



*Ceremony of Investiture
of
The Poet Laureate
of Jamaica*

A SHORT HISTORY OF POETS LAUREATE OF JAMAICA

The practice of countries naming a Poet Laureate was made popular by the appointment of Ben Johnson in 1616 as England's first Poet Laureate, in what has since been an unbroken line of Poets Laureate appointed by the Royal Household. A Poet Laureate is selected from amongst a country's most esteemed and accomplished poets and he/she occupies an exalted position in a nation's literary heritage.

Prior to April 15, 2014, there have been two Poets Laureate of Jamaica: Tom Redcam and John Ebenezer Clare McFarlane, who were both named by the Poetry League Society of Jamaica. Redcam received the title posthumously in 1933 and McFarlane, who was founder and President of the Poetry League Society of Jamaica, was crowned and robed Poet Laureate at a ceremony at the Ward Theatre on April 7, 1953. McFarlane served in that role until his death in 1962.

The effort to re-establish a Poet Laureate of Jamaica was spearheaded by the Chair of the Entertainment Advisory Board Literary Arts Sub-Committee, Justine Henzell, National Librarian and CEO of the National Library of Jamaica, Winsome Hudson and Senior Director of Entertainment in the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Gillian McDaniel. The process of selecting the Poet Laureate of Jamaica was managed by the National Library of Jamaica (NLJ) with both the National Librarian and the Chairman of the National Library's Board of Directors serving on the Selection Committee. The NLJ was the only institution with two positions on the Committee and this is consistent with other countries in which the National Library is the focal point for the Poet Laureate position. The public was invited to submit nominations for the post of Poet Laureate on a prescribed form. Nominations were open from November 10, 2013 and closed December 20, 2013. Nominations which fit the stated criteria were considered by a nine-member committee and the Laureate selected by secret ballot. The announcement of the first nationally appointed Poet Laureate of Jamaica was made at the NLJ on April 15, 2014 by the Minister of Tourism and Entertainment the Honourable Dr. Wykeham McNeill.

The duties of the Poet Laureate fall within the general ambit of promotion and development of Jamaican poetry locally and overseas. The Tourism Enhancement Fund has financed the first three years of the programme. The NLJ serves as Secretariat to the programme as well as the repository for the publications, recordings and ephemera which will emanate from the Poet Laureate programme of activities.

Although there are references to Claude McKay as Poet Laureate, the designation seems not to have been an official one

THE INSIGNIA OF THE POET LAUREATE



Breast Star

The insignia of the Poet Laureate of Jamaica is a breast star which consists of a circle of breadfruit leaves in sterling silver, plated with 24 ct gold and finished with green enamel mounted upon a silver star. In the centre, the Arms of Jamaica in silver gilt on yellow enamel surrounded by the words The Poet Laureate of Jamaica in gold lettering on black enamel.

It is worn with a black shoulder sash edged with a narrow band of gold and green in equal portions.

THE INSIGNIA OF THE POET LAUREATE



Lapel Pin

Order Of Ceremony

Prelude of Music – Jamaica Military Band

Guests are seated

Flourish of Trumpets

– The Fanfare Trumpeters of the Jamaica Military Band

Their Excellencies the Governor-General, the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen, ON, GCMG, CD, and the Most Honourable Lady Allen arrive

Their Excellencies are escorted to their seats attended by:

Major Morton Stewart, Aide-de-Camp to the Governor-General

MASTER OF CEREMONIES – Fae Ellington

NATIONAL ANTHEM – Jamaica Military Band

PRAYER – The Reverend Dr. Stephen Jennings

WELCOME REMARKS

– Dahlia Harris, Principal Director of Culture, Ministry of Youth and Culture

POEM

– On National Vanity by J.E. Clare McFarlane
read by Ralph Thompson, CD

REMARKS

– Hon. Minister K. Wykeham McNeill, MD, MP

ODE TO POET LAUREATE – Ann Margaret Lim

READING OF THE CITATION

– Winsome Hudson, National Librarian

THE INVESTITURE REMARKS

– His Excellency the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen, ON GCMG, CD, Governor-General

SASHING & PINNING

– His Excellency the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen, ON GCMG, CD, Governor-General

POET LAUREATE ADDRESS

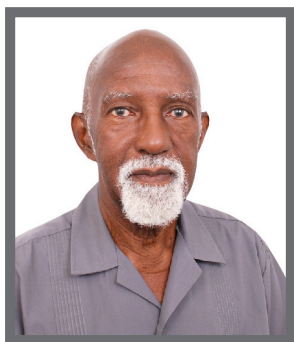
– Honourable Mervyn Eustace Morris, OM

THANKS

– Kingsley Cooper, Entertainment Advisory Board
Chairman

COCKTAIL RECEPTION

MUSIC BY JAMAICA MILITARY BAND



Professor MERVYN EUSTACE MORRIS, OM, was born in Kingston in 1937.

He studied at Munro College, the University College of the West Indies and, as a Rhodes Scholar, at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. From 1966 until 2002, he was on the staff of the University of the West Indies, retiring as Professor of Creative Writing and West Indian Literature. He received the Order of Merit in 2009 and is Jamaica's first Poet Laureate to be appointed by the Government of Jamaica.

His books of poems are *The Pond*, *Shadowboxing*, *Examination Centre* (New Beacon Books, London), *Vestiges* (a limited edition, Erlangen), *On Holy Week* (Dangaroo Press, Sydney) and *I been there, sort of: New and Selected Poems* (Carcenet, Manchester, 2006). In 1976 the Institute of Jamaica awarded him a silver Musgrave Medal for poetry; and in 2011 the Poetry Archive, London, produced a CD entitled *Mervyn Morris Reading from his Poems*. He has given poetry readings in many countries and has conducted poetry workshops in the Caribbean, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom.

He is the author of *'Is English We Speaking'* and **Other Essays** (1999), *Making West Indian Literature* (2005) and *Miss Lou: Louise Bennett and Jamaican Culture* (Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston, 2014).

Books he has edited include *Selected Poems by Louise Bennett*, *It A Come by Michael Smith* and *After-image by Dennis Scott*. He co-edited *Jamaica Woman*, an anthology of poems by Jamaican women who had not yet published individual collections, and *Voiceprint*, an anthology of oral and related poetry from the Caribbean.

¹"McFarlane served in that role until his death in 1962.¹"

Autographs