



Book World Prague '18

24th International Book Fair and Literary Festival

10.–13. 5.





participants
691



exhibitors
404



exhibitions
22



programmes
626



countries
30



stands
208



visitors
46 000



Dear exhibitors, guests and friends of Book World,

The largest Czech event for books and literature, this year held for the 24th time, has just ended. Although this was a very successful season – it broke a number of records – we are already thinking about what we can do to make next year's event even better. Book World Prague will be celebrating a quarter of a century, after all! To mark this jubilee, we have succeeded in attracting the countries of Latin America as guest of honour – a major coup, as I'm sure you will agree.

In addition to the main event, we have decided to extend our activities to the regions. This September, we will welcome visitors to the 1st Book World Plzeň international book fair and literary festival. We are very much looking forward to the Plzeň event, and we trust that you are too.

In closing, I wish to thank all exhibitors, programme partners, partner institutions, financial backers, participating embassies and centres and institutes of culture, performers, and, not but not least, the whole implementation team.

Without you, Book World would not be what it is – a national holiday for books and literature. In other words, you are Book World.

Radovan Auer
director of the fair



foto: Michaela Danelová



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**1st International
Book Fair and
Literary Festival**

21. – 22. 9. 2018
DEPO2015 Pilsen

Guest of Honour – Israel



Partners



The Jiří Theiner Award Travels to Britain

The prestigious prize awarded at Book World Prague to a living person or institution who or which has made a significant contribution to the dissemination and promotion of Czech culture abroad was this year presented to the British translator **DAVID SHORT**.



On the Friday afternoon, visitors were able to meet the new Jiří Theiner Award laureate at a debate moderated by David Vaughan, who opened the ceremony by talking about Jiří Theiner, whose name the award bears. "He lived through two totalitarian regimes, was forced to leave his homeland, knew very well what both oppression and freedom mean, and he also understood the role of literature in society. He fought tirelessly for freedom of expression. In today's complicated times we need more people like Jiří Theiner."

This year's laureate David Short then introduced himself by explaining how he, a native Briton, first became interested in Czech and Slovak, the two languages from which he translates. "I studied in Prague between 1966 and 1972, meaning I witnessed in person the most trying years for your country. I remember the very day of the occupation, in August 1968. I was at a summer house in Slapy with a couple of colleagues from the faculty and they woke me up in the small hours to tell me that the country had been invaded. At that moment I thought it was a rather silly way of getting an Englishman out of bed, but before long I realised that this was for real. I got in touch with the embassy and they told me to return quickly to Prague, get on a train and go home," he recalled.

But he didn't stay in Britain for long. "There was no reason for me not to continue in my Czech studies, so I came back," he added.

Soon afterwards there was another fateful event in the history of the republic and in David's own life. On the day of Jan Palach's death, he met his future wife and decided to stay in Czechoslovakia even after his studies were over.

Even though he now lives in Britain again, his Czech is so fluent that you doubt initially he is a foreigner at all. His command of some of the more intricate aspects of Czech grammar is better than most native speakers'. One example of this is the adverbial participle, a passion of his. "I love linguistic challenges," he explained with a smile.

He started translating from Czech in 1968. "My very first translation was about polluted waters in Ukraine," he recalled.

Gradually the texts got more and more sophisticated, and nowadays David Short is among the most sought-after translators. Thanks to him readers in the UK can now appreciate not only the likes of Bohumil Hrabal, but also contemporary Czech authors. One of them, Antonín Bajaja, read the laudatio.

There can be no doubt that David Short truly deserves the Jiří Theiner Award.

