



2019  
T W E N T Y  
N I N E  
T E E N



14TH ANNUAL  
**ARIZONA  
POETRY  
OUTLOUD**  
STATE FINALS



SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2019  
**BURTON BARR  
CENTRAL LIBRARY  
PHOENIX AZ**



**Arizona Poetry Out Loud** is a partnership of the National Endowment of the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the Arizona Commission on the Arts. For more information about Poetry Out Loud, visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org) or [www.azarts.gov/pol](http://www.azarts.gov/pol).



# Welcome

## Welcome to the **Fourteenth Annual Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finals.**

Tonight's event is the culmination of months of participation by high school students and teachers from communities throughout the state of Arizona. Over 10,000 high school students participated in this year's program. Those of you here to witness tonight's recitations are in for a rare treat.

Many of you already know what we are about to experience. Witnessing these students recite poems of their choosing is quite amazing. Through the commitment and dedication of their teachers, students who participate in Poetry Out Loud build public speaking skills, and learn about their literary heritage.

### **To the students who are here today**

**to compete:** Congratulations on your accomplishment. What you have achieved in representing your schools and regions at the state finals is no small feat.

### **To the parents and teachers who accompanied students today:**

Thank you. Thank you for your commitment to instilling skills that will live with these students beyond today and beyond this program; skills that will help them compete in a 21st-century workforce.

**To our partners who make the program possible:** Your dedication to serving Arizona residents and communities is remarkable. Thank you for the opportunity you've provided these students.

**To the audience:** Poetry Out Loud is one of many arts programs in our state that deliver the benefits of arts education to young people. Through these programs, students often improve their academic performance, demonstrate greater leadership and social skills, and develop advanced creative problem solving. Such programs are made possible thanks to funding from the State of Arizona and the National Endowment for the Arts. If this program and others like it are important to you, your family, and your community, we encourage you to thank your state legislators and congressional representatives for their continued support.

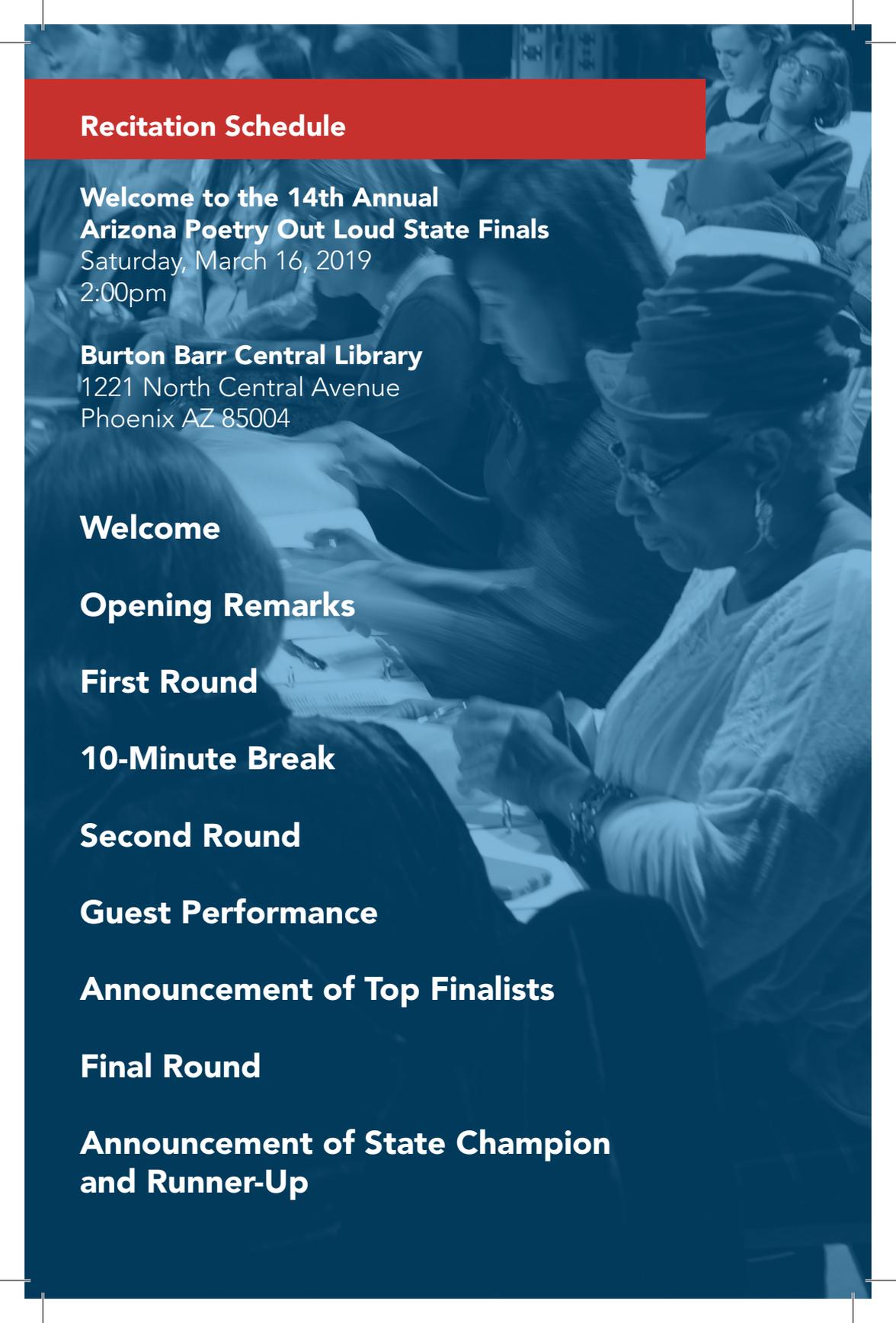
Finally, it is with great gratitude that we thank Burton Barr Central Library for hosting this year's State Finals.

