

Scottish Poetry Library

SPL Board Nominees' Statements

Claudia Daventry

(Nominated by Eleanor Livingstone & Brian Johnstone)

I moved just over a decade ago from Amsterdam to Scotland to complete an MLitt in poetry at St Andrews with Don Paterson and Douglas Dunn, and to join the Committee of StAnza, Scotland's poetry festival, where I worked in various capacities, but generally as participant and translated poets liaison, notably curating and chairing the regular Translation Breakfasts to sellout audiences (and podcast) yearly. Prior to this move, my background has been over twenty years in TV, press and radio advertising – I wanted to find a way of supporting myself while still working creatively and it was the eighties: advertising seemed a good way to be writing and also to work in a competitive environment on high-profile accounts with dynamic and likeminded creative people. Out of 1,200 candidates I landed one of two jobs at a top ten agency with the 'milkround' straight after Oxford, went into the management and marketing training programme and worked on the client side before transferring to the creative department, where I produced strategic TV, radio and press work for clients as diverse and demanding as McDonalds, Nestlé, Kelloggs and P&G, Mercedes and adidas and won awards for my copy. I went on from Leo Burnett London to work at Saatchi's Europe, managing creative teams in Moscow, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest as well as Frankfurt, then working freelance for a time in Spain and France before a retainer at TBWA in Amsterdam.

Even though I'd done some pro bono work for, among others, Greenpeace, MSF and Age Concern, after several years working mostly on big bluechip accounts, and three young children down the line, I started to feel my ethics getting in the way of my happiness. I wasn't writing what I wanted to write and the advertising business was 'cannibalising' my ability to switch off the cutthroat business of selling and return to the music of words and image without the clatter of marketing. I hated corporate consumerism. I left and after some freelance journalism turned to poetry, teaching and translation (my background is in French and Spanish, by this time also Dutch), including poetry workshops and time on the NL performance circuit, and returned to work with StAnza and study with my battered moral compass still intact. I started a PhD on poetic translation and took on some postgrad teaching and poetry workshops at St Andrews, while also teaching at a local school, and participating with the running of the annual StAnza schools poetry competition.

As a lifelong student of poetry and literature with over a decade of publications and prizes for my own poetry, and also as someone who has experienced the joys of living on the Scottish coast with some of the downsides of not living in the central belt, I'm in a position to appreciate the value of a central resource like the Scottish Poetry Library, and the importance of digital outreach. The Scottish Poetry Library has a strong heritage. The 2018-2021 operating plan highlights a need to be ambitious, with a three-pronged focus on governance, diversity/outreach and financial planning: all three are essential to retain, or

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strengthen, its position as the beating heart of poetry in Scotland. As well as a proven passion for poetry and experience in education I can offer over twenty years' background in advertising, a multi-disciplinary business with many transferable skills: it is not only the art of persuasion and creative strategy but brand-building, underpinned by hard data; targeted research, psychology, working coherently with teams to deadline, skilful client contact, internal governance and budget management.

I left my active involvement with StAnza in 2019 to take up a Board position at Poetry London. This has been an exciting time for the magazine, which has moved swiftly into digital, and which has coped brilliantly with the changing marketplace forced on us by Covid-19. I can't claim credit for the recent increase in sales, which is entirely down to the editorial and management of the magazine, but Trustee focus has been on brainstorming funding opportunities, audience analysis, diversity, teamwork and governance: we have just appointed a new editor and are making ambitious plans. It's been a great time to be involved. That said, I'm permanently based in Scotland and I want to remain involved with Scottish poetry: to channel my creative energy and experience to meet the challenges of arts funding and outreach here in beleaguered times – how poetry can present itself as a fresh, dynamic force, and above all a diverse and relevant one, in Scotland and internationally, during and after coronavirus, across competing media.

Laura Fyfe

(Nominated by Marcas Mac an Tuairner & Charlie Roy)

The poetry world in Scotland is in a great moment of evolution and the changes in the Scottish Poetry Library over the last few years certainly embody that. I feel inspired by the opportunity to work as part of a team that represents and guides poets of all ages through a dynamic and shifting landscape.

