PRESS INFORMATION FOR Friday 25 January 2019:

Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics

The successful national mentoring programme, to encourage diversity in poetry reviewing, returns and opens for applications from new and emerging critical voices

Application deadline: April 1st 2019

Following the success of its inaugural year-long programme, Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics, a mentoring programme to encourage diversity in poetry reviewing culture, returns for a second iteration and is now open to applications from new and emerging critical voices.

In the past decade, publishing and mentorship schemes targeting BAME poets and writers, new profile-raising festivals and readings, national prize winners and judging panels, as well as crucial cultural debates around race, gender and ethnicity, have dramatically improved the diversity of British poetry. However, reviewing culture has not accurately reflected this important shift towards a more inclusive poetry community of readers and writers. As recent statistics show, reviewers and poets of colour are hugely underrepresented in broadsheet and journal publications, with just 4.9% reviewers and 8.6% poets from BAME backgrounds.

In late 2017, Ledbury Poetry Festival, along with poets Sandeep Parmar and Sarah Howe, launched a year-long intensive mentorship scheme for 8 emerging BAME poetry reviewers: Dzifa Benson, Srishi Krishnamoorthy-Cavell, Mary Jean Chan, Jade Cuttle, Sarala Estruch, Maryam Hessavi, Nasser Hussain and Jennifer Lee-Tsai. Working with collaborating partner publications, during the scheme these 8 critics have published reviews in The Guardian, The Telegraph, The New Statesman, the Times Literary Supplement, Poetry Review, Poetry Wales, Poetry London and many other magazines and journals.

In 2019, Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics intends to add another 4 emerging BAME poetry critics to its existing cohort of reviewers, offering them a place on its intensive mentorship programme that focuses specifically on redressing the imbalance in UK poetry culture. The 4 new mentees will be announced in May at a live event discussing race and reviewing in 2019, alongside the publication of updated statistics on The State of Poetry Criticism.

In tandem with this, a US-based Emerging Critics mentorship programme focused on diversity will pilot in 2019-20. It will be based in Atlanta, on the campus of Georgia Institute of Technology, and supported by US-based poets and poetry organisations.

Sandeep Parmar, co-founder of the scheme says “the tremendous successes of the Ledbury Critics programme has been borne out entirely by the critics themselves through their many brilliantly written, thoughtful and engaged reviews. Swiftly, these initial eight critics are changing how we appreciate poetry in Britain with the sheer strength of their deeply informed and nuanced reading. A door has been opened that will not be shut; it is time to usher in a whole new and diverse generation of critical voices.”

Sarah Howe, co-founder of the scheme says “rapidly earning reputations as essential new critical voices, the first cohort of Ledbury Critics has already begun to reshape the landscape of British poetry reviewing. In reviews that combine analytical nous with hard-won insights, their critical ears are able to pick up on frequencies that once went unheard. So far, the Ledbury Critics’ work has been embraced by a host
of editors from literary journals to national broadsheets, whose commitment to nurture and champion such previously overlooked talents shows the way forward. We are grateful to the partners whose support makes this work possible, and look forward to the scheme’s next chapter.”

How To Apply UK applicants should send a covering letter and sample review of a recent poetry collection, pamphlet or live poetry performance (by any contemporary poet) of up to 800 words to Sandeep.parmar@liverpool.ac.uk, or by post (address below). This review may be previously published or unpublished. The deadline for applications is Monday 1 April 2019. Full application details for Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics are below and on the Ledbury Poetry Festival website www.poetry-festival.co.uk

For media enquiries about Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics please contact: Becky Fincham at Bigmouth Book Events & PR on beckyficham@icloud.com / 07545 760590

NOTES TO EDITORS

Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics – Application Details
This programme offers an intensive mentoring and support for 4 emerging BAME poetry critics that will focus specifically on redressing the imbalance in UK poetry culture.

Over the course of the Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics scheme, you will be assigned a poetry critic mentor with experience reviewing for national journals, magazines (print and online) and broadsheet newspapers. You may already be an emerging critic with a few published reviews, have some or no critical or academic background, or you might be strongly committed to becoming a poetry critic in the very near future and keen to explore issues of diversity in British poetry.

The scheme begins with a two-day poetry reviewing workshop in London (end of June, date to be confirmed). This will be followed by one-to-one mentorship and critical feedback on the writing of a poetry review before November 2019 (to be conducted either virtually or in-person). These reviews will be shared with the editors of our collaborating partner publications, which include The Guardian, Poetry Review, Poetry London, Mslexia, Poetry Wales, Magma, The White Review, Sabotage, Prac Crit and others.

TO APPLY send (in hardcopy or a PDF via email) a covering letter expressing your interest and any experience in poetry reviewing. Please tell us why you feel you would benefit from participating in Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics. Also, send a brief sample review of a recent poetry collection, pamphlet or live poetry performance (by any contemporary poet) of up to 800 words. This review may be published or unpublished.

Send your applications and/or any preliminary enquiries to: Dr Sandeep Parmar, Co-Director, Centre for New and International Writing, Department of English, University of Liverpool, 19 Abercromby Square, Liverpool, L69 3BX
Or via email to: Sandeep.parmar@liverpool.ac.uk

Please note that this scheme is unfortunately only open to poets/critics resident in the UK. Travel and accommodation as well as costs associated with mentorship and residency/events are entirely covered.

Applicants in the US interested in the scheme should email Sandeep.parmar@liverpool.ac.uk for more details.

What the participants say about the Ledbury Emerging Poetry Critics programme:

“The Ledbury Emerging Critics Programme has been absolutely crucial to developing my credentials as a critic – I’ve been asked to write for publications like the Guardian, The Times Literary Supplement, The Poetry Review and many others as a direct result of being selected for this brilliant scheme.” – Jade Cuttle
"I feel like the programme has given me both validation and visibility, something that every emerging critic / poet needs, and I am so grateful for that. I have wanted to be a freelance poet and critic / arts journalist for many, many years and I feel that, through this scheme, this is at last becoming a reality.” - Sarala Estruch

“The community I have built from this is one of the most valuable things I've gained. The mentorship has been invaluable and I have acquired skills (and confidence) that would otherwise have been impossible for me to get access to.” – Maryam Hessavi