

USAG Benelux  
Brussels Library  
Young Poet Contest  
2025









## Preface by the Judges of the 2024 Young Poet Contest

**“Poetry should be written with feeling and should always have something to say, whether directly or without explicitly stating the message. These young poets have shown traces of this, while some are on the verge of mastering this skill at such a young age.**

**Poetry is an art and art in any form should be encouraged in our children and young adults. They should be encouraged to write, and to write without fear.**

**A good poem is created when the poet writes about feelings from within and the reader recognizes it as his or her own feeling. That is the best poetry.”**

**-Michael Adubato, author of “Missing the Exit”**

*Born and bred in the great state of New Jersey, Michael Adubato is a poet, sports journalist, and writer who currently lives in Mons, Belgium. He will relocate later this year to the Central European country of Slovakia where he plans to spend his time writing and going to as many ice hockey and football (soccer) games as possible. There will be journeys on planes and trains as well.*

*Maltese poet, Stephen Buttigieg said about “Every Day is Forgotten”, Adubato’s second book of poetry released in March of 2025, “...he captures moments in free-flowing verse with a quasi-impressionistic honesty. In doing so every picture he paints is as vivid and fresh as the moment he put pen to paper.”*

*According to former United States Poet Laureate Robert Pinsk, Abato’s first book, “Missing the Exit” (2022), is full of, “very spoken, true-voice poems.”*





## Preface by the Judges of the 2024 Young Poet Contest (Continued)

Poetry, taken seriously, is a powerful tool. Poetry composed by young adults possesses a unique sort of energy and urgency.

What late-coming, seasoned writer Wallace Stevens brought to poetry — qualities of sophistication, worldliness and complex beauty — is dashed by the energy and restlessness of the young poet.

One senses a rawness of emotion, an impatience, sometimes even a curious, developing moralism towards the world; a broader tableau that they are, for the first time as semi-autonomous beings, wading into. It is performative, imperfect - though not seeking perfection. Energy and imagination are projected onto the reader, representing an act of daring and bravery on the part of the poet.

Reveal your pain, your joy, your rage, your wonder, and isolation. Channel it into words and spill it onto the page. Disregard your fears and display your soul. In the words of poet Patti Smith, "Never let go of that fiery sadness called desire." Become who you are.

**-Thomas K. Murphy, Author of "Doris the Loris"**

*Thomas K. Murphy, Ph.D. is a professor of History and Government, having taught at three universities in the US and Europe over the past thirty-seven years. He is the author of three academic books, one children's book and two Compact Disks of originally composed music. Dr. Murphy has lived overseas for over thirty years, in eight countries. As an undergraduate, he worked within a campus poetry consortium, and, as a graduate student, contributed to a published French poetry collection at L'Universite de Pau et des Pays de L'Adour (where he studied 1993-94), titled "Je Suis Perdu". He currently lives in Duisburg, Belgium, is a regular gym rat at USAG, and writes and travels whenever he gets the chance.*