Czech Readers Meet António Lobos Antunes

"This is one of the countries with the smallest number of my translations. As far as I know, only two of my books have been published here. This is ideal, because nobody knows me here. It's quite the contrary of what you might think – it's a truly great and relaxed feeling," said 76-year-old **ANTÓNIO LOBO ANTUNES**, one of Portugal's foremost contemporary writers, on the Saturday afternoon. The author of 28 novels had come to introduce the Czech translation of his book *The Return of the Caravels*, originally published in 1988. To give readers a better understanding of the context of and inspiration for his work, he used a captivating monologue to present a summary of his



dramatic life. One of eight sons of a prominent Portuguese family, even as a child he wanted to become a writer, but his father made him study psychiatry. Until the Carnation Revolution of 1974 he felt traumatised by not being able to stand up to the inhumane nature of the dictatorship that had held his country in its grip since 1926. In 1971, this trauma led him to the Angolan war as a military doctor. In his books, he comes to terms with his experiences to this date. This is also true of *The Return of the Caravels*, even though Antunes wrote the novel in the substantially different environment of the liberated Portugal and from the position of a respected writer, which he managed to become despite the resistance of his elitist family.

I Wake Up for Poetry's Sake

The legendary Polish poet **ADAM ZAGAJEWSKI** was a guest at the book fair. His work has received countless accolades and he is considered a serious contender for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The Friday meeting with this outstanding representative of the world of poetry was attended by many visitors to the fair. Adam Zagajewski's open and communicative style proved that far from being absentminded dreamers, poets are quite normal, flesh-and-blood mortals.

"Why do I resort to poetry rather than prose? Quite simply because some thoughts and feelings are more easily expressed through verse," he said, in explanation of his division of labour. "Once, on a visit to the Gulf of Mexico, which had made a great impression on me, I was missing the words to describe

a moment. Perhaps I could express it in music, but not in a multitude of words. Poetry is more internal, it is more on the interior level, it is more readily available to describe feelings. That's why I usually choose poems."

Asked why his works often deal with the past, he replied that revisiting exceptional moments is like reliving one's childhood. "The past is ever-present in us. It is deep-rooted, and sometimes it emerges without us even realising. It is lodged somewhere inside."

To the question of how he works, he answered with wit: "As soon as I wake up in the morning, I know whether it's going to be a day

for poetry or a day for prose. As you can see, more often than not I wake up to a poetry day."

The ensuing discussion included questions about the influence of politics on his work. Having signed the Letter of 59, an anti-Soviet petition, he became a banned author in 1975 and went into emigration. He returned to Poland only in 2002. "You can't just close your eyes to the world around you," he explained, adding that politics is still an influence on his work today.

This wasn't Adam Zagajewski's first visit to Prague – he has a close connection with the city and even wrote a poem called 'September' about it, in which he describes his search for the poet Vladimír Holan's house.

His latest book published in Czech is entitled *Neviditelné věci* [*Invisible Things*].

In one sentence, what is your definition of literature?

Adam Zagajewski

Still the best way to experience the impossible – a life that is not your own, a world not seen through your eyes.

Drago Jančar and a Touch of Inspiration from Contemporary Slovenian Literature

As part of The Ground-breaking 20th Century, a major theme of this year's book fair, the Lapidarium venue at the Exhibition Grounds played host to the renowned contemporary Slovenian prose writer **DRAGO JANČAR**. A discussion with the author, moderated by his current Czech translator Kamil Valšík, focused mainly on *I Saw Her That Night*, a novel of his recently published in a Czech translation.

The novel's main protagonist is a Slovenian aristocrat by the name of Veronika, who disappears one day in the middle of the Second World War. Nobody knows exactly what has happened to her, but everybody eagerly awaits her return. The story is narrated in five chapters through the recollections of five different characters who have enjoyed an intense relationship with her – her mother, a housemaid, a butler from her manor, a simple peasant who taught her how to ride and had a passionate affair with her, a German officer from the occupying army, and a doctor. The story is thus composed mosaic-like from various points of view and set in the chaos of the Second World War on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, where hardly anything is black and white.

"I didn't go looking for the story, it sought me out," Drago Jančar said, in answer to a question about the source of his inspiration. As he was leafing through a family chronicle at Strmol Castle in Upper Carniola, he found in it a very evocative account of the disappearance of the lady of the castle. Images evoked by the text in the annals kept coming to his mind at night – hence the novel's title *I Saw Her That Night*.

