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SAL NAMES CLAUDIA CASTRO LUNA AND HUGO HOUSE AS SIXTH ANNUAL SHERRY PROWDA LITERARY CHAMPION WINNERS

Seattle, WA— February 11, 2019: At their annual Words Matter benefit gala on April 4, 2019, Seattle Arts & Lectures (SAL) will present the sixth annual Sherry Prowda Literary Champion Award to Claudia Castro Luna, Washington State Poet Laureate, and the literary arts organization Hugo House. SAL and the Prowda selection committee chose Castro Luna and Hugo House for demonstrating true commitment to our region's community of readers and writers.

Claudia Castro Luna—current Washington State Poet Laureate, former Seattle Civic Poet, and author of *Killing Marías* (Two Sylvias Press)—is a strong voice for immigrants and creative voices alike in the Pacific Northwest. Her acclaimed Seattle Poetic Grid, completed during her tenure as Civic Poet, is an online interactive map of showcasing poems by community members about different locations around the city. Of her work, committee member Jennie Shortridge said, “When [Castro Luna] shares her story of emigrating from El Salvador during its civil war, she connects us to the immigrant experience in ways that help our community move forward, and helps us help each other. In addition to writing her own stunning and important work, she generously advocates for other poets, other writers, and all readers in Washington State.”

Hugo House, which has offered a space in Capitol Hill for creative writing readings, classes, workshops, and more for the past two decades, redeveloped its property and opened its doors again in September. “Amidst a big year for Hugo House,” committee member Linda Johns said, “The staff stayed committed to offering classes at their temporary location and broke down barriers to access by leading more than 30 free Write with Hugo House programs at Seattle Public Library branches in Columbia City, Fremont, and West Seattle.” Committee member Christine Foye added, “Hugo House brings a sense of joy and wonder to their space for literary community and creation. The idea that such a place can exist, emphatically, in a time when writers and their voices are so often under siege, is absolutely worth celebrating.”

The Prowda Literary Champion Award is named for Sherry Prowda, SAL’s founder and first Executive Director. It was created to honor Prowda’s vision of a future in which imaginative acts such as reading, writing, and creative thinking are indispensable to a curious, engaged, democratic society, and her leadership as a champion of the literary arts. Each year, the award celebrates the individuals and organizations that make Seattle an outstanding place for writers and readers.

The Prowda Award Selection committee was comprised of local literary luminaries: Paul Constant, co-founder of *The Seattle Review of Books*; Mary Ann Gwinn, former *Seattle Times* book editor; Linda Johns, children’s book author and Fiction Librarian at the Seattle Public Library; Jennie Shortridge, local bestselling author of *Love Water Memory* and co-founder of Seattle7Writers; and Rick Simonson of Elliott Bay Book Company.

About Seattle Arts & Lectures: Founded in 1987, Seattle Arts & Lectures champions the literary arts by engaging and inspiring readers and writers of all generations in the Puget Sound region. SAL's programs include the Literary Arts Series, Poetry Series, Women You Need to Know (WYNK), Journalism Series, SAL Presents, Hinge, Local Voices, Summer Book Bingo, the Youth Poet Laureate (YPL) program, and

Writers in the Schools (WITS). For more information about SAL, visit lectures.org.

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