

## **The Annikki Poetry Festival programme has been published. The focus is on autobiography – the theme is “Personal”.**

Next summer's Annikki Poetry Festival will explore the importance of personal life experiences as building blocks for artistic work. The festival will be held in the courtyard of the Annikki Wooden Quarter in Tampere, Finland on **8 June 2024** with the theme *Personal*. The keywords are autobiography, personal involvement and autofiction. The poetry festival explores whether the personal is still political, or if it is lost among the countless real-life stories appearing in social media every day. Is the thrill of personal stories still in our blood?

Held now for the 17th time, the Annikki Poetry Festival will once again feature notable international performers, a fine and surprising selection of Finnish poets, prose writers, music, an open mic in the basement, children's programme and visual arts. Developed around the poetry festival, Annikki OFF will fill Tampere with dozens of cultural events on the three days before the festival. The last time the Annikki Poetry Festival was held was two years ago.

One of the international performers next summer is **Abdulla Pashew**, the most important Kurdish poet of our time. Various themes coexist in Pashew's poetry, ranging from the stages of the struggle for an independent Kurdistan to personal love poetry. Until now, very few Finns have known that Pashew, one of the prominent figures in the Kurdish-speaking world, has been living in Finland since 1995. His appearance at the Annikki Poetry Festival will be his first performance for a Finnish audience.

Another international performer is the Irish **Stephen James Smith**, who has been dubbed Dublin's poet laureate. Over the past two decades, he has given more than a thousand performances around the world. Smith's long-standing work in performed poetry has been a key contributor to the rise of Ireland's vibrant spoken word culture.

Next summer's Finnish performers include **Aulikki Oksanen & Kielo Kärkkäinen**. Kärkkäinen will perform classic songs with lyrics written by Oksanen in connection with the latter's poetry performance. A biography of Aulikki Oksanen will be published in autumn 2024, and its author **Helena Ruuska** will also speak at the festival.

Other performers include **Risto Ahti, Sirpa Kähkönen, Maija Kauhanen, Rosanna Fellman, Lyyti, Iida Rauma, Piki Rantanen, Hassan Maikal, Tommi Liimatta, Vilma Talvitie, Tuukka Terho & Heikki Nikula** and **Ranja Omena**.

Annikki gives voice to performers of different ages and various backgrounds. This year's programme focuses on poetry written to be performed, since it typically highlights personal experiences. For the first time, there will also be an open mic. Annikki Open Mic will run as an independent part of the programme in the basement during the festival.

The title artist of this year's poetry festival is **Verna Tervaharju**. Last summer, she painted a mural dedicated to poet **Kirsi Kunnas**, which is titled *Villiomenapuu (Wild Apple Tree)* and located near the venue. Next to this is a mural dedicated to poet **Mirkka Rekola**, with the title *Runopuu (Tree of Poetry)*. Together, they form a combination of poetry and visual arts that is unique of its kind in Finland.

In 2003, the residents of the Annikki Wooden Quarter in Tampere, built over 100 years ago, founded a poetry event in their yard. Since then, the Annikki Poetry Festival has developed into one of Finland's biggest poetry events and warmest cultural festivals. The artistic director of the event is a poet who recently received the State Prize for Literature, **J.K. Ihalainen**. The poetry festival is organised by volunteers every two years.

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