Translator Kamil Valšík remarked that this is not Jančar's first book to feature a heroine. The author commented that women are more sensitive to and perceptive about historic upheavals. Their perception in both rational and emotional terms is much deeper, which is to literature's advantage.



It is characteristic of Drago Jančar's work that it is often set against the backdrop of decisive historical events. As the author remarks, "Every nation has its shady side, which is not easily reflected in official history or political discourse. Literature is much better equipped to address these problematic topics and put a name to them."

Drago Jančar is also an essayist – one of his essays describes his four-day experience of war-torn Sarajevo, which he visited as part of a humanitarian mission in the 1990s.

The End of the World That Hasn't Happened

Czech readers are very familiar with the author and translator **PATRIK OUŘEDNÍK**, and it came as no surprise that for his visit to Book World Prague the Lapidarium welcomed a capacity crowd. And there was much in store for the eager audience.

The author lives and works in France, and the main reason for this meeting with Czech readers was for him to introduce in person his book *La fin du monde n'aurait pas eu lieu* [*The End of the World Might Not Have Taken Place*], and to read from it.

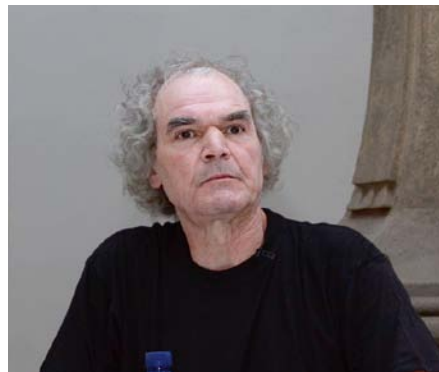
"What's it about? I can never really tell. I wait for the first reviews to come out and tell me," he joked. "From these I choose the most interesting sentences and pretend they are mine."

Before reading excerpts from the new book, he and his audience looked back briefly on his highly successful work *Europeana*, which has been translated into thirty-five languages, making Patrik Ouředník one of the most-translated Czech writers.

"I became a writer by accident, and as a translator I am well aware that some of the passages in the book will probably make my translator colleagues slightly dizzy," the author said.

Europeana was published in 2001, but its topic is still highly relevant today, making it the subject of unfaltering interest. "Truth be told, I wrote that book for myself. I was looking for a publication about the 20th century, but whatever I laid my hands on disappointed me. I couldn't get the experience I was looking for. They say that writers write the books they would like to read themselves, and as far as *Europeana* is concerned, this is one hundred percent true."

The book entitled *The End of the World Might Not Have Taken Place* was originally written in French and published in 2014,



some thirty years after the author first went to France.

Why start writing in French, instead of his customary Czech, only now, after such a long time in France? "Every language brings a different style of thinking. Czech is a rich, diverse and down-to-earth language. French is completely different, which means writing in it was also completely different. It was an interesting experience. I'm glad I tried it," he explained.

Well known for his translations of Czech literature into French, Patrik Ouředník has now taken on the opposite role, having authored a work of literature that needed to be translated into Czech. The complete translation is not yet ready, but some passages have been finished, and it was from these that Patrik Ouředník read. It was interesting to see that the audience was so taken in by the author's words that people were laughing out loud, nodding their heads and expressing all kind of emotions.

The meeting with Patrik Ouředník was interesting throughout and hardly anyone left disappointed.

How a Horse Walked into a Bar

On the Friday afternoon, visitors to the fair flocked to a debate with **DAVID GROSSMAN**, one of Israel's most esteemed contemporary writers, who was representing the literature of Israel, guest of honour at this year's fair. Grossman who was presenting his latest book *A Horse Walks into a Bar*.

Its story is set one evening, with an ageing actor having arrived in a small city to entertain the local audience with his stand-up comedy show. But the show gets out of hand, and among the hilarious and often very coarse jokes the actor begins to address some of his real-life traumas.