*Jaime Dempsey*

Jaime Dempsey, Executive Director  
Arizona Commission on the Arts

Photo by Alonso Parra



A blue-tinted background image showing a group of people, likely students and judges, at a poetry competition. Some are looking at papers, while others are looking towards the camera. The image is overlaid with a red banner at the top and white text for the event details and schedule.

## **Recitation Schedule**

### **Welcome to the 14th Annual Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finals**

Saturday, March 16, 2019  
2:00pm

### **Burton Barr Central Library**

1221 North Central Avenue  
Phoenix AZ 85004

**Welcome**

**Opening Remarks**

**First Round**

**10-Minute Break**

**Second Round**

**Guest Performance**

**Announcement of Top Finalists**

**Final Round**

**Announcement of State Champion  
and Runner-Up**

## HOST

**Tomás Stanton, Phonetic Spit**

## SPECIAL GUESTS

**Dr. Rosemarie Dombrowski, Phoenix Poet Laureate**

**Dr. Laura Tohe, Navajo Nation Poet Laureate**

## JUDGES



### **Dr. Rosemarie Dombrowski**

Dr. Rosemarie Dombrowski is the inaugural Poet Laureate of Phoenix, AZ, the founding editor of both rinky dink press and *Write On, Downtown: A Journal of Phoenix Writing*, as well as the curator and host of the Phoenix Poetry Series and First Friday Poetry on Roosevelt Row. She is the recipient of five Pushcart nominations, a 2017 Arts Hero Award, the 2017 Carrie McCray Literary Award in Nonfiction, and a fellowship from the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics. Her collections include *The Book of Emergencies*, *The Philosophy of Unclean Thing*, and *The Cleavage Planes of Southwest Minerals [A Love Story]*, winner of the 2017 Split Rock Review chapbook competition. She teaches on ASU's Downtown Phoenix campus, for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and at Changing Hands Bookstore. [www.rdpoet.com](http://www.rdpoet.com).



