

# polip

INTERNATIONAL  
LITERATURE FESTIVAL  
PRISHTINA

PROGRAM 2022

**The Writer is Present?!**

International Literature Festival – polip

Prishtina

12th Edition

13–15 May 2022

<https://polipfestival.wordpress.com>

<http://www.qendra.org>

**PRE-PROGRAM**

**THURSDAY, 12. 05. 2022**

**BOOK LAUNCH**

**18:00 – 19:30 Venue: ODA Theater**

*Slepec by Mitja Čander, translated into Albanian by Nikollë Berishaj and published by Qendra Multimedia*

Discussion between the author **Mitja Cander** (SLO) and the translator **Nikollë Berishaj** (MNE)

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## PROGRAM

**Friday, 13. 05. 2022**

*Official Opening of the 12th edition of polip - International Literature Festival  
The Writer is Present?!*

19:30 – 20:00 | Venue: ODA Theater  
Alida Bremer, Saša Ilić, Jeton Neziraj

## READINGS

20:00 - 21:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

***Readings with:*** Şebnem İşigüzel (TUR), Eqrem Basha (RSK), Ivana Bodrožić (CRO),  
Carsten Jensen (DEN), Jovica Ivanovski (NMK), Joël Vernet (FR), Mitja Čander (SLO)  
***Moderators:*** Saša Ilić (SRB) & Jeton Neziraj (RKS)

## MUSIC PERFORMANCE

21:30 - 23:00 | Venue: ODA Theater

***With:*** Edona Reshitaj & Band

**Saturday, 14. 05. 2022.**

## PANEL 1

11:00–12:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

***Life vs. Literature***

**Who is Telling Stories and Who is Sharing Stories?**

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**Panelists:** Şebnem İşigüzel (TUR), Mirishahe Sylva (RKS), Alida Bremer (CRO/DE)

**Moderator:** Ivana Bodrožić

*Discussion in English.*

## PANEL 2

15:00 – 16:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

*War in Ukraine - What Can Writers and Translators Do Now?*

**Panelists:** Carsten Jensen (DEN), Edis Galushi (RKS), Daniel Gustafsson (SWE), Petra Nagenkögel (AT)

**Moderator:** Tatjana Radmilo (CRO)

*Discussion in English*

## READINGS

20:00– 21:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

**Readings with:** Zvonko Karanović (SRB), Petra Nagenkögel (AT), Daniel Gustafsson (SWE), Mirishahe Sylva (RKS), Aidan Hehir (UK), Rozafa Shpuza (ALB), Mechthild Henneke (DE), Tatjana Radmilo (CRO)

**Moderators:** Ivana Bodrožić (CRO), Alida Bremer (CRO/DE)

**Sunday, 15. 05. 2022**

## PANEL 3

16:00 – 17:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

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*Historical narratives and collective memory as origin of ethnic wars, or as means for healing and reconciliation for post-war societies? How can writers influence the outcome?*

**Panelists:** Aidan Hehir (UK), Aleksandar Pavlović (SRB)

**Moderator:** Ardiana Shala Prishtina (RKS)

*Discussion in English*

## READINGS

**20:00– 21:30 | Venue: ODA Theater**

**Readings with:** Katarina Mitrović (SRB), Luan Buleshkaj (NL), Nikola Nikolić (MNE), Edis Galushi (RKS), Vlora Ademi (RKS), Alida Bremer (DE), Radmila Petrovic (SRB), Daim Miftari (NMK)

**Moderators:** Saša Ilić (SRB), Aurela Kadriu (RKS)

## MUSIC PERFORMANCE

**21:30 - 23:00 Venue: ODA Theater**

**With:** Linda Rukaj (FR/AL)

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## Panels / Debates & other events

### Thursday 12.05. 2022, PRE-PROGRAM

#### BOOK LAUNCH

18:00 - 19:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

***Slepec* by Mitja Čander, translated into Albanian by Nikollë Berishaj and published by Qendra Multimedia**

***Discussion between the author Mitja Čander (SLO) and the translator Nikollë Berishaj (MNE)***

The main character, and narrator, in *Blind Man* is a successful book editor and critic who since birth has had problems with his eyesight, although he has never had much to do with the visually impaired community and doesn't really feel like he is one of them. But when he is offered a chance to enter the world of politics, he is "blinded" by the lure of power, and this easy-going, level-headed husband and soon-to-be father gradually turns into a self-absorbed careerist.

The author, without pontificating and with a measured dose of humour, paints a critical, unsparing portrait of a small European country and through it a convincing satire on the psychological state of contemporary European society. What, or who, do we still believe in today, and who should we trust? Politicians, appa-ratchiks, the media? The bureaucratic system? Greater and lesser luminaries? Empty pledges, absurd situations?

Speeches laden with buzzwords and grandiose promises break down the flimsy façade, as the protagonist's own insecurity suggests that things are not always what they seem. In the end, social blindness is worse than any physical impairment, and worst of all is to be blinded by your own ego.

*Blind Man* is a superb Gogolian novel about the current state of Slovenian – and European – society.

