



## Emerging Writers' Competition



# SBS announces winners of the SBS Emerging Writers' Competition 2021

SBS today named the five talented writers who have been selected as the winners of the SBS Emerging Writers' Competition for 2021.

An initiative from [SBSVoices](#), the competition - now in its second year - aims to uncover bold new voices that reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia by inviting aspiring writers to share their stories and providing a platform for their voices to be heard.

The 2021 competition saw significant growth, with SBSVoices receiving almost 4,000 entries – nearly double the number of entries from last year - on the topic of 'Between Two Worlds: stories from a diverse Australia'.

Cat Yen was named as this year's winning author with her submission, *Minor Details*. The first literary piece Yen has ever written, *Minor Details* is an honest and raw account of a marginalised woman who is so focused on survival that she doesn't dare allow herself to chase her dreams. When she sees herself through the eyes of her middle-class boyfriend, it prompts her to re-examine not just her own life, but that of her migrant parents who came to Australia chasing their own dreams.

Yen, a 25-year-old data analyst from Melbourne, claims listening to hip-hop music inspired her writing style, saying "It's attuned me to the rhythm of words." Awarded \$5,000 to support further development of her writing and knowledge, Yen said: "This is the nicest thing that has ever happened to me. I'm so grateful and lucky to win this award."

Reflecting on the winning entry, judges and award-winning authors Tara June Winch and Behrouz Boochani described it as "masterly storytelling".

The judges continued: "This story manages to wrap a story around a story, the outer incarnation is that of outsiders, of a mother and a father and the things that were broken in the process of creating a family, and the inner heart is a tale of that minor detail of love, of having hope and in being understood. There is an elasticity to the writing - allowing the reader to invest and



journey in the story and at the same time be shaken by its truths, pulled back into the writer's orbit."

With the high standard of this year's competition, the judges struggled to name a single runner up, instead awarding two submissions the title - Arky Michael's *Songbird* and Maya Hodge's *bidngen* - with both authors receiving \$3,000 for further skill development.

There were also two highly commended entries with Miranda Jakich and Maya Skidmore, being recognised for their pieces, *Coat of Stones* and *The End Is Green and So is the Beginning*.

All winning pieces have been published on the [SBS Voices](#) website today.

On the competition entries, Tara June Winch said: "This year was ground-breaking in its volume and remarkable in the scope of stories. The quality of entries was extraordinary and the process of coming up with a collection of prize-winners was particularly challenging,"

"What struck us was the range of stories, from the pains of migration to the evocation of Country by some up-and-coming First Nation writers - all these stories encounter many versions of Australia, and dissect the sociological and political times of our lives"

Behrouz Boochani said: "Being a minority is challenging but also valuable because one understands politics and society on an intricate level, where their very lives are politicised. These stories showed such power. I would like to congratulate all of the winners and also the writers whose work was among the finalists."

Marshall Heald, Director of TV and Online Content at SBS, said: "We are thrilled at the continued success of the SBS Emerging Writers' Competition, and are in awe of the diversity and depth of talent of this year's entries. We are proud to provide a platform for emerging voices from under-represented backgrounds to be heard, and were overwhelmed to see close to 4,000 stories submitted this year, showcasing diverse perspectives and insights into Australia today.

"Our judges were tasked with a tough decision, choosing the winners from so many amazing submissions, and we are excited to share these unique stories with all Australians via SBS Voices."

All entries from this year's competition will be considered for inclusion in an official anthology of the SBS Emerging Writers' Competition, published by Hardie Grant. Approximately 30 entries will be selected for the anthology, to be published in 2022.

This follows the official anthology of the 2020 SBS Emerging Writers' Competition *Roots: Home is Who We Are*, which was published in July 2021.

**Ends.**



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**About the SBS Emerging Writers' Competition judges:**

Tara June Winch is a Wiradjuri author, born in Australia in 1983 and based in France. Her first novel, *Swallow the Air* was critically acclaimed. She was named a Sydney Morning Herald Best Young Australian Novelist and has won numerous literary awards for *Swallow the Air*. A 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition was published in 2016. In 2008, Tara was mentored by Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka as part of the prestigious Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Her second book, the story collection *After the Carnage* was published in 2016. *After the Carnage* was longlisted for the Victoria Premier's Literary Award for fiction, shortlisted for the 2017 NSW Premier's Christina Stead prize for Fiction and the Queensland Literary Award for a collection. She wrote the Indigenous dance documentary, *Carriberrie*, which screened at the 71<sup>st</sup> Cannes Film Festival and toured internationally. *The Yield* won the 2020 Miles Franklin Literary Award as well as the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, the People's Choice Award and Book of the Year at the 2020 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Behrouz Boochani is a Kurdish-Iranian writer, journalist and filmmaker. His memoir *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* was written in secrecy while he was being held in the Manus Island Detention Centre from 2013 to 2019. The book won the 2019 Victorian Prize for Literature. "I think that work was quite...that was exceptional. And I think that was something that I look at it like a mission as a writer to expose a system. For me, it was a mission. And that was quite different because I was writing to survive as well." Behrouz now resides in Christchurch, New Zealand.

**About SBS Voices**

SBS Voices is an online platform which provides a voice for, and champions, emerging writers from diverse backgrounds in Australia, particularly women. It aims to foster a sense of belonging for all Australians, by celebrating the unique stories of Australia's emerging writers.

SBS Voices has a mission of raising the voices of marginalised Australians with a focus on first person, memoir-style content and video. In the past two years, SBS Voices is proud to have published more than 100 new writers, sharing their unique stories and perspectives with all Australians. Many of those writers had never been published before.