### **Dr. Laura Tohe**

Dr. Laura Tohe is Diné. She holds a Ph.D. in Indigenous American Literature. A librettist and an award-winning poet, she has written or edited 5 books. She wrote a commissioned libretto, *Enemy Slayer, A Navajo Oratorio*, for the Phoenix Symphony. She was commissioned by Opera du Rouen to write the libretto for *Nahasdzaan in the Glittering World*, which will premiere in Rouen and Caen, France in April and May 2019. In 2019 she was awarded the American Indian Writer's Award by the Tulsa Hardesty Library. She is Professor Emerita with Distinction in Indigenous Literature at Arizona State University and is the Navajo Nation Poet Laureate for 2015-2019.



### **Cynthia Wheeler**

Cynthia Wheeler is a 20-year valley resident and a transplanted native Ozarkian who attributes her self-deprecating yet humorous storytelling style on family tradition. She shares stories based on life experiences, inexplicably etched in her memory. Her goal is to encourage her grandchildren to write their own stories, carrying on their deep family legacy.



### **Joy Young**

Joy Young is a performance and teaching spoken word artist based in Phoenix, Az. Their performance work which has been featured on Button Poetry and Everyday Feminism as well as on stages and in colleges and classrooms across the country, focuses on transgressing borders, both real and imagined. They believe our personal narratives should be a driving force for healing ourselves and the world around us— that they are a doorway through which we should consciously enter the world of social justice in hopes of creating understanding, connection, and making substantive change.

## STUDENT FINALISTS



### **Edgardo Aguilar, Desert View High School, Tucson**

Edgardo's objective is to graduate college with a major he can actually do something with. His goal in life is to simply become a man that he sees fit to be worthy of life. He is a musician, a poet, and a philosopher, according to his AP Literature teacher.

"It would be neat if with the New Year" by Jimmy Santiago Baca; "Nude Descending a Staircase" by XJ Kennedy; "A song: Lying is an occupation" by Laetitia Pilkington



### **Sylvia Dale, Ganado High School, Ganado**

Sylvia Dale is a junior at Ganado High School. She's Native American and participating in her second year of Poetry Out Loud. Sylvia enjoys reading and writing poetry.

"Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou; "If We Must Die" by Claude McKay; "I Find no Peace" by Sir Thomas Wyatt



### **Sharmila Dey, University High School, Tucson**

Sharmila is a Tucson-grown writer and activist. She is a founder of *Carnegiea Literary Magazine* and has been published by *Arizona Public Square* and *Bridge Ink Magazine*. Sharmila was an organizer for the local March for Our Lives and is passionate about the environment and mitigating climate change.

"The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus; "Abecedarian Requiring Further Examination of Anglikan Seraphym Subjugation of a Wild Indian Rezervation" by Natalie Diaz; "August 12 in the Nebraska Sand Hills Watching the Perseids Meteor Shower" by Twyla Hansen



### **Becca Driggs, Highland High School, Gilbert**

When she was young, Becca dabbled in poetry composition as a means of self-discovery. As she grew, she discovered poetry recitation and immediately fell in love. She loves traveling and seeing the majesty of this planet we share. Next year, Becca will study Global Women's Studies at Brigham Young University. She is grateful to be performing at Poetry Out Loud and thanks all those involved in coordinating this event and for their dedication to the arts.

"Cartoon Physics, part 1" by Nick Flynn; "I Go Back to May 1937" by Sharon Olds; "A Noiseless Patient Spider" by Walt Whitman



### **Zaquia George, City High School, Tucson**

Zaquia is a freshman at City High School. She's an active member of Tucson Roller Derby and the City High Drama program.

"I, Too" by Langston Hughes; "The Paradox" by Paul Laurence Dunbar; "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou

## STUDENT FINALISTS



### **Helena Häber, Arizona School for the Arts, Phoenix**

Helena Haber is a young filmmaker, musician, writer, and tea-drinker who attends Arizona School for the Arts. In addition to advocating for youth access to the arts through the City of Phoenix Youth Arts and Culture Council, she is an avid fighter for intersectional feminism, LGBT+ rights, climate justice, and gun violence prevention. She also has an encyclopedic knowledge of the popular PBS kids show, Arthur, and she encourages you to ask her about it sometime.