The book has been published to exceptional worldwide acclaim. Grossman appeared in the presence of Israeli ambassador Daniel Meron, who explained that in Israel reality is so multifaceted and complex that prose is the best way to describe it in all its aspects. He also admitted that he sometimes reads Grossman's books in order to understand Israel's complexity a little better.

In the ensuing debate, moderated by Petr Fischer, Grossman acknowledged his affinity with Kafka, Hašek, his beloved Hrabal, and, above all, Ota Pavel and his book *The Golden Eels*. He also spoke about his love of Hebrew, a 4000-year-old language which after 1800 years began to be rediscovered as a living tongue, with the need to put names to new things and find new words for today's realities. David Grossman explained that he had invited fifteen of his translators to a week-long retreat in a small German village, where he would read to them one passage after another from his new book and allow them time for discussion about the most fitting translations. In this context he paid a compliment to his Czech translators Lenka Bukovská and Mariana Fischer. The title of the book, *A Horse Walks into a Bar*, is the opening sentence of one of the jokes the book's protagonist tells in his show.

In one sentence, what is your definition of literature?

Patrik Ouředník

The presence of letters on a page.

Robin Cook: Fortune's Industrial Child

The American novelist **ROBIN COOK** became one of the greatest literary stars to visit the annual Book World Prague fair, which is in its 24th year. The Euromedia Group, his current publisher, hosted a debate between the author and his Prague readers and fans on the Friday afternoon.

Robin Cook is a man of numerous professions and interests, which was perhaps a great prerequisite for his later writing career. When asked to describe himself, he used the term child of fortune. He had the good luck to be the very first in his family to receive a university education. And what an education it was – he studied medicine. His profession spanned several disciplines, including general surgery and ear surgery.

His military service was with the marines, and his literary debut dates back to the time he spent as a crew member aboard a submarine. The main topic of the book was treated very well, but the book did not lend itself to easy reading, which the public immediately recognised. The book's sales were a disappointment. But Robin Cook fought on, and this experience may even have encouraged him.

He set out on a quest to discover what properties turn books into a captivating read. He bought all sorts of bestselling titles and scrutinised them to figure out the methods and secret recipes that result in a thrilled reader. This heralded the discovery of a brand-new world for him, as up till then he had paid little attention to bestselling titles, having focused mostly on the study of chemistry and maths rather than literary theory.

After four years of this theoretical grounding in the literary achievements of others, he wrote his second book during a six-week internship at an ear surgery department. The book was welcomed enthusiastically by readers. The internship at the clinic served him well. As there



were no night shifts, Robin Cook was able to write long into the night.

According to Robin Cook, what makes a successful book today? "A book must be accurate. It must show clearly that the author knows what he's writing about. On the other hand, it mustn't be overly technical, so readers don't choke on incomprehensible terminology."

Robin Cook's novels initially drew on real people, whose identity he would alter. Over time, however, he discovered that it is much more effective simply to make characters up, and this has provided him with much greater freedom in making his characters act.

Having mentioned that Robin Cook is a man of many professions and interests, we are bound to note his lifelong interest in archae-

ology. Some themes from this discipline have made their way into the pages of his books. He has also tried his hand at running a business, having set up a software company. Now he intends to become a film producer. Even though close to ten of his literary works have already been adapted for the screen, Cook believes that there could be more. Being a man who likes to have things under control, he has decided to take on the role of producer, i.e. to remain in charge of script development and casting decisions.

Although he describes himself as a child of fortune, Robin Cook's approach to pretty much everything in his life shows that luck is the last thing he relies on. The path to all his achievements is clearly marked by intense and focused effort.

Describing a Shaken World Kindly

The accompanying programme at Book World Prague on the Friday evening was dedicated to a literary debate with two outstanding European authors – the Portuguese novelist **ANTÓNIO LOBO ANTUNES** and the Slovenian playwright, novelist and essayist **DRAGO JANČAR**.

