

The program of Vilnius Book Fair is taking shape

The 19th Vilnius Book Fair open on 22-25 February will traditionally present new books in print, host discussions and program for professionals, exhibitions, and meetings with foreign guests that are so much awaited by the visitors. A month before the fair, which will welcome its visitors under the theme “Reading Lithuania – Reading the World”, the cultural program is taking its final shape and the and the list of the main foreign guests is getting clear. This year the fair expects over 40 international participants from more than 10 countries.

Lithuania celebrates 100 years’ anniversary

As in February Lithuania will be celebrating 100 years’ anniversary of the restoration as an independent state, Vilnius Book Fair will devote much of its attention to the anniversary too. The events during the Fair will not let us forget that we are celebrating not alone but with many guests coming from the countries which recently celebrated or will be soon celebrating their 100 years’ anniversary.

On this occasion the Lithuanian Culture Institute will invite the visitors to the Book Fair to the series of interviews “Our Century” where Lithuanian famous writers will be interviewing their colleague writers: Nora Ikstena from Latvia, Marian Milcak from Slovakia, Jan Hajek from Czech Republic, Ilmar Taska from Estonia, and Jerzy Illg from Poland.

You will also meet I.Taska, a famous Estonian film director, screen writer and producer whose debut novel “Pobeda 1946” brought him fame and was recently translated into the Lithuanian language. The novel presents a realistic depressive post-war atmosphere of fear and suspicion in Tallinn when Estonia was separated from the free world by the iron curtain. The novel depicts the events that were not mentioned in literature before when the soviet security service used to obtain information from small children about their parents and how that would end in the post-war Estonia.

The Polish Cultural Institute offered the possibility for the visitors of Vilnius Book Fair to meet not only J. Illg but also other famous intellectuals from the neighbouring country: Michał Rusinek, Wiesław Myśliwski. Vaga publishing house invited Krzysztof Zanussi, the Polish film legend and director very well known to the Lithuanian audience.

The discussion program of the Fair will also be attended by Rosie Goldsmith, a journalist from the UK over 20 years working in various countries of the world with such broadcasters as BBC and actively participating in the European cultural life. She will have a special mission in the Fair, i.e., interview Lithuanian authors to be presented London Book Fair’s special Market Focus program for the Baltic States in April.

Dialogue of European Union Prize for Literature Winners

During the Fair a lot of attention will be focused on the European Union Prize for Literature. Established by the European Writer’s Council, the Federation of European Publishers and the European Commission, the Prize has already been won by three Lithuanian authors, and this year a special publication intended for 9 Baltic winners will be presented in the Fair.

Lithuanian Publishers Association together with Federation of European Publishers and EUPL organisers will coordinate a dialogue of European Union Prize for Literature Winners Sara Mannheimer (Sweden), Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė (Lithuania) and Evie Wyld (UK).

On this occasion, the Fair will be visited by the Swedish writer Sara Mannheimer. Grown up in Goteborg, the author is currently living in Stockholm and besides writing she also runs a glassworks studio. Her debut novel “The Rules” (2008) was nominated for the August Prize, while her second novel “The Action” in 2012

won the European Union Prize for Literature. In 2015, this novel was translated by Alma Braškytė and published by Tyto Alba.

London Book Fair will offer the possibility for the Lithuanian readers to meet Evie Wyld, a British recognised author, who was awarded with the European Union Prize for Literature in 2014 for her novel “All the Birds, Singing”, which was also published in Lithuania in 2017.

As well Homo Liber publishing house invited Selja Ahava, a Finnish writer, to visit the Fair. The author who was awarded with the European Union Prize for Literature in 2016 will present her book “Things that Fall from the Sky” which was translated into the Lithuanian language.

Favoured and new authors

The Fair will also be honoured by people who have become symbols of the event and have become part of it. We will meet Tomas Venclova, Antanas Šileika, Kristina Sabaliauskaitė.

Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla (Publishing House of Lithuanian Writers’ Union), which pays its dues abundantly to the Lithuanian authors during the Fair, this year have invited a Swedish journalist and writer Lena Andersson. She won the August Prize in 2016 for her novel “Wilful Disregard: A Novel About Love” which was also translated into the Lithuanian language, and this year her new book “Limited Liability” will be presented during the Fair.

Tyto Alba publishing house invited Guy Verhofstadt, a famous politician, former Belgian Prime Minister, and Member of the European Parliament to present his book “Europe’s Last Chance”.

Program for professionals

Lithuanian Publishers Association will continue the tradition of presenting the program to professionals and will discuss the challenges in today’s book distribution and sale as well as the initiatives to promote reading by popular campaigns.

The relevant issues in book distribution and the culture of bookstores in Germany will be presented by Iris Hunscheid, representing more than 500 individual bookstores in the German Publishers and Booksellers Association. Alan Staton, head of marketing at the Booksellers Association of the United Kingdom and Jane Streeter, board member of the European Booksellers Federation will discuss the booksellers’ initiatives to promote reading. Professional speakers will overview book publishing markets and bookselling specifics in EU, Lithuania, Germany and UK.

From Spain to Oman

Some of the guests to the Fair are from countries whose literature and translations are not widely known to Lithuanians so far. The Lithuanian Association of Literary Translations offered the opportunity for the Lithuanian readers to meet the Iranian poet and translator Ali Abdollahi, while the Sultanate of Oman invited the poet and academic Hilal al-Hajri to visit Lithuania and to meet the visitors of the Fair.

One of the world’s top books and literary events – Frankfurt Book Fair – is coming back to Vilnius with their stand after four years. They invited a delegation from Germany, including the writer Alexander von Schönburg, whose book “World History, to Go” was published in the Lithuanian language by Tyto Alba. The German journalist, former editor of “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”, since 2009 member of the editorial staff at “Bild”, author of four bestsellers able to turn the world before the reader’s eyes from a new angle in a humorous and intellectual way.

Sofoklis publishing house invited Zeruya Shalev, Israel’s modern writer, poet and essayist to visit the Fair. She is one of the best authors of her generation, who became famous for her book “Love Life” translated into 24 languages. The book will also be presented to the Lithuanian readers.

We are also expecting quite many writers from Spain. Ignacio del Valle, Antonio Manuel Carrasco, Iván Vélez – these are the three writers who will be participating in the Fair events to present Spain’s cultural and literary field and its relationship with Europe.

The 19th Vilnius Book Fair will take place on 22-25 February in Litexpo Exhibition and Congress Centre. The Fair will occupy the five halls again and this year will pay special attention to reading. The visitors will be expected in events, meetings, exhibitions and popular spaces: “Bookinists’ Passage”, “Book Cinema”, creative studio “You can Create a Book”, libraries’ space, and the Music Hall. Over 400 events will be held during the four days of the Fair.

More information:

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