"Undivided Attention" by Taylor Mali; "Friendship After Love" by Ella Wheeler Wilcox; "Sci Fi" by Tracy K. Smith



### **Aslihan Hadinoglu, Coconino High School, Flagstaff**

Aslihan was born in 2001 in Adana, Turkey. She arrived in Flagstaff seven months ago as an exchange student in the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program. She is attending Coconino High School in her senior year. She is interested in languages and drama.

"Key to the Dollar Store" by Al Young; "My Darling Turns to Poetry at Night" by Anthony Lawrence; "Sonnet 1" by Sir Philip Sidney



### **Abby Noel, Verrado High School, Buckeye**

Abby is a sophomore. She loves theatre and enjoys participating in plays and musicals. She is part of the HyperRevolution group at Arizona Broadway Theater. Poetry and reading are her beloved hobbies, cultivated by her parents, grandparents, and friends. She is proud to represent her school, family, and friends at the state level for Poetry Out Loud.

"The Conqueror Worm" by Edgar Allan Poe; "[i carry your heart with me(i carry it in)]" by E.E. Cummings; "Do Not!" by Stevie Smith



### **Daniel Noon, Brophy College Preparatory, Phoenix**

Daniel is a junior who enjoys writing and reciting poetry, playing chess, and the occasional round of Flappy Golf with friends. He is extremely grateful for the contributions of Mr. John Damaso, Mr. Austin Pidgeon, Mr. Victor Cervantes, and so many more who have ensured the vitality of the Poetry Out Loud program at Brophy.

"Very Large Moth" by Craig Arnold; "Mingus at the Showplace" by William Matthews; "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus



### **Sophie Weinzinger, Coconino High School, Flagstaff**

Sophie Weinzinger is a senior at Coconino High School and will be studying business and Mandarin Chinese at ASU in the fall. When not reciting poetry, she can be found giving tours at the local state historic park or in a cafe with a good book and a chai. Sophie would like to thank her parents, her English teachers, and her high school for supporting her throughout her four years in Poetry Out Loud.

"Memory As a Hearing Aid" by Tony Hoagland; "Adam's Curse" by William Butler Yeats; "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" by Walt Whitman

## **FOLLOW THE JOURNEY**

### **The Arizona State Champion will compete at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals April 30 – May 1, 2019 | Washington, DC**

Over the past 14 years, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3 million students and 45,000 teachers from 10,000 schools nationwide. The winner of tonight's competition will advance to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals April 30–May 1, 2019 in Washington, DC, where \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be distributed.

**Live Broadcast.** The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will be webcast live. For broadcast information, visit

[www.poetryoutloud.org/competition/national-finals](http://www.poetryoutloud.org/competition/national-finals).

## **FOLLOW POETRY OUT LOUD ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Facebook** @azartscommission

**Twitter** @azartscomm @PoetryOutLoud @NEAarts

**Instagram** @azartscomm @NEAarts

**Use #POL19 #iampoetryoutloud**

## **SPECIAL NOTE**

Due to circumstances beyond her control, finalist Helena Häber is unable to participate in today's event. Fortunately, the organizers were able to make an accommodation. With guidance from the National competition, the Arizona Commission on the Arts invited Helena to recite her poems on camera on the afternoon of Thursday, March 7. The recording was administered by Arts Commission staff in accordance with Poetry Out Loud guidelines. Helena was allowed a single pass at each of her poems with brief breaks in between. Every effort was made to ensure that no significant advantage nor disadvantage was imposed by these circumstances.

These recordings will be presented to the audience and judging panel, one per round, during Helena's randomly assigned recitation slot. The judges have not seen them previously.

# About Poetry Out Loud

**Poetry Out Loud** is a national poetry recitation contest for high school students that begins in the classroom and culminates with the Poetry Out Loud National Finals in Washington D.C. By inviting the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theatre into the English class, Poetry Out Loud encourages the nation's youth to learn about great poetry by studying, memorizing, and performing some of the most influential and timeless poems of the English language. Through Poetry Out Loud, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

A program of the **National Endowment for the Arts** and **The Poetry Foundation**, Poetry Out Loud is delivered in all 50 states and three territories through partnerships with the State Arts Agencies. The Arizona Poetry Out Loud program is managed and supported by the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

Participation in Arizona Poetry Out Loud continues to grow with over 10,000 students in communities throughout the state participating in the program each year.