The debate, with its deliberately noir title "Writing the Shaking of the World", was held in the Gulliver airship at the DOX gallery and moderated by the book fair's artistic director Guillaume Basset. The "shaking world" of the title stood for the reflection of history in contemporary literature – not just classical history (i.e. the past), but also the present, which will become history.

Both authors grew up and came of age against a backdrop of truly dramatic historical events. Drago Jančar was born to a family of Yugoslav guerrillas fighting against the occupation of Slovenia during WWII. As a young man entering the literary milieu, he adopted an attitude of opposition to Tito's socialist leader-



ship of Yugoslavia. After the fall of the Yugoslav regime in the 1990s, he bore witness to the terrible Balkans war.

António Lobo Antunes's childhood was in no way easier – he grew up under Portugal's dictatorial regime. As a young man in the early 1970s, he spent his formative years fighting a war in Angola.

Thus both authors have experienced more than their fair share of a shaking world. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, their take on history is unfalteringly categorical and at the same time understanding and generous. The deep humanism they displayed transformed a debate which could have ended in desperate defeatism into an evening of gentle personal reconciliation with history and positivity. This is maybe the most important mission of any writer, who, unlike a journalist, is obliged to see the world in a more optimistic context, while not concealing any of history's horrors. On the Friday evening our two authors managed to share this gift with the entire audience.

In one sentence, what is your definition of literature?

Sofi Oksanen

Written words opening windows to new worlds.

The Three Book Magi at One Table

JÜRGEN BOOS, director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, **OLIVER ZILLE**, director of the Leipzig Book Fair, and **BENEDIKT FÖGER** from the Buch Wien fair met at the Professional Forum to discuss the joys and hardships of book fairs in today's world of books.

"My knees are shaking because I am joined here by three aces, three directors of major European book fairs," Book World Prague director **RADOVAN AUER** said with a smile as he opened the debate. Listening to their experiences would be a great lesson for him, he added.

"This is the first time anyone has succeeded in bringing the three of us together like this," laughed Oliver Zille.

At the start of the debate, each of the guests provided a brief introduction to "his" book fair, its history and current direction. All the directors agreed that instead of competing with one another, their book fairs should co-operate, share experience, and expand on each other's efforts.

"We haven't come to Prague because we had to. We have come out of friendship," said Jürgen Boos. "The Frankfurt Book Fair likes to support other book fairs, and many organisers have learned from us in the past. We focus on developing book centres worldwide, including, for example, Latin America. We are happy when our experience helps the book market grow."

"When the Leipzig book fair was given a new lease of life after 1990, I went to all the major book fairs around the world," explained Oliver Zille. "In each place I chose something that would suit us and our circumstances. Everywhere people gladly offered their advice. The book fair in Frankfurt, with its exceptionally long tradition, provided us with much inspiration. Since those days we have co-operated, met and designed our book fairs in such a way that they do not compete with but rather complement one another."

"We are a young book fair, only now celebrating our tenth anniversary, and book fairs



such as Leipzig or Frankfurt were our role models," said Benedikt Föger from Vienna. "It is thanks to them and their experience that we have grown so fast, from a small book exhibition at Vienna City Hall to a book fair boasting fifty thousand visitors."

"Each book fair has a unique character representing an important part of a country's culture and international identity, which is why it must be approached very responsibly," said Jürgen Boos, as he outlined the role of book fairs in today's society.

All three gentlemen agreed that a book fair's main task is not to sell books but to introduce and spread information about authors, to motivate more people to read and to facilitate meetings between publishers and enable them to share their professional experience.

"Our book fair is no longer only about books," Benedikt Föger pointed out. "It is a major social event that reaches out to the entire city and influences it. A truly fine thing has been created."

