

Chemnitz, 4th April 2017

## **City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize 2017 awarded to Joanna Bator**

The City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize was awarded to the Polish author and publicist Joanna Bator on Tuesday, 4th April 2017. The prizewinner received the award, endowed with 20,000 euros, personally from Lord Mayor Barbara Ludwig at Chemnitz Schauspielhaus.

Amongst others, the honorary citizens Christoph Magirius and Siegmund Rotstein, deputies of the German Bundestag and the Saxon Landtag, the chairwoman of the International Stefan Heym Society, Dr. Ulrike Uhlig, as well as members of the award committee attended the awarding ceremony of the International Stefan Heym Prize.

Lord Mayor Barbara Ludwig addressed the prizewinner in her welcoming speech: "The topics you are dealing with touch with the substance of the social debates we encounter on a daily basis – an obvious parallel to the work of Stefan Heym. And just like him, you do not make it easy for your reader to choose one side, you rather challenge him. Your books are about questions that do not know simple answers: questions about home, identity, affiliation, exclusion – how do people change, how do societies change when they have to change?"

The prizewinner, Joanna Bator, who signed the City of Chemnitz Golden Book after awarding the prize: "I am very pleased and I am honoured to be awarded the International Stefan Heym Literature Prize today. In addition to the joy, this prize also means a great responsibility. That my novels touch so many people that they overcome social differences and linguistic boundaries is like an anchor for me, like a quick cure against misanthropy. "

Born in 1968, **Joanna Bator** is one of the outstanding voices in contemporary European literature. Her idiosyncratic, artistic and subtle narratives engage quietly but determinedly with current social issues and phenomena, exploring all their historical dimensions.

Her latest novel, *Ciemno, prawie noc* (Dark, Almost Night), shows how hate can destroy a community and how quickly the surface of human morality can rupture when people are confronted with change. This novel earned Joanna Bator Poland's most prestigious literary prize, the Nike Award, in 2013. In 2016 she was shortlisted for the same novel for the House of World Cultures Award for Translated Contemporary Literatures. Her previous publications include the novels *Piaskowa Góra* (Sandy Mountain, 2011) and *Chmurdalia* (Cloudalia, 2013), along with numerous essays and articles.

It was only in March that Joanna Bator was awarded the Usedomer Literature Prize 2017. Joanna Bator was also the recipient of the Spycher: Leuk Literary Award 2014. She held the post of Friedrich Dürrenmatt Visiting Professor of World Literature in Bern for the winter semester of 2014/15. In 2015 Joanna Bator lived and worked for twelve months in Berlin as a guest of the DAAD Berlin Artists-In-Residence programme. She has a degree in philosophy and is an author and university lecturer. She has taught in Warsaw, New York, London and Tokyo. She spent four years in Japan. Joanna Bator lives in Poland.

### **City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize**

The City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize is awarded in remembrance of the son and honorary citizen of the city to individuals with the courage to criticise our times and who like Stefan Heym have produced outstanding literary and/or journalistic works that will stand the test of time. Previous prizewinners are Amos Oz (2008), Bora Ćosić (2011) and Christoph Hein (2013).

An award committee decides on the recipient of the International Stefan Heym Prize. Ex officio members of the committee include the Lord Mayor of the City of Chemnitz, the President of the German PEN Centre, the President of the Goethe-Institut, the Director of the publishing house C. Bertelsmann Verlag, the Chair of the German Section of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), the Chair of the International Stefan Heym Society and Professor Bernadette Malinowski from Chemnitz University of Technology. Two members of the City of Chemnitz Culture Committee also form part of the committee.

**Prizewinner Reading:**

Wednesday, 5th April 2017, 7 pm, TIETZ, event room 3rd floor, free admission

Joanna Bator will be reading from her current novel *Ciemno, prawie noc* (Dark, Almost Night) on Wednesday, 5th April 2017, 7 pm, at the TIETZ, event room 3rd floor. She is accompanied by the translator of the Polish first edition, Lisa Palmes. The translation reads the Chemnitzer audio book speaker and Germanist Dr. Christoph Grube from Chemnitz University of Technology. Prof. Dr. Bernadette Malinowski, Professor of Modern German and Comparative Literature at the Chemnitz University of Technology, moderates the literary evening. Admission is free.