



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

21st ALDEBURGH POETRY FESTIVAL • 6–8 NOVEMBER 2009

The UK's leading annual international contemporary poetry festival celebrates its 21st year with an exhilarating line-up of world-class poets. Aldeburgh is renowned for the quality of its programme – mixing famous names, established poets, 'well kept secrets' and intriguing new talent. With 49 events (15 entirely free) a weekend of 'best words in the best order' is promised in Suffolk's idyllic seaside town.

What makes the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival unique?

To borrow words by Tom Paulin – one of this year's 20 featured poets – Aldeburgh generates its own unique atmosphere "where ideas fly about and bang into each other."

- Launched in 1989, it is the oldest festival in the UK dedicated to contemporary poetry
- Aldeburgh attracts the UK's largest and most discerning poetry audiences each year (some 45,000 attendances since 1989)
- Aldeburgh features an all-new line-up each year (350 poets from 32 countries to date)
- Creative, quality programming led by artistic directors who are also published poets
- Aldeburgh combines Suffolk seaside magic with an international reputation for culture

Highlights of 2009 ...

Geoffrey Hill – There is no finer way to celebrate the Festival's 21st year than with the man many regard as England's greatest living poet. A rare reading from Geoffrey Hill, whose visionary complex writing demands engagement and thought in a world where language is increasingly instantaneous and disposable.

Philip Levine – One of the most significant US poets of the last 50 years appearing in the UK for the first time in 30 years. Levine's familial, social and economic portrait of working class America has left a monumental testimony of mid-20th century American life. His poetry of the assembly line finds a 'voice for the voiceless'.

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Albert Goldbath – One of America's better kept secrets, Albert Goldbarth makes his UK debut as Aldeburgh continues to blaze the trail for introducing American poets to UK audiences. Winner of the Mark Twain Award for a poet's contribution to humour, his poetry combines pop-culture fanaticism with erudite research into the far corners of modern culture.

Also joining the 21st celebratory Festival are the UK's best loved comic-poet **John Hegley**, cultural broadcaster **Tom Paulin**, Radio 4 *Saturday Live* regular **Kate Fox**, Italian **Valerio Magrelli** – launching his first UK publication from Faber alongside his translator **Jamie McKendrick** – Pakistani born poet, film-maker and artist **Imtiaz Dharker**, Trinidadian writer **Roger Robinson**, senior British poet, playwright and novelist **Maureen Duffy**.

On Saturday 7 November the **Wonderful Beast Theatre Company** will perform 'YES' a celebration of the life and work of one of the UK's best-loved funny, passionate and political poets – Adrian Mitchell. This specially-created cabaret for Aldeburgh will feature **Roger Lloyd Pack**, **Diana Quick**, Adrian's widow and his daughter, **Celia** and **Sasha Mitchell**, and a dazzling ensemble of dancers and musicians.

The weekend will also see the announcement of the winner of this year's **Aldeburgh First Collection Prize** – £3,000 plus an invitation to read at next year's Festival – and a reading by last year's winner, young Irish poet **Ciaran Berry**.

Full programme: www.thepoetrytrust.org

Box office: 01728 687110, www.aldeburgh.co.uk (follow link to Aldeburgh Poetry Festival)

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NOTE TO EDITORS

The 21st Aldeburgh Poetry Festival will take place in Aldeburgh, Suffolk from 6 – 8 November 2009. 49 Festival events – 15 free – take place across four town centre venues, the main stage being the historic Jubilee Hall where Benjamin Britten first established his Festival of Music and the Arts in 1948.

The Aldeburgh Poetry Festival was set up in 1989 and directed for its first decade by poet, editor and teacher, Michael Laskey. Naomi Jaffa, also a published poet, has been Director since 1999. It has taken place annually for twenty-one years, drawing poets and audiences from across the UK and around the world. Today it is managed by The Poetry Trust – one of the UK's flagship poetry organisations – which in addition to the Festival, delivers a year-round programme of live events, creative education opportunities, courses, prizes, publications and a new digital platform The Poetry Channel. www.thepoetrytrust.org

To **arrange an interview** with Festival director Naomi Jaffa or any of the Festival poets or to request photos contact Alice Kent at akent@thepoetrytrust.org or on 01986 835950. A limited number of press passes are available.

Poets who have read at The Aldeburgh Poetry Festival over the last 21 years

include: Simon Armitage, Margaret Atwood, Mourid Barghouti, Alan Brownjohn, Billy Collins, Wendy Cope, Carol Ann Duffy, Helen Dunmore, Clive James, Antjie Krog, Roger McGough, Andrew Motion, Sharon Olds, Ruth Padel, Brian Patten, Michael Rosen, George Szirtes, C K Williams.

Praise for Aldeburgh from Irish poet Dennis O'Driscoll (author of *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney*) after appearing at the Festival in 2008:

“Aldeburgh is the ultimate poetry anti-depressant. One's gloom about poetry's standing in the world – the tiny audiences, the minimal readership –lifts. Enthusiastic crowds attend. Books sell. Friendships are forged. Spirits soar.”

Full programme details available at www.thepoetrytrust.org