The issue of politics as a backdrop to book fairs also came up. "Yes, our book fair also acts as a political platform," said Jürgen Boos. "Books have a strong political emphasis and that is why politics and the book fair are closely connected. It has a significant social and cultural aspect, not least in terms of the

choice of guest-of-honour countries. We have presented Chinese and Catalan culture, for instance, and with these places a political sub-text can immediately be sensed."

"Books often deal with the present, and literature influences both the way people feel and events themselves, which means the connection between books and politics is quite natural," added Oliver Zille.

"Yes, we too feel the strong presence of politics, and we do address social and political topics," said Benedikt Föger.

At the close of the discussion, questions were asked about book pricing and the position of small publishers at large book fairs, whereupon all three directors outlined their plans for the future.

"We look for new ideas, react to changes in the field of copyright, develop the areas of audiobooks and new media," said Jürgen Boos. "We must go along with the times, which are developing fast. We focus on young people, create new platforms and develop an international network."

Similar visions were presented by Oliver Zille and Benedikt Föger. All the guests agreed that the role of book fairs will be even more important in the future and that they are turning into increasingly influential cultural events that set the pace of social affairs.

A Latin American Breakfast

Enjoying a breakfast at the book fair and finding out, over coffee and sandwiches, about what's new in the Latin American literary world constituted an ideal start to the book fair's second day.

"As most of you probably know, this Latin American-style breakfast is not a mere coincidence. There is a very good reason for it – the fact that Latin America is next year's guest of honour at Book World Prague," explained **RADOVAN AUER**, the director of Book World Prague. "We hope to be able to welcome the most outstanding authors, which is why preparations are already under way."

Then it was the turn of renowned translator, Hispanist and Romanist **ANEŽKA CHARVÁTOVÁ**, who gave the audience a detailed analysis of the situation on the Latin American book market. After providing a brief introduction to the most interesting contemporary authors, she naturally chose to focus on their Czech translations. "I am happy to say that all

the great authors from Latin America have already been published in Czech. The sixties, for example, are pretty much complete," she said.

She added with a smile that some works have never been translated simply because no Czech translator has mustered up the courage to try. "This is the problem with the Cuban author José Lezama Lima, for example. No translator is quite ready to commit professional suicide."

Anežka Charvátová went on to describe ways of winning support for translations. "There are several programmes, not only in the Czech Republic but also in Latin America itself. The most important programmes are in Argentina, Chile and Columbia. We have also established excellent co-operation with Mexi-

co. We get most translations from Argentina, not only thanks to its support programme but also because of the vibrant Czech-Argentinian cultural relationship."

This address was followed by contributions from representatives of the Chilean and Argentinian embassies, who introduced the individual programmes in person.

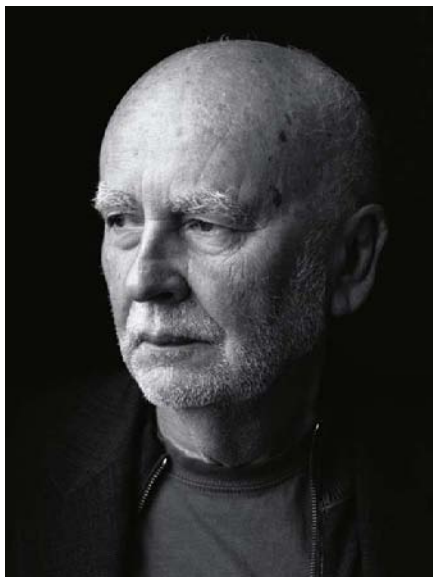
Anežka Charvátová concluded by saying that due to Latin America's guest-of-honour status at Book World Prague, the Czech Republic's Ministry of Culture has allocated support for translations of works by Latin American authors. "Next year we hope to introduce not only as many newly translated books as possible but also the authors themselves," said Anežka Charvátová. "I hope we will be successful."

As far as Latin American literature is concerned, we obviously have a lot to look forward to next year.

