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## **SEATTLE ARTS & LECTURES ANNOUNCES 2017/18 SEATTLE YOUTH POET LAUREATE AND YOUTH POET LAUREATE AMBASSADOR**

**Seattle, WA— June 14, 2017:** At the Northwest Folklife Festival on Saturday, May 27, Seattle Arts & Lectures (SAL) awarded the title of Seattle’s 2017/18 Youth Poet Laureate (YPL) to Lily Baumgart, age 17 of Garfield High School. SAL also named the the 2017/18 Youth Poet Laureate Ambassador, Namaka Auwae-Dekker, a 15-year-old student at Franklin High School. The announcement was preceded by a celebratory reading by all of the 2017/18 Youth Poet Laureate finalists. The 2016/17 Youth Poet Laureate, Angel Gardner, also read from her new collection of poetry, *Blood Melody*, published by Penmanship Books.

Alicia Craven, WITS Program director said, “The YPL judges, including Seattle’s first Youth Poet Laureate, Leija Farr, and outgoing YPL Angel Gardner, all noted Lily’s incredible precision with language, and her grace and poise on the page. The judges also loved Namaka’s strength of voice and rich use of imagery. I am thrilled that all eight YPL finalists will be part of a cohort of writers who will attend workshops together throughout the year, have public reading opportunities, and support one another as artistic colleagues.”

**About 2017/18 Seattle Youth Poet Laureate Lily Baumgart:** Lily is a senior at Garfield High School. She was a 2016 Jack Straw Young Writer, is part of the Garfield High School literary magazine, *The Pen*, and is an active member of the Flying Trapeze Team at the School of Acrobatics and New Circus Arts.

**About the YPL Program:** A joint program between WITS and Urban Word NYC—with support from Northwest Folklife, Penmanship Books, and the Academy of American Poets—the Seattle Youth Poet Laureate Program aims to identify youth writers and leaders who are committed to civic and community engagement, poetry and performance, human relations, diversity, and education across Seattle. SAL, WITS, and our other partners recognize that youth voices and community engagement are vital for empowering young people to effect positive changes in their communities and beyond.

Along with holding the prestigious title of Seattle Youth Poet Laureate, Lily Baumgart will be awarded a book deal from Penmanship Books to publish a first collection of poems, and will be mentored by accomplished Seattle writers Aaron Counts and Matt Gano. As the Seattle Youth Poet Laureate, Baumgart will enjoy numerous opportunities and platforms to share her powerful voice, leadership, and love of Seattle at public readings across the city.

**About Seattle Arts & Lectures:** Founded in 1987, Seattle Arts & Lectures champions the literary arts by engaging and inspiring readers and writers of all generations in the Puget Sound region. SAL's programs include the Literary Arts Series, Poetry Series, Women You Need to Know (WYNK), Sherman Alexie Loves, SAL Presents, Hinge, Local Voices, Summer Book

Bingo, the Youth Poet Laureate (YPL) program, and Writers in the Schools (WITS), an award-winning reading and writing program that places professional writers in public elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as at Seattle Children's Hospital. For more information about SAL, visit [lectures.org](http://lectures.org).

Photos available upon request.

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