

Announcing Orange County's Poetry Out Loud Champion

Arts Orange County and Orange County Department of Education has awarded Elora Sparnicht, a student at Orange County School of the Arts, the title of OC Poetry Out Loud Champion 2021. [Poetry Out Loud](#) (POL) is a nationwide literary arts program and recitation competition, free to the public, providing opportunities for high school students to interact with the words of literary masters through memorization and recitation.

This season's competition took place during a world wide pandemic presenting extraordinary opportunities and unique challenges. This was the first year the competition was expanded to include the participation of community organizations as well as local high schools. This allowed a wider range of inclusion locally for this nationally recognized program. This was also the first year that the contest took place entirely virtually.

Arts Orange County provided online tutorials and virtual community coaching opportunities courtesy nationally award winning poet and writer [Marcus Omari](#), Poetic Reform Party, to help prepare students and organizations for this unique competition. Competitors had to memorize two poems from the national Poetry Out Loud anthology, record those poems using personal video equipment and submit them to the county's panel of judges. Guest judges included well known Southern California poets Charles E. Scott III aka Philosophy, Danielle Mitchell of The Poetry Lab and Professor Mike "The Poet" Sonksen. Poetry recitations were scored based on physical presence, voice and articulation, dramatic appropriateness, evidence of understanding, overall performance and accuracy. On Feb. 25th, all judges scores were tabulated and a special ceremony was held online to announce the winner.

Sparnicht's winning recitations were "Abandoned Farmhouse" by Ted Kooser and "Backdrop Addresses Cowboy" by Margaret Atwood. She will move on to compete in the virtual California State Finals, March 15, 2021. The 2nd-place title was awarded to Preston Veravanich representing South Coast Repertory Theatre. The 3rd-place honor went to Alyssa Johnson of Mater Dei High School.

Arts Orange County and Orange County Department of Education celebrate the participation of all local high schools, community organizations, and students. Poetry Out Loud is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. Please visit [Arts Orange County](#) website for more information

regarding how your high school or organization may participate in next season's Orange County POL program and competition.