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186338-d214631-Reviews-St_Pancras_International_Station-London_England.html

For more information on the music, arts, culture and retail events happening in the station, visit <http://stpancras.com> and follow @StPancrasInt.

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Notes to Editors

For further information about St Pancras International contact Clarion Communications on 020 7479 0910 or email HS1@clarioncomms.co.uk

About St Pancras International Station:

St Pancras International station is a unique Grade I listed building owned by HS1 Ltd. Offering a wealth of stylish and premium shops, bars and restaurants all under one iconic roof, the venue is a destination in its own right, as well as a world-class station.

Known for its calendar of new and exciting arts and music experiences, there’s always something new to discover. From now until December 2017, visitors can appreciate the Terrace Wires public art installation – an impressive 16m wide mechanical work by RA artist, Conrad Shawcross.

Visitors can also experience St Pancras International’s free-to-play jukebox and station pianos, played by world famous stars including Elton John and John Legend, as well as the public day to day.

For more information about the station and its premium retailers, including Fortnum & Mason, Searcys, Whistles, kikki.K, plus recently launched Ted Baker, Chanel and Calvin Klein, visit <http://stpancras.com>.

About HS1 Ltd:

HS1 Ltd has the 30-year concession to own and operate High Speed 1, the UK’s first section of high speed rail, as well as the stations along the route: St Pancras International, Stratford International, Ebbsfleet International and Ashford International.

About Betjeman Poetry Prize

Founded in 2006, on the centenary of former poet laureate Sir John Betjeman’s birth, the Betjeman Poetry Prize is a charity in the education sector working with partners across the United Kingdom to promote literacy, foster creativity and provide a platform for new voices from the next generation.

About National Poetry Day

National Poetry Day is an annual celebration, taking place this year on Thursday 20 September 2017, that inspires people throughout the UK to enjoy, discover and share poems. Everyone is invited to join in, whether by organising events, displays, competitions or by simply posting favourite lines of poetry on social media using #nationalpoetryday. Each year there is a new theme and this year it's 'Freedom'

The initiative was founded in 1994 by the charity Forward Arts Foundation, whose mission is to celebrate excellence in poetry and increase its audience. The Day enjoys the support of the BBC, Arts Council England, the Royal Mail and leading literary and cultural organisations, alongside booksellers, publishers, libraries and schools. For details, visit www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk.