

Yet more stars at Book World Prague 2021. Czech readers will meet the author of *Cloud Atlas* David Mitchell and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who penned the book „Americanah“

Book World Prague announces more big names to feature at the 26th international book fair and literary festival. The previously announced French author Laurent Binet will be joined by the English writer David Mitchell, author of *Cloud Atlas*, and the most prominent voice of contemporary African literature Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of the bestselling novel *Americanah*. After a year's delay caused by the pandemic, Prague will also welcome representatives of the Polish reportage school Witold Szabłowski and Martyna Bunda. Literature as a Voice of Freedom is a new feature focusing on Belarus this year, highlighting, among other, Andrei Khadanovich and Dmitry Strotsev. Winners of the European Union Prize for Literature will offer insights into contemporary literature elsewhere in Europe. The Book World Prague 2021 guest of honour is France. The book fair will take place on September 23-26 at the Prague Exhibition Grounds.

The Nigerian-American author and activist **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** first drew literary attention to herself with her very first novel *Purple Hibiscus*, awarded with the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for best literary debut. It was her third novel, *Americanah*, which attracted worldwide acclaim. The book features among the ten best books of 2013 as selected by the New York Times. Both these novels and several others are available in Czech translations. Adichie's books draw on her own experiences: born in Nigeria, she moved to the United States and currently lives alternately in both countries. The prominence of her voice among contemporary African prose-writers is perhaps equalled by her credit as an activist – she speaks out on topics of race and gender and her lecture *We Should All Be Feminists* is quoted by Beyoncé in her song *Flawless*.

David Mitchell is another distinguished guest of the book fair whose renown extends beyond the borders of his homeland. Genius of the multiple-voices literature, prose-writer, author of TV and film scripts and opera librettos, he debuted with the novel *Ghostwritten* (published in Czech as *Hybatelé*). Mitchell's two subsequent novels, *number9dream* and *Cloud Atlas*, were shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. *Cloud Atlas*' popularity was further enhanced by its successful screen adaptation directed by Tom Tykwer and the Wachowskis. Mitchell's co-operation with these filmmakers continues – he joined the screenwriting team of the fourth instalment of the cult series *Matrix*. Time magazine lists Mitchell among the one hundred most influential people in the world. His works are also published in Czech translations.

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Besides France, the book fair will also focus on Poland and its literature. Our northern neighbour was to be the event's guest of honour last year and its current programme features some of the originally scheduled encounters. One such invitee is the prose-writer and reporter of the *Polityka* weekly **Martyna Bunda**. Her debut novel *Nieczułość* (Heartless) conveys major historical events from the female perspective and was nominated for the prestigious Nike award. At Book World she will talk about her new book *Kot niebieski* (The Blue Cat), another return to the idiosyncratic region of her childhood – Kashubia. Together with another guest, **Witold Szabłowski**, Bunda is a representative of one of the main features of Poland's programme: non-fiction literature, chiefly reportage. In his books, Szabłowski returns, among other, to the topic of the Volyn massacre. Marking the book fair will be the publication in Czech of his latest book *Dictators' Chef* about the cooks of Saddam Hussein or Fidel Castro. British reporter **Jack Fairweather** received a prestigious award for his biography of "Poland's superhero" Witold Pilecki, who voluntarily became a prisoner at the Auschwitz concentration camp in order to report on the conditions inside this death factory. His book *The Volunteer* won the Costa Award and the author will fly to Prague to sign the book all the way from Vermont.

Besides the art of literary reportage, Poland's programme will shine a spotlight on two more topics. Polish illustrations in children's books published in Czech will be presented at the *Browse the World* exhibition. The 100th anniversary of the birth Stanisław Lem, an iconic name of science-fiction, is reflected in the works of several contemporary Czech comic-book authors. Their works can be seen at the *Future in Bubbles* travelling exhibition, premiering at the book fair.

„Poland was scheduled as the guest of honour for 2020, which was also the year when many new translations into Czech had been published. Some of these we have introduced online, other books waited for the Book World. The result is this year's rich and varied programme, complete with a large exhibition stand offering a wide array of books, exhibitions and concerts,” the director of the Polish Institute in Prague Maciej Ruczaj describes Poland's presentation.

Starting this year, Book World has decided to dedicate a special section of programmes to topics it has always considered important, namely those of supporting freedom, democracy and human rights. This new feature is called Literature as a Voice of Freedom and this year it focuses on Belarus. Throughout Book World, the Prague Exhibition Grounds will host a display of the Independent Culture Embassy of Belarus. The programme will include authors' readings, meetings with Belarusian poets and debates on how to convey the truth or life in exile. One of these encounters will be that with the poet, translator, literary scholar and laureate of numerous prizes for literature **Andrei Khadanovich**. His poems have been translated into twenty languages, including Czech. Poetry is also the central means of expression for the Russian-writing author **Dmitry Strotsev**, who comes to Prague to represent Belarus' literary underground.

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Another special section highlights the European Union Prize for Literature. As the book fair's programming editor Guillaume Basset says: *"Our co-operation this year with the European Union Prize for Literature is a further affirmation of our strong interest in Europe-related topics. The latest Czech laureate of the prize is **Lucie Faulerová** and her book *Deathmaiden*. The awarded author will present her work at the Book World, as will three other laureates of the prize."* The other three winners are the Norwegian writer **Gunstein Bakke** (awarded for *Maud and Aud: A Novel on Traffic*), Hungarian prose-writer **Edina Szvoren** (awarded for her story collection *Serves Her Right She Ain't Got Any*) and the writer and visual artist from Catalonia **Irene Solà** (*I Sing and the Mountain Dances*). All the above authors will also take part in a debate on what Europe and its values mean for writers.

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