**Book World Prague 2021 will highlight French, Polish and Belarusian literature, its star guests are Mitchell, Adichie and Binet**

**On September 23-26, the Exhibition Grounds at Prague-Holešovice will once again play host to literature. 288 exhibitors and 607 guests and performers from 27 countries and regions will converge during the international book fair and literary festival Book World Prague 2021. Its 26th annual edition has adopted the motto “Language Is My Home”, setting itself the goal of scrutinising the relationship authors and their works enjoy with language and their geographical and mental roots in a given country. Visitors can once again look forward to the many facets of contemporary literature. Our guest of honour is France, a veritable literary heavyweight. The talk will be, among other, of our “shared” author Milan Kundera. Readers will be able to enjoy personal encounters with the literary superstars David Mitchell, Laurent Binet and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Laureates of the European Union Prize for Literature will also be represented. Two countries will enjoy their very own spotlight: Poland will acquaint us, among other, with its legendary reportage school, and Belarus will be centre stage in the Literature as a Voice of Freedom section.**

For this year’s guest of honour, the Book World Prague organisers have selected France, a country of great literary appeal. The wide scope of France’s literature will be introduced, from fiction to children’s literature, from graphic novels to theatre. *“To mark this* *invitation we wanted to offer an insight into the creative fields and literature in French in all their versatility, while at the same time making a European confirmation of our support for translations. It is the translators and editors who initiate translations, making their contribution to the circulation of texts and thoughts. It is their selection that influences what the readers of tomorrow will have access to*,” says Alexis Dutertre, France’s ambassador to the Czech Republic. He also perceives literary dialogue as representing a strong bond between co-operating countries.

One of the star authors who will be present in person in Prague to introduce their work to Czech readers also hails from France. **Laurent Binet** had captivated the jury of the prestigious Goncourt award – and later also on Czech readers – with his highly original perspective of the events surrounding the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in his novel *HHhH*. At Book World Prague 2021 he will be introducing a Czech translation of his latest book *Civilisations*, an alternative look at history. He will be discussing historical fiction with, among other, the Czech writer **Alena Mornštajnová**, who also uses the “what if” approach in her bestselling book *Listopád*.

The colourful world of French literature will be represented by other authors, too, many of whom have already been translated into Czech: **Muriel Barbery** will be introducing her latest book *A Single Rose*, **Pendy Diouf** will offer a glimpse of “shaman” theatre, and **Magali Le Huche** and representatives of the **Talents Hauts** publishing house will provide a look at French children’s literature. Another major author, acclaimed both in the Czech Republic and in France, will not appear in person but will be the subject of many discussions. The writer in question is **Milan Kundera**. Author of Kundera’s biography **Jean-Dominique Brierrer** will be among those providing their perspective of the Brno-born author, who found his second home in exile in France.

Being this year’s guest of honour, France is at the centre of attention, but the literary programme encompasses a total of 27 countries and regions. When David Mitchell and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie had been announced as Book World 2021 guests, the two names drew much public attention. The English author of fiction, screenwriter and librettist **David Mitchell** achieved substantial critical as well as public acclaim, mainly with his novel *Cloud Atlas*. He is also a co-screenwriter of the fourth instalment of the cult film series *Matrix*. At Book World Prague 2021 he will be talking about his work and the role of literature and stories and myths in general in our everyday lives.

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie** has won the attention of the literary circles with her autobiographical novel *Americanah*. Originally from Nigeria, the author travels between the country of her birth and the United States, and has emerged as a prominent voice among contemporary African writers. In both her fiction and essays she focuses on issues of race and gender. At Book World Prague 2021 she will meet, among other, the Czech fiction writer **Viktorie Hanišové** and the two willdebate issues of identity in literature.

