

Press release: Simon Armitage appointed new UK Poet Laureate

Her Majesty The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Simon Armitage as the next Poet Laureate for a fixed-term of ten years.

The acclaimed poet succeeds Dame Carol Ann Duffy, who served in the role between 2009 and 2019.

A Professor of Poetry at the University of Leeds, Simon has published 28 collections of poetry. His work has been studied by millions of children as part of the national curriculum and in 2010 he received a CBE for services to poetry.

He now becomes the 21st UK Poet Laureate.

Simon was born in Marsden, West Yorkshire, in 1963 and worked as a Probation Officer in Greater Manchester until 1994 before focusing on poetry. He was elected to serve as Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford from 2015 until 2019 and is also the Holmes Visiting Professor at Princeton University, New Jersey, United States of America.

In 2012, as part of the celebrations of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Simon conceived and curated the Poetry Parnassus, a gathering of world poets and poetry from every Olympic and Paralympic nation, which was the largest gathering of international poets in history. Simon also received The Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry for the year 2018, awarded for excellence in poetry, on the basis of his body of work.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I'm delighted Simon Armitage has been appointed the UK's new Poet Laureate.

As one of our most popular and respected poets, Simon brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this important role. He is well placed to attract even more people into the literary world, and further enhance our nation's proud tradition of producing exceptional poetry.

I would also like to thank Dame Carol Ann Duffy for her work over the last decade – championing literature, showcasing other poets' contributions, and marking significant national moments through her outstanding poetry.

Poet Laureate Simon Armitage said:

It's a huge honour to be appointed Poet Laureate, one of the great high offices of literature. Over the past two decades the laureateship has become a working role, with previous laureates actively involved in the promotion of poetry and in numerous initiatives to identify and encourage talent, especially within education and among younger writers; I hope to build on the work of my predecessors with energy and enthusiasm.

Since the laureateship was first conceived many hundreds of years ago Britain has changed enormously and the position of Poet Laureate has changed accordingly – I want to celebrate and speak on behalf of the variety of voices who contribute to the rich chorus of British poetry from a wide range of personal, literary and cultural experiences, and to help poetry explore its potential in a multi-faceted, multi-vocal and multi-media age.

The poetry of these islands is one of our greatest achievements, and as well as being proud of its traditions I want poetry to feel confident and at home in the contemporary world and to demonstrate that in a hectic and sometimes frenetic age the combination of considered thought and crafted language is more relevant and vital than ever. I hope poets, readers and audiences will support me in my efforts.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

Simon Armitage is one of the UK's foremost poets, whose witty and profound take on modern life is known and respected across the world. He has done so much to promote poetry, and I am sure he will use the Laureateship to continue this work.

He is a very worthy successor to Dame Carol Ann Duffy, who championed the importance of poetry over the past 10 years and made the position relatable to people across the country. I congratulate Simon on his appointment to this historic role.

The honorary Royal title of Poet Laureate is awarded to a poet whose work is of national significance. The UK's first Poet Laureate by Royal appointment was John Dryden who was given the title by King Charles II in 1668.

Previous Poet Laureates have included William Wordsworth, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, John Betjeman and Ted Hughes. UK Poet Laureates initially served until their death until the rules were changed in 1999 to give more poets the opportunity to hold the position.

The steering group, appointed by the Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright to select the new Poet Laureate praised Simon Armitage's outstanding contribution to poetry over the course of his career.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For further information and interview requests please contact Faye Jackson in the DCMS press office on faye.jackson@culture.gov.uk or 020 7211 2210.

The appointment is approved by Her Majesty The Queen, acting on the advice of Her Majesty's Government.

In due course, Simon Armitage will be received in Audience by Her Majesty The Queen on his appointment as Poet Laureate.

The position is honorary and it is up to the individual poet to decide whether or not to produce poetry for national occasions or Royal events.