



Press Release

October, 19<sup>th</sup> 2018

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## THE FRANZ KAFKA INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE 2018

**The Franz Kafka Society is proud to announce that this year's laureate of the prestigious Franz Kafka Prize, the Czech poet Ivan Wernisch will be awarded on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 in the Old Town Hall in Prague.**

**He will become the eighteenth laureate of this international literary prize awarded by the Franz Kafka Society in cooperation with the Capital City of Prague. Due to the personal decision of Mr. Wernisch, an antiquarian and a friend of him Jan Placák will take over the Prize in his credentials.**

*Ivan Wernisch commented on the award with a distinctive and a very pragmatic insight: "As an old age pensioner I need every crown. Any Prize is good," the laureate said to the Franz Kafka Society.*

The traditional ceremony of the Franz Kafka Prize awarding will take place on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2018 from 5 p. m. in the Brožík Hall of the Old Town Hall in Prague.

Ivan Wernisch is a Czech poet, writer, journalist and translator. He was born in Prague, studied at an industrial ceramic school in Karlovy Vary. Already during his studies, he published his first poems in the *Host do domu* and *Tvar* magazines. After the Warsaw Pact invasion to Czechoslovakia in August 1968, he became a prohibited author and had various odd jobs. His works were published until the collapse of Communism in 1989 in samizdat and abroad only. The Franz Kafka Prize is his second international award. In 1991 he was awarded by the international prize *Premio Capri*. In his native country he has been awarded four times so far. He was granted the *Jaroslav Seifert Prize* (1991), the *State Prize for Literature* (2012), *Magnesia Litera* (2013) and *The Annual Prize of the Czech Literary Fund Foundation* (2013).

His poetry reflects dream-like fractions of reality. He often uses neologisms and his work results in existentialism. He is one of the remarkable authors of the 1960s literary generation. *Kam letí nebe* (Where the Sky Flies To, 1961), *Zimohrádek* (Winter Palace, 1965) and *Dutý břeh* (Hollow Bank, 1967) were his first collections. His later collections included *Doupe latinářů* (The Latin Scholar's Den 1992), *Pekařova noční nůše* (The Baker's Night Hamper 1994), *Lásku já nestojím* (2001), *Hlava na stole* (Head on the Table, 2005), *Nikam* (Nowhere, 2010), *Na břehu* (On the Shore, 2014). Apart from collections of poems, he also composed several anthologies. The Czech 'Plastic People of the Universe' underground band used his poems as its lyrics. He also translates from German, French, Italian, Flemish, Russian and Latin and his books were published and translated to languages of numerous countries.

The mission of the Franz Kafka Prize is the evaluation of artistically exceptional literary creation of contemporary authors whose work addresses the readers regardless of their origin, nationality and culture, as well as the work of Franz Kafka himself, one of the greatest authors of modern world literature.

The Prize is presented for the entire work of the particular author to date, and assuming that one

of the author's books, at least, has to be published in a book form in the Czech language. The laureate receives the main symbol of the Prize – a bronze statuette of Franz Kafka by the sculptor Jaroslav Róna and a financial award of USD 10,000.

Nomination for the Prize is accorded exclusively by the international jury. The candidate can be an author of any nationality or of any age. The Prize can be awarded only to a living author and it can be awarded only to one candidate every year. The candidate can be an author of a prosaic work (novels, collections of short stories, collections of essays), poetry or drama, i.e. only of a literary work (not journalistic, film or television, etc.) that was published in a book form (the same for drama).

The Franz Kafka Prize has been awarded by the Franz Kafka Society since 2001. Its laureates so far include the writers Philip Roth (USA, 2001), Ivan Klíma (Czech Republic, 2002), Péter Nádas (Hungary, 2003), Elfriede Jelinek (Austria, 2004), Harold Pinter (Great Britain, 2005), Haruki Murakami (Japan, 2006), Yves Bonnefoy (France, 2007), Arnošt Lustig (Czech Republic, 2008), Peter Handke (Austria, 2009), Václav Havel (Czech Republic, 2010), John Banville (Ireland, 2011), Daniela Hodrová (Czech Republic, 2012), Amos Oz (Israel, 2013), Yan Lianke (China, 2014), Eduardo Mendoza (Spain, 2015), Claudio Magris (Italy, 2016), Margaret Atwood (Canada, 2017), Ivan Wernisch (Czech Republic, 2018).

In 2018, the jury was formed of André Derval, Marianne Gruber, prof. Oldřich Král, Petr Matoušek, Lorenzo Silva, Jiří Stránský, prof. Jiří Stomšík and prof. Hans Dieter Zimmermann. The jury did not have an easy task to choose a winner as it had to choose among many remarkable representatives of contemporary literature worldwide.

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The award ceremony of the Franz Kafka Prize takes place under the auspices of the President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic and the Lord Mayor of the Capital City of Prague.



The partner of the Franz Kafka Society in organising the Franz Kafka Prize is the Capital City of Prague.



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