School finalists compete at one of three regional competitions: Central, Northern and Southern. Finalists will be selected at each regional competition to advance to the State Finals where they will compete for the title of **Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Champion**. The winner of this year's Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finals will receive \$200 and the winner's school library will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The second place finalist will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library.

In addition, the Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Champion will receive an all-expenses-paid trip (with a chaperone) to compete at the National Finals in Washington D.C., April 30 - May 1, 2019. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

## **Contest Structure and Evaluation Criteria.**

Arizona Poetry Out Loud includes three levels of competition: School Finals, Regional Competitions and the State Finals.

**School Finals.** Each participating high school held a school contest at the end of their Poetry Out Loud unit or program. The top scoring students from each school final advanced to their region's competition.

**Regional Competitions.** Students competed at three regional competitions: Central, Northern, and Southern. At each regional competition, students recited two to three poems; the scores of these poems were tallied and the students with the highest scores advanced to the state finals.

**State Finals.** Students—from each region—will perform recitations in tonight's event. Each student will recite two poems, one in each of the first two rounds. The scores of these two recitations will be tallied and the four students with the highest scores will recite a third poem in a final round of recitations. The score of the third poem will be added to each of the students' first set of scores. The highest scoring student will be named the Arizona State Champion; the second highest scoring student, the First Place Runner-up.

Scoring in Poetry Out Loud is cumulative between judges' scores and from round to round, however scores from previous competitions do not carry over to subsequent contests.

Each student will be evaluated on a scale from one (weak) to six (outstanding) using the following criteria: **Physical Presence, Voice and Articulation, Dramatic Appropriateness, Evidence of Understanding and Overall Performance**. Additionally, a maximum of eight points will be assigned for accuracy.

For more information on Poetry Out Loud, visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org) or [www.azarts.gov/pol](http://www.azarts.gov/pol).

## Reflections from a State Champion: Laws of Life



Photo by James Kegley

It's striking, really, what can be accomplished in five seconds. In the last five seconds alone, 205,000 Facebook posts were created, 375 McDonald's burgers were sold, and 3,150 steel cans were recycled. However, among the most important things that can happen in five seconds is the choice to be brave or to back down.

It's said that people fear public speaking more than they fear death. For as long as I can remember, I've easily been one of those people. I know the feeling all too well: my chest tightens with panic, my vision spirals in pirouettes, and my body grows numb from the toes upward, like stepping ever deeper into a stream of ice. Imagine my horror when in a dire turn of events, I was selected to recite a poem by memory in front of my entire school. The event was hosted by Poetry Out Loud, an annual poetry-reading competition. Four students were selected from each grade, and the sixteen competitors would then perform for a panel of three judges. Throughout the next few weeks, I found myself anxiously pacing in circles while muttering lines under my breath. Some nights, I even sacrificed sleep to rehearse in front of a mirror, struggling to suppress my nervous mannerisms. Despite my anxiety, I was firmly determined to try my best.

When the fateful day arrived, I was seated backstage, my legs quivering like a flame in the wind. One by one, the competitors delivered their performances, and I was simultaneously mesmerized and daunted. Their voices were warm and resonant as if a beam of sunshine had dissolved into sound; how could I possibly compare? All too soon, my English teacher beckoned me to the podium, but I was glued to my seat, desperately trying to remember how to breathe. I could already feel the stares piercing mercilessly through my soul. Then I recalled an adage my dad once

told me: "Nobody is brave every minute of every day; you only need five seconds of courage at a time to make the change you want to see." So I began to count.

Five. I closed my eyes and drew a slow, deep breath. Four. I gradually rose to my feet, struggling to steady my trembling legs. Three. Step by step, I forced myself onstage, footsteps resonating with my heartbeat. Two. I approached the microphone and faced the sea of eyes; there was no turning back now. One. I cleared my throat. "I'll be reciting 'Fishing on the Susquehanna in July' by Billy Collins."