# **Young Poet Contest**

## **Ages 8-12 Category**

### **First Place**

#### **“Music to My Ears”**

**by Elena Sulewski, age 11**

### **Second Place**

#### **“The Bombings”**

**by Hoshina Noelle Malandrino, age 11**

### **Third Place**

#### **My Weird Car**

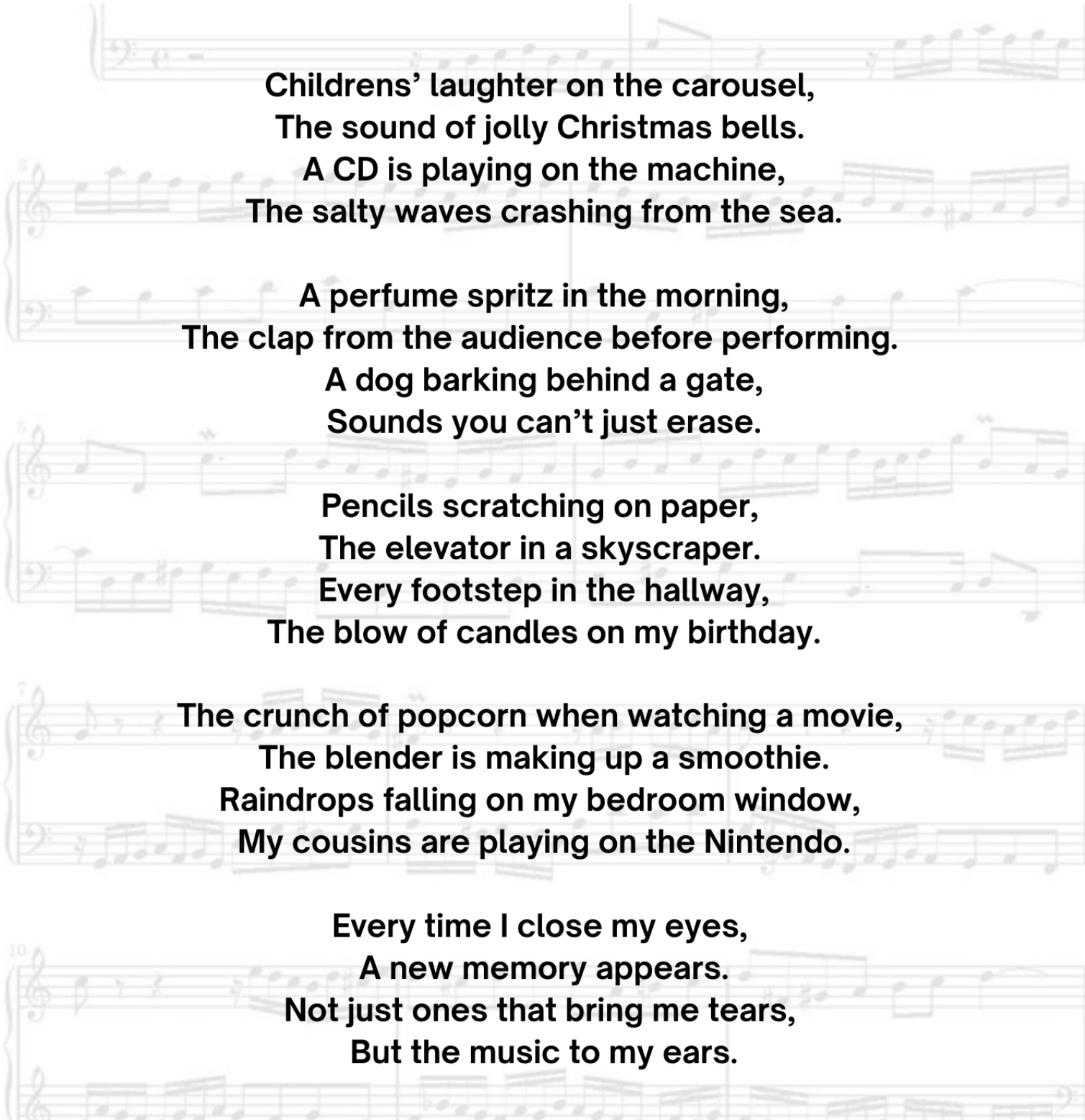
**by Huseyn Allahverdiyev, age 10**





# **Music to My Ears**

**Elena Sulewski**



**Childrens' laughter on the carousel,  
The sound of jolly Christmas bells.**

**A CD is playing on the machine,  
The salty waves crashing from the sea.**

**A perfume spritz in the morning,  
The clap from the audience before performing.**

**A dog barking behind a gate,  
Sounds you can't just erase.**

**Pencils scratching on paper,  
The elevator in a skyscraper.  
Every footstep in the hallway,  
The blow of candles on my birthday.**

**The crunch of popcorn when watching a movie,  
The blender is making up a smoothie.  
Raindrops falling on my bedroom window,  
My cousins are playing on the Nintendo.**

**Every time I close my eyes,  
A new memory appears.  
Not just ones that bring me tears,  
But the music to my ears.**



# THE BOMBINGS

The time had come.  
People gathered.  
But this time  
None  
Came.

The past Shattered.  
Our future, yet to be  
Fractured.

There WILL be consequences.  
consequences careening across  
continents,  
Oceans even.

Consequences resulting to  
peoples souls being  
dragged away,  
by our  
OWN  
CHOICES.

Echoing voices plead,  
For mercy;  
For Remembrance;  
Growing fainter  
and fainter.  
Slowly  
Fading  
Away.

The army of the  
New,  
Throwing away the  
Old..

Forgetting the past,  
the raging monster that  
once  
lived.

Forgetting the past,  
bringing dread to  
OUR  
FUTURE.

The raging monster  
that once blocked  
out the sun.

The raging monster  
that caused  
Deaths.

The raging monster  
that caused  
Grief.  
Grief.

Yet there is  
ALWAYS  
Hope for Peace.

Hoshino Noelle Melandrina Ito.



