

Grant Fund Report, August – December 2018

The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust



"The Arvon experience seemed like a distant luxury I had no way of accessing, and therefore didn't deserve. A grant made it possible to have a week to learn, to grow, to get better. I'm hugely grateful for everything the course has meant to me." – Grant recipient, 2018

"Funding the Grant Scheme is a deep act of kindness and a way to bring light into someone's life."
– Grant recipient, 2018

We are extremely grateful to the Trustees of The Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for their unwavering support of our Grant Fund. Over the years, your commitment has been a massive support to the Grant Fund, and to scores of writers from different backgrounds, giving them a chance to express themselves creatively and ensuring our courses are full of varied voices.

Arvon's Grant Fund in 2018: Our 50th Anniversary Year

2018 marks fifty years since the very first Arvon course at Totleigh Barton, and we have spent the year celebrating our 50th birthday. We ran 88 courses across our three rural centres covering a range of genres and forms, from Radio Drama to Experimental Fiction to Writing with Ted Hughes. Thanks to your generous support and that of other donors we awarded grants to nearly 125 writers in 2018. This year, 87% of grant recipients had an income of £23,000 or less.

In October at our 50th anniversary party, we launched the #OPENTOALL crowd-funding campaign to raise funds towards our Grant Fund in 2019. We have been really blown away and touched by the success of the campaign, which well exceeded our £10,000 target to raise over £15,000.

A woman from Leeds received a grant to attend a poetry course at Lumb Bank. Due to her low income and caring responsibilities, Emily said that *"without the grant scheme I wouldn't have considered applying for an Arvon course"*. She said her course *"ignited a little, slow burning flame into something brightly blazing...I want to say a big thank you for the opportunity to attend an Arvon course with the grant scheme...I found the whole poetry course experience liberating, inspiring, and it has given me a whole new perspective on what I want to achieve, both in terms of pursuing my love of poetry, but in a wider sense, in life in general. I loved the whole atmosphere and 'way of life' at Lumb Bank, the beautiful surrounding and the space to 'think' and be with like-minded people. After completing the course I now feel more confident in myself. I will always remember my time at Lumb Bank, memories that I will cherish for a long time to come."*

Achievements of Grant Fund Alumni

We follow the progress of Arvon grant recipients with great pleasure. Feedback this year showed that after a few months, participants were making progress with their work, finishing their collections, performing at public spoken word sessions, getting involved in creative writing projects at their local museum filmed by the BBC, and being accepted onto an MA Writing course at Liverpool John Moores University.

The benefits of an Arvon course last well beyond the week itself. For example, before the 2018 courses, only 43% of grant recipients said they felt confident about developing a piece of writing. Directly following

their course, this percentage had nearly doubled to 83%. A few months later, it had only dropped a little, to 73%, which shows Arvon's long-lasting impact.

We also enjoy following grant recipients' progress over the years. 2018 has been a particularly strong year for poetry, and we are delighted that the collections of three Grant Fund alumni – **Phoebe Power** (*Shrines of Upper Austria*), **Richard Scott** (*Soho*), and **Zaffar Kunial** (*Us*) – have been shortlisted for the TS Eliot Poetry Prize this year. **Richard Scott** and **Zaffar Kunial** have also been shortlisted for the Costa Poetry Award 2018, and **Phoebe Power** won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection for *Shrines of Upper Austria* in September 2018. **Liz Berry** won the Forward Prize for Best Single Poem for 'The Republic of Motherhood' in September 2018. **Richard Scott** commented on how valuable his grant was ten years ago, and how it has continued to have an impact in the following years:

"About ten years ago I received a grant from Arvon to cover part-costs of a poetry writing course at The Hurst. The money enabled me to attend. This type of funding is crucial and central to one of the things which Arvon does best, ensuring access to the study of creative writing for everybody. Without the grant I wouldn't have been able to attend the course. I never would have travelled to The Hurst and spent valuable time studying how to read and craft poetry.

*I feel I must also mention what followed on from that course as it all stems from that initial grant: I was selected as a Jerwood/Arvon Poetry Mentee and was mentored by Daljit Nagra. The ensuing mentorship changed my entire life and my relationship to poetry forever. In the last ten years I have published a pamphlet, *Wound (Rialto)*, and my first collection, *Soho (Faber & Faber)*, came out this April. **I could not be more grateful to Arvon and their integral and essential Grant Fund as it really does change lives.**"*

Following are some further recent achievements of Grant Fund alumni in 2018:

- **Anita Pati** was one of three winners of the inaugural Women Poets' Prize in October 2018
- **Andrew Thompson** won The Stage Debut Award for Best Writer in September 2018
- **Claudine Toutoungi's** adaptation of *Based on a True Story* has been shortlisted for the BBC Audio Drama Award for Best Adaptation
- **Debris Stevenson's** debut show 'Poet in da Corner' premiere at the Royal Court in September 2018, part of the Represent series, inspired by the Representation of the People Act 1918
- **Ishy Din's** television adaptation of his own theatre piece *Taxi Tales* about Middlesbrough taxi-drivers was broadcast on BBC2 in August 2018
- **Jessica Swale's** adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* was produced at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick from August to October 2018
- **Rosie Garland** performed at two *That's What She Said* spoken word nights run by women's writing publishing house For Books' Sake at the Royal Albert Hall in December 2018

Eight past grant recipients will return to Arvon as tutors in 2019, including **Fiona Benson**, **Sasha Dugdale**, **Hannah Lowe**, **Andrew McMillan**, **Wyl Menmuir**, **Tiffany Murray**, **Jessica Swale** and **Sheena Wilkinson**.

We remain indebted to the Trustees of the Barbara and Philip Denny Charitable Trust for their commitment to our Grant Fund. Your support continues to give aspiring writers a life-changing experience that would otherwise be out of their reach, and by doing so contributes to a varied and exciting future for English literature. Thank you for your ongoing support.

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