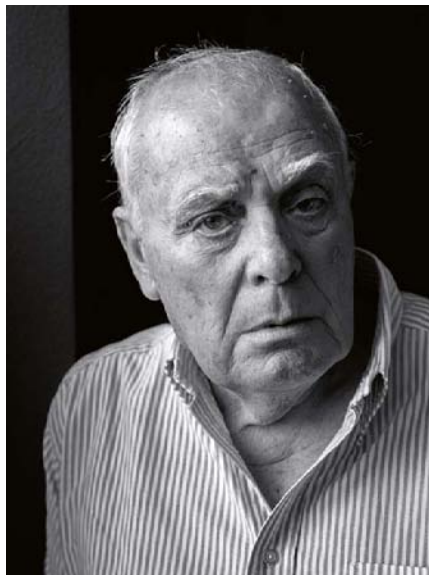
In one sentence, what is your definition of literature?

David Grossman

The strongest way I know to feel a thing and its loss simultaneously.



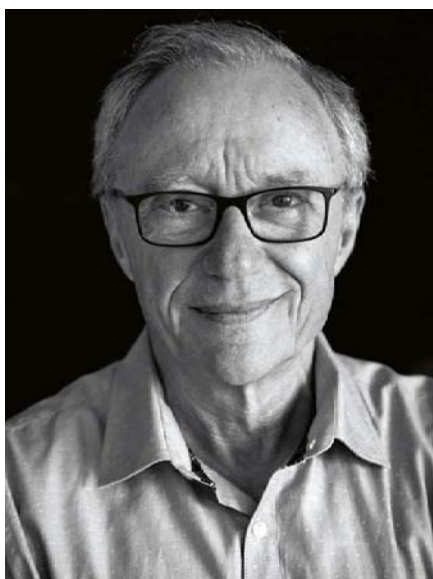
Adam Zagajewski Polsko / Poland



António Lobo Antunes Portugalsko / Portugal



Paolo Cognetti Itálie / Italy



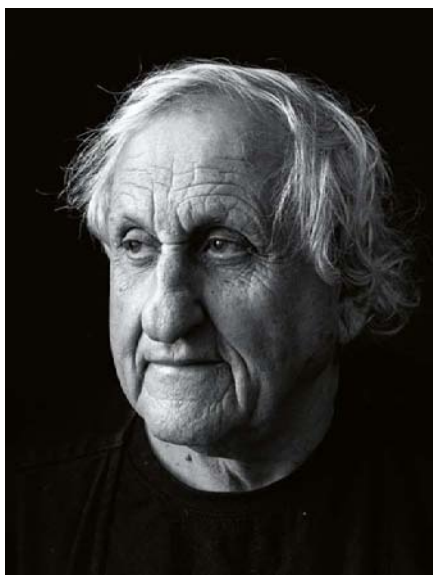
David Grossman Izrael / Israel



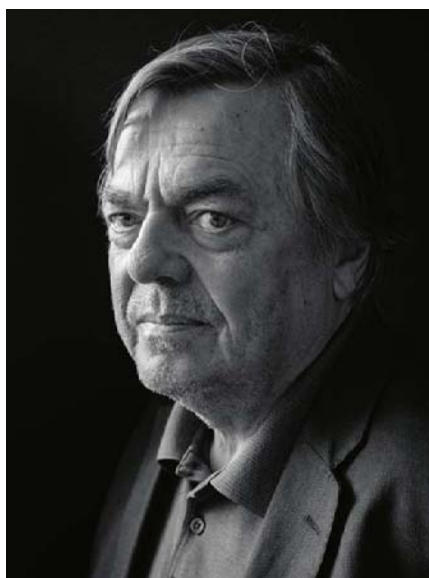
Sofi Oksanen Finsko/Estonsko / Finland/Estonia



David Foenkinos Francie / France



Abraham B. Yehoshua Izrael / Israel



Drago Jančar Slovinsko / Slovenia



Dror Mishani Izrael / Israel

foto Dirk Skiba

Svět knihy Praha '18

Zahraniční hosté

Foreign Guests

Book World Prague '18