# **My Weird Car**

## **Huseyn Allahverdiyev**

**I saved up cash for my dream machine  
A ride so nice, it looked too clean.  
But the moment I sat in the driver's seat,  
It played Taylor Swift music on repeat.**

**I turned the wheel, it turned the opposite way,  
Took me to music class on a Saturday.  
Then I tried to turn on music, instead it rocked  
And drove straight into a big fat shopping cart.**

**The engine coughed like it had a stick of bamboo,  
The air conditioner so bad looks like I drew  
I flooded the gas, it let out a big yawn,  
Then the car stopped to sing on a neighbor's lawn.**

**I asked nicely, "Please let's roll!"  
It locked the doors and started to troll  
Now every ride's an awkward magic show  
Where will we end up, how will I know?**

**So, if you think he is my actual bro,  
You are so off like a big bag of dough  
Just know my car's not mean or rude  
It's just got a weird car attitude.**

**Is it nice, of course not  
The inside is flamin' hot  
As I turn off the spooky car  
It sounds like one from avatar**





# **Young Poet Contest**

## **Ages 13-18 Category**

### **First Place**

#### **“Liar”**

**by Fionna Gibbons, age 15**

### **Second Place**

#### **“Sleepy Train”**

**by Hudson Kinard, age 16**

### **Third Place**

#### **“Automaton”**

**by Sophia Emerson, age 15**





**Liar**  
**Fionna Gibbons**

Gilded tongue, still so young,  
Drowning in every untruth,  
Worse than a spy, buried in a lie,  
Her only innocence is youth,

She is an actress,  
Deceitful, untrue,  
One moment she's an angel,  
Then no good for you,  
Stay away, they say,  
Before you're misled,  
Pray none of her lies,  
Have you wind up dead,

Everyone thinks,  
She doesn't understand,  
That liars lose their tongues,  
And thieves lose their hands,

But I know, oh, I know,  
They'd all watch me die,  
I say I'm not afraid,  
But that is a lie.





# **Sleepytrain Lyrics**

## **Hudson Kinard**

I have this recurring dream I seize up on the floor,  
Nobody reacts or runs for the door he was such a gentle child,  
a shame he died so young  
Everybody stands and watches as I choke on my fat tongue

My best friend just got cheated on, she called me on the phone  
She's scared he's gonna hurt her but she's scared to be alone  
I don't know what to do and I don't know what to say  
I'm sorry you had to find out this way

I feel like there's something I need to do something I need to say  
I wish I was more productive  
I wish I could do more but lay here on my couch.  
I should be doing something.

It's getting real cold on this bench  
I wish I'd brought gloves.  
I wish the clouds would go away  
I wish I was in love.  
I wish I didn't have to wait on the bench in the cold  
without gloves.

I'm excited to see my friends I think  
Sometimes that irrational fear that everyone hates me,  
Doesn't feel so irrational.  
My friends are excited to see me.  
And I know it's wrong to be tired, but I'm tired.  
I'm so tired.  
And I know it's wrong to be tired,  
But I'm tired



# **Automaton Sophia Emerson**

**Gilded bird in crystal cage  
Yearning for soft down  
Manufactured notes ring.....false.**





# Young Poet Contest

## Honorable Mention

**“Favorite Memory”  
by Juliana Kitt, age 9**

**“A Journey Continues”  
by Kenzie Kinard, age  
12**





The background of the page features a stylized, hand-drawn illustration of a pirate ship. The ship is depicted with multiple masts and sails, sailing on a choppy sea. A large, prominent eye is drawn on the side of the ship's hull, looking forward. The entire scene is rendered in a sketchy, artistic style with a color palette of purples, pinks, and yellows.

## **Favorite Memory**

**by Juliana Kitt**

**I once woke up from a nap  
And then I got a slap**

**It took me into the next century  
And then I remembered my favorite memory**

**It's a memory with treasury  
And here is my favorite memory**

**Once I was sailing the Sea  
When three odd animals  
Started looking at me**

**I frowned and they did too  
And then a monkey called me  
Bugaboo**

**But then I woke up with a sigh  
And then someone started to cry**





## **A Journey Continues**

### **By Kenzie Kinard**

**My time here in Belgium  
Has been quite fun  
But sadly, my time here is done  
I will be sad to leave  
But excited to explore  
But there are so many things I will miss  
The clear waters of Italy  
The warm sand of France  
The cold lakes of Norway  
The historic architecture of Germany  
Just to name a few  
But there are some more  
I must mention too  
The palm trees of Spain  
The loud music of Sweden  
The tall statues of the Netherlands  
These are my favorites  
But I have so many more  
Being a military kid is hard  
But the world is mine to explore**



Thank you for writing these poems to share.  
You are all talented beyond compare.  
The pictures you conjure are so clever.  
We genuinely appreciate your endeavor.  
Whether it's haiku, sonnet, ballad, limerick, or free verse  
Please keep adding your poetic voice to the universe.

Sincerely,

The Brussels Library Staff









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