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**Svetlana Alexievich, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Lukas Bärfuss or Etgar Keret – Book World Prague Presents Literary Stars, Some as “Voices of Freedom”**

**Book World Prague – 27th international book fair and literary festival – announces the names of even more literary celebrities it looks forward to hosting. Its section entitled Literature, or the Voice of Freedom offers a public platform to authors fighting for freedom. As such, it will present two authors of world renown: laureate of the Nobel Prize for Literature Svetlana Alexievich from Belarus, and one of the leading representatives of Russia’s intellectual opposition Lyudmila Ulitskaya. Another distinguished guest, the human rights activist from Hong Kong Nathan Law, will also be heard as a voice of freedom. Book World Prague connects a wide array of guests from various parts of the world. Readers can look forward to encounters with the acclaimed Swiss novelist Lukas Bärfuss, as well as the master of short texts from Israel, Etgar Keret. Czech as well as global audiences have shown their appreciation for the Canadian “queen of domestic thrillers” Shari Lapena, and the same is true of the British author Naomi Wood, acclaimed by critics and readers alike, or the French writer with Moroccan roots and outstanding literary talent Leïla Slimani. Besides the already announced guest of honour, which is Italy, 27th Book World will also shine a spotlight on Ukrainian literature for adults and children. The Prague Book World will welcome all book enthusiasts on June 9-12 at the Prague Exhibition Grounds.**

This year, one more name will be added to the list of Nobel Prize winners to have visited Book World Prague – that of **Svetlana Alexievich**. The Belarusian (and, from her mother, Ukrainian) journalist, writer and representative of literary journalism looks at some turning points of the Soviet and post-Soviet era through the testimonies of “normal” people, which she records with literary excellence. On several occasions she faced court proceedings or went to exile. All her books have been published in Czech, including *Voices from Chernobyl* and *Secondhand Time*. Book World Prague 2022 will present the outstanding author with the Jiří Theiner Award, which changes its status this year. It will newly focus on personalities who raise their free voices against censorship and in support of democracy. A critical perspective of both the Soviet Union and the current Russian regime is also typical for the work of the Russian author **Lyudmila Ulitskaya**. Her fame spreads beyond the borders of her country, in which she is seen as a troublemaker by the establishment because of her criticism of Putin’s regime. She also talks of Russia’s “Stalinisation”. Ulitskaya counts among those Russian intellectuals who have condemned Putin’s aggression against Ukraine. Her novels *The Kukotsky Enigma* and *The Big Green Tent* are among her books that have been translated into Czech. Both authors currently live in exile in Berlin.

*“Inviting Svetlana Alexievich and Lyudmila Ulitskaya is an important part of the programme section entitled Literature, or the Voice of Freedom. We want to provide a platform for voices that disagree with Putin, whose opinions are heard much louder. Even though Book World Prague has cancelled Russia’s official presentation, it certainly does not cancel Russia’s culture – quite the opposite,”* says Book World’s programme director Guillaume Basset. This year, the section entitled Literature as the Voice of Freedom wants to emphasise two undemocratic regimes: Russia and China. We will therefore also hear the voice of the human rights activist **Nathan Law**, one of the leaders of Hong Kong’s umbrella revolution – an attempt to protect democracy from the communist party’s authoritarian rule. The Chinese government cracked down on the protesters and Law ended up in jail. He now lives in exile. Last year he described his story in the book *Freedom: How We Lose It and Fight Back*.

Book World Prague presents its visitors the opportunity to acquaint themselves with literature from many different countries. This year’s event will emphasise, among other, the work of the Swiss novelist and playwright **Lukas Bärfuss**, whose name already greatly resonates in German-speaking countries. He is the only Swiss writer to have received the Georg Büchner Award, the most prestigious prize in the field of German-language literature. Bärfuss focuses on topics that are both current and disquieting, such as development help to Rwanda during the genocide, or sexual life of the mentally handicapped. At the book fair he will join a debate about the writing of plays together with the Spanish philosopher, mathematician and fellow dramatist **Juan Mayorg**, who has sought inspiration, among other, in the legend of the Golem. The popular and acclaimed Israeli author **Etgar Keret** comes to pay his “debt” to the Prague Book World, as he could not come when his native country, Israel, was the book fair’s guest of honour in 2017. Keret’s short story collection *Missing Kissinger* is counted among the most significant literary works in Hebrew. A number of Keret’s books are also available in Czech translation, most recently his short stories *Fly Already*.

By inviting the Canadian writer **Shari Lapena**, Book World Prague shows that it is by no means an elitist event, and that its scope includes literature speaking to the general public. The “queen of domestic thrillers” entertains her readers with addictive and nail-biting storytelling. Her worldwide success started with the 2016 psycho-thriller *The Couple Next Door*. Lapena’s latest book *Not a Happy Family*, which she will personally present at the book fair, yet again confirms her unique skill in producing unexpected plot twists. **Leïla Slimani**, the French prose-writer with Moroccan roots, is recognised by readers outside of France mostly for her novel *Sweet Song*, awarded with the Prix Goncourt. In this, as well as in her other works, Slimani focuses on the issues of feminism, female sexuality and colonialism. Her novel *War, War, War,* first volume of a planned trilogy entitled *The Country of* Others, as well as the graphic novel *À mains* nues, have recently been translated into Czech. Czech readers will also be happy to meet in person the British writer **Naomi Wood**, whose captivating history-based books are available in Czech translations – be it the highly sophisticated *The Hiding* Game, taking place in Germany’s turbulent pre-war years, or the novel *Mrs. Hemingway*, which intertwines the lives of the famous writer’s four wives.

Book World Prague 2022 organisers have also decided to show their support for Ukraine, its writers and other artists connected with literature. One book fair display will therefore be dedicated to the presentation of Ukrainian literature for children and young people. *“We are engaged in intense communication with our Ukrainian partners about their participation, which should be substantial and noticeable. We seek to provide a partial compensation for the cancellation of the great Book Arsenal book fair in Kyiv and hope to hold a small-scale Arsenal at our book fair. Besides readings and discussions, we are also planning a multimedia show called Fokstroty, that will present Ukraine’s avantgarde poetry from the first half of the 20th century in the rhythm of the disco. We also want to play our part in keeping Ukraine’s book industry going. Books in Ukrainian from Czech publishers will be distributed to Ukrainian children for free at the book fair,”* says Book World Prague director Radovan Auer.

On June 9-12, 2022, Book World Prague will play host at the Exhibition Grounds to writers, but also playwrights, screenwriters, authors of TV series and music, in short, everybody who is included in the wider world of books. This celebration of literature will be attended by guests from various parts of the world, from Iceland to Argentina, with a traditional presentation of authors in the Das Buch project or writers from the Scandinavian countries. The guest of honour this year will be Italy. Contemporary Italian literature and atmosphere of the country imbued with culture will be presented by, among others, Donatella Di Pietrantonio, Viola Ardone, Stefania Auci, Gianfranco Calligarich and Luigi Zoja. The 27th Book World has borrowed its motto from the work of the Italian intellectual of global renown Umberto Eco. His words fit in perfectly with the philosophy of Book World Prague: “We live for books. A sweet mission in this world dominated by disorder and decay.” The organisers also remembered the youngest readers, who will find what they are looking for in the Growing with the Book pavilion, and an interesting programme will also be offered aimed at professional public.

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