With a background of nearly twenty years in Secondary Education, I feel I could bring my knowledge of the Scottish Education System to support and advise the already brilliant work you do in schools. My experience as a writing workshop and community facilitator, as well as my interest and research into new publishing technologies and writing for wellbeing may also be of value at this point in your development.

It is clear to anyone watching that the SPL is travelling an exciting trajectory and I'd dearly love to join you on that ride. I hope you'll consider me as a potentially beneficial fellow-navigator on your journey.

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Marcas Mac an Tuairneir

(Nominated by Charlie Roy & Hugh McMillan)

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as an SPL board member during my previous term. One such aspect of this work has been a driving role in the organisation's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion plan, which was received well by Creative Scotland. I am pleased that this work reflects how I have continued to add my voice to the democratisation of SPL processes and the widening of inclusion and access to its services.

As a member of the LGBTQ community, it is important that such representation is maintained at board level. Writing in the minoritised Gaelic language, I am acutely aware of how minoritisation impacts on creatives in multiple ways and being this lived experience to the role. I have been thrilled to lead on the growing inclusion and streamlining of Gaelic and Scots, as Scotland's indigenous languages, within the library's work. It is my hope to use this expertise to support the inclusion of BSL and other minoritised communities in coming years, as we build on this solid foundation with Gaelic and Scots.

As a freelance creative, tutor at Edinburgh University and with experience working at various levels within the Scottish education system and the arts, I bring diverse professional experience to the board. As a member of the Heretics and sitting on committees for the Scottish Book Trust, The Saltire Society and the Federation of Writers (Scotland), I am pleased to uphold the collegiate ethos which underpins the Scottish literary sector.

Gordon Munro

(Nominated by Patrick Corbett & David Rutherford)

I bring a range of experiences to support my candidacy for the Board. A former chair of Leith Festival and the Edinburgh International Conference Centre along with Board experience on Council Companies, including Edinburgh International Festival.

I am an elected member for Leith on Edinburgh City Council (since May 2003).

I was co-Chair of the Scottish Poetry Library with Jane Ryder from October to November 2019, and continued as Chair to November 2020. From November, I have shared the role with Charlie Roy.

This experience couple with my enthusiasm for building on the success of the library today are why I wish to stand for the Board.

Chris Wardhaugh

(Nominated by Gordon Munro & David Rutherford)

Almost three decades in international life sciences has given me a large amount of governance and management experience in organisations of all scales and levels of complexity. I am currently a Non-Executive Director of Motif Bio plc, Altair Medical Limited and Lamellar Biomedical Limited. In addition, I am Chief Business Officer of MGB Biopharma

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Limited, a clinical-stage antibiotic company and founder of Sercader Limited, a life sciences advisory firm. In each of these organisations there are challenges in the short, medium and long terms. I take my responsibility as a Director seriously and discharge my fiduciary duties with care and attention.

My love for poetry is enduring. I am never without a slim volume on business travels and during these days of working from home, I do so surrounded by hundreds of poetry books. I am an avid consumer of poetry, having been so since a copy of “A Choice of Poets” was left on my school desk when I was a teenager. Since that fire was lit, I have fuelled it by buying and reading mostly contemporary poetry by mostly living poets.

For me poetry is an essential oil. It is a distillation, the essence’s power released upon opening the book. It is also, for me, a critical lubricant of daily activity. My working life is involved, hectic, draining; but being able to escape for a moment by joining Kathleen Jamie, Jen Hadfield or Alice Oswald on some journey can be all the restorative strength I need to get me through a day.

From my home in Dumfriesshire, I am aware not just of the nationwide pool of writing talent, but of the interest in poetry in people from all backgrounds. I will do everything I can to increase the presence of the Scottish Poetry Library among poets and readers outside of the central belt.

I aim to bring to the SPL my experience in business management, governance, and duty of care to the organisation. In doing so I hope to help foster an environment in which the SPL can continue its mission to bring people and poetry together.