Five seconds of courage were just the push I needed; weeks of practice took care of the rest. I was amazed to find the words rolling off my tongue almost as easily as they had in front of the mirror. With the final line - "I imagined him springing out of the frame" - I breathed a sigh of relief and returned to my seat to enjoy the remaining performances. After the last recital, the judges began to compile our scores. Although I could still feel adrenaline coursing through my veins, a vast smile stretched across my face, and a single thought occupied my mind: I did it. I really did it. Lost in reflection, I nearly missed the judges announce, "The winner of Poetry Out Loud 2017, who will be representing Arizona School for the Arts at the regional competition, is ... Kellen Vu!"

The audience burst into applause as I sat frozen in my seat, stunned beyond belief. I'd been too preoccupied with overcoming my fear to even entertain the possibility of placing. Words can't describe the ensuing elation; in that moment, I swear I could soar. Miraculously, a few weeks later I found myself winning the regional and state competitions and progressing to the national championship! Never did I imagine that such a spectacular experience could unfold from a mere five seconds of courage. So whatever you're afraid of - be it public speaking, failure, or rejection - take a deep breath, count to five, and leap. You never know where you're going to land, but rest assured that something great will come of it.

--2017 Poetry Out Loud Arizona  
State Champion Kellen Vu  
February 12, 2017

# Special Thanks

The Arizona Commission on the Arts would like to give special thanks to the following **2019 Arizona Poetry Out Loud** national and regional partners and venue.



## NATIONAL PARTNERS

The **National Endowment for the Arts** is an independent federal agency that funds, promotes, and strengthens the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation.



**The Poetry Foundation**, publisher of Poetry magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience.



## REGIONAL PARTNERS

**Central Region: Phonetic Spit.** Through the intersections of Literary Arts, Youth Development, and Social Justice programs, Phonetic Spit creates Brave Space to empower young and emerging adults to find, develop and publicly present their voices as agents of societal change.



**Southern Region: The University of Arizona Poetry Center** is a leading literary institution and a living archive of poetry. As a premier example of a thriving public/private partnership, the Poetry Center connects the University of Arizona with the greater literary community in Tucson and beyond.



**Northern Region: Dr. William Cordeiro** is a published poet and writer, and Honors College Professor at **Northern Arizona University (NAU)**. NAU is a public university whose academic programs, research, public service, and creative endeavors enrich lives and create opportunities in Arizona and beyond.



## STATE FINALS HOST

**Burton Barr Central Library** is the main branch of Phoenix Public Library, serving the metropolitan area of Phoenix. Its mission is focused on what it can do for and with people in our communities. Phoenix Public Library is a cornerstone that supports early literacy, education, entrepreneurship, empowerment, and engagement.



## ABOUT THE ARIZONA COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

One of 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies across the United States, the **Arizona Commission on the Arts** is a 51-year-old agency of the State of Arizona and a leading force in the creative and professional development of Arizona's arts sector. Through robust programs, research initiatives and strategic grantmaking, the Arts Commission catalyzes arts-based partnerships that strengthen Arizona communities through the arts.

**We imagine an Arizona where everyone can participate in and experience the arts.**

**Front Cover Photo Credits (clockwise):** 2017 Arizona State Champion Kellen Vu, Arizona School for the Arts, Phoenix. (Photo by James Kegley.) 2013 Arizona State Champion, Cassandra Valadez, Sunnyside High School, Tucson. (Photo by James Kegley.) 2015 Arizona State Champion Zaskia Villa, Nogales High School, Nogales. (Photo by James Kegley.) 2014 Arizona State Champion, Matthew Kaplan, Tesseract School, Phoenix. (Photo by Jeff Smith.) 2018 Arizona State Champion, Sophie Weinzinger, Coconino High School, Flagstaff. (Photo by James Kegley.) 2016 Arizona State Champion Hunter Hazelton, Betty Fairfax High School, Laveen. (Photo by James Kegley.)



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visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org) or [www.azarts.gov/pol](http://www.azarts.gov/pol).