

Media release – for immediate release

Annikki Poetry Festival will explore and celebrate Finland's international atmosphere and linguistic diversity

The Annikki Poetry Festival will be held in the courtyard of the Annikki Wooden Quarter in Tampere, Finland, on **6 June 2026 from 11 am to 10 pm**. Now organised for the 18th time, the festival will celebrate Finland's linguistic diversity and international atmosphere with the theme *Babel Finland*. The programme will shed light on the great cultural wealth and diversity of experiences that various language areas and traditions have brought to Finnish poetry, literature and culture.

Once again, the festival will offer a high-quality selection of Finnish and international performers: poets, prose writers, music artists, intriguing combinations of poetry and music, multi-arts performance, children's programme and visual arts in the unique setting offered by the wooden quarter built over 100 years ago.

The linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the performers represent the wide range of languages in Finland: Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Romani, Finnish Sign Language, Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese, Swahili and English. There will also be multilingual performances and wild combinations of languages. International performers will add the Lithuanian, Spanish and Tibetan languages to the mix.

Finnish performers at the Annikki Poetry Festival will include **Ánnámáret, Hassan Blasim, Monika Fagerholm, Hilja Grönfors, Satu Kankaanpää & Juhana Salonen, Daniil Kozlov, Kölö & Satu Kae, Tania Nathan** & Sointi Jazz Ensemble, **Nihkee** & Saarten tyttäret, **Risto Rasa**, The Shameless Shongololo Band, **Vy Tram** and **Suvi West**.

International guest poets will represent countries from which the festival has not had any performers before. Approaching his 90th birthday, Lithuanian **Tomas Venclova** is one of the giants of European poetry. Personally acquainted with **Anna Akhmatova**, Venclova was also close to Nobelist **Joseph Brodsky**. **Tenzin Tsundue** is considered the most significant Tibetan poet living in exile, and for him, writing is not only creative work but also a form of activism. Active in various aspects of poetry, **Regina Roze** will bring the vivid voice of contemporary Latin American poetry to the festival. Born in Argentina and living in Austria, **Ox Maló** combines poetry and performance art in his work, and he will create personal portraits of festival guests together with a musician and dance artist.

The title artist of the poetry festival, **Katariina Lillqvist** is a film director, writer and cultural figure known as the pioneer of puppet animation in Finland. Working together with Hilja Grönfors, she will add a strong touch of the Romani culture to the event. The festival will also give attention to two murals on the walls of adjacent buildings close to the venue: *Villiomenapuu (Wild Apple Tree)* is dedicated to poet **Kirsi Kunnas**, and *Runopuu (Tree of Poetry)* honours the work of poet **Mirkka Rekola**. Together, they form a combination of poetry and visual arts that is unique of its kind in Finland.

The amount of free programme offered by the Annikki Poetry Festival will increase significantly. The previous poetry festival attracted a record number of guests, causing occasional congestion. Due to this, the park located next to the wooden quarter will now house not only restaurant services but also the book bazaar and children's programme, which were previously located in the courtyard. The Annikki festival park is a free area open to everyone, and it will offer entertainment throughout the day, including the Viitapiiri association's open mic for poets.

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 and most international poetry events and unique cultural festivals. The artistic director of the event is the poet **J.K. Ihalainen**. The poetry festival is organised by volunteers every two years.

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