

## Winners of the Sky Arts RSL Writers Awards Announced

The RSL is delighted to announce the recipients of the 2021 Sky Arts RSL Writers Awards. The **Awards celebrate and nurture British writers of colour at the beginnings of their careers. Five winners will receive ten mentoring sessions** over the course of 12 months with an RSL Fellow writing in their form, as well as **two sessions with Sky Arts Ambassador Bernardine Evaristo.**

### The winners are:

Fiction: **Christina Fonthes**, mentored by Irenosen Okojie

Non-Fiction: **Clementine E Burnley**, mentored by Colin Grant

Playwriting: **Sarah Isaac**, mentored by Roy Williams

Poetry: **Pey Oh**, mentored by Pascale Petit

Screenwriting: **Adiza Shardow**, mentored by Tanika Gupta



**Christina Fonthes** is a Congolese-British writer. Her work, laden with themes of womanhood, religion, and sexuality, has featured in several publications around the world. Based in London, Fonthes found her writing voice whilst living in Manchester. Her mantra 'telling stories through any means possible' allows her to bring untold stories to life. Mentor **Irenosen Okojie** said 'I'm delighted to be working with Christina, whose undeniable talents leap off the page. I'm impressed by the power and tensions in her work, the rendering of queer Black women's lives with authenticity, vibrancy and specificity. I look forward to facilitating Christina realising some of her ambitions for this important novel.'



**Clementine E Burnley** is a feminist migrant mother, writer and community organiser who lives in Edinburgh. Her work has appeared in *Parabola Magazine*, the *National Flash Fiction Anthology* and *The Centifictionist*. She's an alumnus of Obsidian Foundation and a 2021 Edwin Morgan Second Life Grantee. Mentor **Colin Grant** said 'Clementine already has a great facility for language and writing. Her prose shows daring, experimentation and an ability to subtly transmit profoundly felt emotions. I'm excited to work with Clementine, at her elbow as it were, to help her to dig further, as Seamus Heaney would say, with her pen.'



**Sarah Isaac** is an emerging playwright who grew up in Leeds. She studied philosophy at King's College London and was a member of the Royal Court's Writing Group and Kali's Discovery Programme. In 2020, she was longlisted for the Sultan Padamsee Playwriting Award and is currently part of Rifco's 2021 associates. Mentor **Roy Williams** said 'We all want to see the unseen, and hear from the unheard in theatre of course. But it is not as simple as that. We have to find the voices, Here is one, right here — I found Sarah's writing to be beautiful, as well as essential and of course so theatrical. Her ability to express the political through the personal was a joy to read. I am very much looking forward to working with her'.



**Pey Oh** is a Bath-based poet from Malaysia. Her first pamphlet, *Pictograph*, was published by Flarestack Poetry in 2018. Her recent work can be found in *harana poetry*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Long Poem Magazine*, and *The Scores*. A Legitimate Snack, *Bagua* is forthcoming with Broken Sleep Books in 2021. Mentor **Pascale Petit** said 'Pey's poems are outstanding and have enormous promise. They are bursting with emotional and imagistic depths. I would love to help her craft them into exceptional works of art. I'm particularly excited to support her in excavating her silenced matriarchs, and feel that as an emerging Malaysian poet, with a lot of life experience, she will gain maximum benefit from this project'



**Adiza Shardow** is a Scottish writer/actor with Ghanaian heritage. Her screen debut was playing Liberty Gordon in BBC One's *Waterloo Road*. In 2015, she wrote and appeared in the mini web series *#sketchpack*, which won Best International Comedy Sketch at Miami Web Fest. Her latest work is penning spoken word monologue BLM on YouTube and *#mama*, about an Instagram star exploring her relationship with her mother. Mentor **Tanika Gupta** said 'Adiza has a strong style and voice which shines through in her writing. She has important things to say about the world in which we are living and she does so with warmth, humour, humanity and sharp dialogue. I very much look forward to working with Adiza.'

### Shortlisted writers:

Fiction: Marissa Mireles Hinds, Loney Smallhorne

Non-Fiction: Emily Abdeni Holman, Omar Khan

Playwriting: Nicole Latchana, Yuyu Wang

Poetry: Joyce Chen, Naush Sabah

Screenwriting: Jessica Benhamou, Luis Hindman

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## Notes to Editors

Presented for the first time in 2021, the Sky Arts RSL Writers Awards are focused on discovering and nurturing talented emerging writers of colour, working across different literary forms. The scheme was developed in order to counteract the underrepresentation of British writers of colour.

**Bernardine Evaristo, Sky Arts Ambassador**, said 'It's essential to create new initiatives to help make our culture more inclusive for those from under-represented and marginalised communities. I'm looking forward to discovering and mentoring the next generation of talented writers through this wonderful Sky Arts and RSL programme.'

### About the RSL

Founded in 1820, the Royal Society of Literature is Britain's national charity for the advancement of literature. We act as a national voice for the value of literature, engage people in appreciating literature and encourage and honour writers. The RSL's other annual awards are the RSL Ondaatje Prize, the RSL Christopher Bland Prize, the RSL Giles St Aubyn Awards, the Encore Award, The RSL Literature Matters Awards and the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize.

## About Sky Arts

These Awards are made possible thanks to the generosity of Sky Arts, who are passionate about supporting the next generation of artists, so are working with five leading Sky Arts Ambassadors: Booker Prize-winner Bernardine Evaristo, dance artist Akram Khan, conductor Charles Hazlewood, Theatre Royal Stratford East Artistic Director Nadia Fall, and sculptor Anish Kapoor – to run bursary schemes for new and emerging talent.

Sky Arts exists to bring more art to more people across the UK. In 2020, with the creative industries under serious threat, they threw open their doors to make the channel free for everyone to watch. They've redoubled their mission to increase access to the arts and are committed to getting everyone involved as the industry recovers. The fact is, we need the arts now like never before, and Sky Arts brings them straight to your living room.

They have something for everyone, championing creative talent by showcasing the best in music, theatre, dance, literature, opera and visual art. From Glyndebourne to Grime and Cézanne to The Style Council, they've got your passions covered. Millions of viewers tune in to hit returning series such as *Portrait Artist of the Year*, *Urban Myths* and British cultural institution *The South Bank Show*, but their acclaimed new programmes might take you anywhere from Pinter's house with Danny Dyer to a Scottish road trip with Samuel Johnson.

Collaboration is at the heart of what they do. Sky Arts is the headline sponsor of National Theatre Live in the UK and they work with cultural partners across the country including the English National Opera, Royal Academy of Arts, Tate, Creative Industries Federation and Coventry City of Culture to name but a few.

You can watch Sky Arts for free on Freeview channel 11 and Freesat channel 147. If you've got Sky or a Now TV entertainment pass, you can also watch over 2,000 hours of shows exclusively on demand.

[rsliterature.org](http://rsliterature.org)

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