Special focus will also be provided to Poland, last year book fair’s intended guest of honour, whose festival presentation was disrupted by the pandemic. This year’s extensive programme of Polish literature hopes to become a worthy substitute. Focus will be given, among other, to the renowned Polish school of reportage. It will be represented by the seasoned author **Witold Szabłowski**, who will be signing at the book fair his book *How to Feed a Dictator*, and the prose-writing hopeful **Martyna Bunda** with her latest book *Blue Cat*, set in the idiosyncratic region of Kashubia. In a debate on “heartless history” she will be joined by **Karin Lednická**, whose novel *The Slanting Church* looks at the history of Silesia from a female perspective.

Poland’s programme also features the British journalist **Jack Fairweather**. Winner of the Costa Book Award, Fairweather has authored a biography of the “Polish superhero” from Auschwitz Witold Pilecki. Other items on the Polish programme include illustrations for children or the 100th birth anniversary of the icon of sci-fi literature Stanisław Lem.

The topics of supporting freedom, democracy and human rights have always resonated with Book World Prague. Starting with its 26th edition we are dedicating a special section to them, entitled Literature as a Voice of Freedom. This year it will focus on Belarus. The Exhibition Grounds will host a temporary Embassy of Independent Belarusian Culture, offering authors’ readings, meetings with writers, debates or a night of poetry and music. Two of the country’s foremost poets – **Andrei Khadanovich** and **Dmitry Strotzev** – will offer their perspective of Belarus. One of their encounters will be during a debate moderated by **Jáchym Topol**.

The objective of Book World Prague is to offer as much contemporary literature from various countries and regions of the world as possible in a limited space and time. For this reason we have also dedicated a special section to titles awarded with the European Union Prize for Literature. Prague will witness a debate on European values featuring the prize’s laureates **Gunstein Bakke** (Norway), **Edina Szvoren** (Hungary), **Irene Solà** (Catalonia) and **Lucie Faulerová** (Czechia).

Numerous authors visiting the book fair from neighbouring Slovakia include two laureates of the Anasoft Litera award – **Vladimír Balla** and **Peter Balko**.Another guest, **Anne Cathrine Bomannová**, will come from Denmark. The successful writer is also a psychologist, a fact she often relies on in her writing. The list of Scandinavian authors includes **Mikko-Pekka Heikkinen**, with whom Czech readers will be familiar – his gangster story from Lapland *The Reindeer Mafia* has been translated into Czech. Arriving from sunlit Italy will be the novelist, essayist and journalist **Sandro Veronesi**. His novel *The Force of the Past* has been translated into fifteen languages, received several prestigious award and was adapted for the screen.

The **Das Buch** literary series has already become a regular feature at Book World and involves co-operation with Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Writers, translators and publishers have all accepted the invitation to increase Czech readers’ awareness of contemporary literature in German-speaking countries.

The programme of Book World Prague 2021 provides close to five hundred items, including exhibitions, children’s events, educational programmes for schools, presentations of titles boasting various literary awards, but above all a star line-up of Czech writers. The Covid-19 pandemic will also be addressed, as it has affected almost everything last year, including the book markets. The Professional Forum will therefore focus on the (post)pandemic transformation experienced by this segment not just in Czechia but also in other countries.

**Book World Prague 2021 in numbers**

**Book fair:**

Number of exhibitors: 288

Number of expositions: 152

Total area:  2933 m2

**Literary festival:**

Number of performers: 607

Number of programmes: 481

Number of exhibitions: 11

**Number of countries and regions: 27**

Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Catalonia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Nigeria, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom

**Organiser:** Svět knihy, s.r.o., company of the Association of Czech Booksellers and Publishers

**Financially supported by:** Czech Republic’s Ministry of Culture, Prague City Hall, District Prague 7

**General partner:** ČSOB

**Partners:** DOX – Centre for Contemporary Art, Czech Centres, Czech Literary Centre, Gauč na Výstavišti, Jahoda – Community Centre, Moravian Land Library, National Library, Scandinavian House; Auroton Computer, Graspo, Kosmas, Magnesia

**Main media partner:** Česká televize

**Media partners:** Český rozhlas, Právo, Echo weekly, Echo 24, Knižní novinky, Host, A2, Deník N, Mladý svět, Náš region, Revue Prostor, Radio1

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