This year's winner of the international Franz Kafka Prize for Literature is Milan Kundera.

The prestigious, international Franz Kafka Prize for Literature, founded by the Franz Kafka Society in Prague, has been won this year by the Czech writer, Milan Kundera, by decision of an international jury. Milan Kundera responded to the announcement of his winning the Franz Kafka Prize, by telephone from Paris, saying that he felt honoured and would joyfully accept the Prize, particularly because it is "Kafka's Prize", a "fellow writer" and a writer he holds dear above others.

Milan Kundera (1929), originally from Brno, has lived in Paris since the mid-1970s, where he has written further novels, latterly in French, to add to his previous work, the novel, The Joke (Žert, 1967), which became a literary milestone. The international jury, composed of jurors from six countries, which made its decision from three nominated candidates, praised Kundera’s lifelong work, which today represents not only an extraordinary contribution to Czech culture, in the very spirit of which we must acknowledge it was born, but also vital input in the context of European and international culture, and which has been translated into more than forty languages.

Milan Kundera is certainly the most prominent Czech writer today, hence he joins the ranks of other, prominent, much earlier winners of the Franz Kafka Award such as Philip Roth, Amos Oz, Haruki Murakami, Margaret Atwood, Claudio Magris or more recent ones like Harold Pinter, Elfriede Jelinek and Peter Handke, who won the Franz Kafka Prize before he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

With the Franz Kafka Prize, bestowed upon its winners in Prague, Milan Kundera permanently returns to the Czech surroundings from which he was once so harshly expelled. Since 1991, he has been present in our country once again thanks to the editorial and publishing care taken by the Atlantis publishing house in Brno, of Kundera’s work. Just a month ago, the first Czech translation of
Kundera's French novel, *The Celebration of Insignificance*, translated by Anna Kareninová, followed on from seventeen volumes published previously. At the same time, The Kundera couple's decision to donate an extensive family library collection, which includes, among other things, all Czech and foreign editions of Kundera's works, as well as an extensive author's archive, to the Moravian Regional Library, is taking concrete form. These library and archival documents will be made available to the public electronically.

Milan Kundera's award in this twentieth jubilee year of the Franz Kafka Prize and also the thirtieth anniversary year of the founding of the Franz Kafka Society in 1990, is symbolic in a way. It was Milan Kundera who, in his essays from the 1980s, put our region, at that time still behind the Iron Curtain, back on the European cultural map; defining the specific border of Central Europe, in which Kafka's Prague still bears the memory of the critical, unique, Czech, German and Jewish, mutually influencing, growing stimuli, encompassing the dramatic events of the Central European region. Milan Kundera writes in many parts of his multi-layered work, on how Kafka's work directly reflects this in its description of the complex aspects of human existence.

The Franz Kafka Literary Prize is awarded by the Franz Kafka Society in Prague based on the decision made by its international jury for collaborative Support of the Capital City of Prague and under the auspices of the Mayor of the City of Prague and other patrons of the President of the Senate.

The Franz Kafka Society, which is the founder of the Franz Kafka Award, is one of the oldest post-November cultural non-profit organizations. It supports educational, cultural and research activities in its Franz Kafka Publishing House: in addition to dozens of other books, it has also published the first comprehensive edition of Franz Kafka's work in Czech. The Franz Kafka's Society, in cooperation with the City District Council of Prague 1, also placed a monument to Franz Kafka in the centre of the capital, which it owns, and which is today one of several much frequented, iconic sites for visitors to Prague. A small, original casting of this sculpture is always presented to each laureate along with the Franz Kafka Award. In addition to the Franz Kafka International Literary Prize, the Franz Kafka Society is also the founder of the Max Brod Prize, which is awarded to the author of the best piece of essay writing produced by a high school student.
The Franz Kafka Society, which this year nominated Milan Kundera as its candidate for the Franz Kafka Award, to be considered by an International Jury, has decided to join the numerous world cultural institutions and personalities in their innovation, by nominating Milan Kundera, "our Central European, European and international writer" for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

For the Franz Kafka Society: Vladimír Železný, Chairman of the Franz Kafka Society

Contact for Journalists:
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