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*The book was translated into Albanian by Nikollë Berishaj and published by Qendra Multimedia in 2022. The Albanian translation of the book was supported by The Slovenian Book Agency.*

## PROGRAM

**Saturday, 14. 05. 2022.**

### PANEL 1

11:00–12:30 | Venue: ODA Theater

#### *LIFE VS LITERATURE*

*Who is Telling Stories and who is Sharing Stories?*

**Panelists: Şebnem İşigüzel (TUR), Mirishahe Sylva (RKS), Alida Bremer (DE)**

**Moderator: Ivana Bodrožić (CRO)**

*Discussion in English.*

It is not only important who is writing books but it is also important who is hired in a publishing houses, agencies, cultural institutions, ministries of cultures. The diversity that we have among writers should be followed by diversity in literary industry which right now is not the case. Literature told by *others* based on different narratives about gender, class, sexuality disabilities and such is often not reaching large audience because is not recognized as something worth supporting. For a long time interesting stories for international publishers and audience from our territory were war stories, and when that was no longer actual topic, in a way we have disappeared from the international scene. In these times there is a big gap between (especially) younger female authors which are writing great literature and sistem which is strongly patriarchal, and this is reflected in the literary scene. How to point those topics and realize that is all connected, or in other words, to realize that engagement is necessary to bring literature into the focus.

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## PANEL 2

15:00 – 16:30 Venue: ODA Theater

*War in Ukraine - What Can Writers and Translators Do Now?*

**Panelists:** Carsten Jensen (DEN), Edis Galushi (RKS), Daniel Gustafsson (SWE), Petra Nagenkögel (AT)

**Moderator:** Tatjana Radmilo (CRO)

*Discussion in English*

Since Russia brutally invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the entire world has entered a very strange phase altogether, especially if we take into account that the World War III started in the midst of pandemic that has lasted for more than two years now. So, what is the role of Ukrainian, but Russian authors, as well? This Panel aims to touch on issues, such as “*inter arma silent Musae*”, on dignity of silence as opposed to voices that need to be heard, writers and translators as heroes of an invisible Ukrainian army and their Russian counterparts under threat of prosecution and 15 years prison term if they let their voices be heard...

Also, we will discuss what can global literary community do to help? Once the war is over, what kind of literature will be needed and how not to fall into the traps of post-war propaganda?

**Sunday, 15. 05. 2022**

## PANEL 3

16:00 – 17:30 | Venue: Oda Theater

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*Historical narratives and collective memory as origin of ethnic wars, or as means for healing and reconciliation for post-war societies? How can writers influence the outcome?*

**Panelists:** Aidan Hehir (UK), Aleksandar Pavlović (SRB)

**Moderator:** Ardiana Shala Prishtina (RKS)

*Discussion in English*

Both books we are promoting in this panel are in a sense each in their own way a story about stories. Some questions that arise from both of them deal with issues of how historical narratives influence generations of people. We then want to ask, what is a writer's power to change or influence how the other is represented in stories? If historical narratives have been constructed to fuel wars, how can we deconstruct them and construct other stories that can make peace possible? What does it mean to "never forget" and how can remembrance and collective memory help deal with the past and make peace possible in a wider, local and international socio-political context where mere facts of a genocide are contested, and denial of genocide is normalized and accepted? As is for example, the case with Serbian political discourses in "Republika Srpska", but also with awards like the Nobel Prize for Handke. These are just some of the topics that we will discuss in the panel with both authors.

*Aidan Hehir – The Flowers of Srebrenica, translated into Albanian by Gazmend Bërlajolli and published by Qendra Multimedia*

The book of Aidan Hehir "The flowers of Srebrenica" is inspired by his visit to the 'Srebrenica Memorial Center' and thematizes collective memory and the question of witnessing the truth and dealing with it in a post-war period. Underlined in this story is the need and struggle of people to deal with the trauma of the past by telling their own stories, but also through becoming witnesses and bearers of victims' testimonies, and thus the truth that should not be forgotten. The immense heat in that particular day of this visit, in that summer day, somehow reflects the inner struggle of people searching for peace and reconciliation while remembering the painful past and the heat of the war which took the lives of so many.



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*Aleksandar Pavlovic – Imaginarni Albanac, translated into Albanian by Anton Berishaj and published by Qendra Multimedia*

Pavlovic's book "The imaginary Albanian" deals with questions of historical narratives and the construction of "truths" through Serbian nationalist folklore. It raises the question of how in an environment where there is little to almost no knowledge about "the other" stories are used to construct "the other", in this case the Albanian, as the enemy that suddenly defines the core of the Serbian identity. This enemy is positioned at the core of justifying the survival of a nation, as a threat that must be destroyed to achieve it. In overall the author discusses Serbian folk poems of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and what he considers to be the birth of the construction of the Albanian as the enemy that threatens Serbs.

## **The Writer is Present?!**

The title of this year's edition of our POLIP Festival is an expression of at least three states writers could have found themselves in during the previous year, and especially since February of this year, when, due to Russian war invasion of Ukraine, the world came not only to a turning point for current Cold War period relations between West and East after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but in real, huge danger. Fear, wonder and trepidation. PEN International reacted on the very same day and released a letter, signed by over a thousand writers, condemning the Russian invasion and warning about the possible fatal consequences of such a war crusade. Very soon a question of the real scope of the impact of literature in borderline war situations was raised. What can writers do in a situation, such as Russian war invasion of Ukraine, that is, amid total media blackout and under threat of 15 years of legally imposed prison term? One of rare voices of modern Russian literature, that reacted against the war, was Russian writer in emigration, Mikhail Shishkin, who raised that very question of what literature and writers can do in such circumstances. They can speak out clearly and talk about what they see, what goes on in front of their eyes, in their imminent surroundings.

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about what happens in their surroundings. Shishkin did it by publishing his appeal in several European countries, in which he very clearly condemned the war politics of his country.

The title of this year's edition of our Festival is also a paraphrase of the famous extraordinary performance by Marina Abramovič, who, during a retrospective of her work in The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2012, spent 736 hours sitting on a chair during three months and looking straight in the eye each of 1675 visitors who took a seat opposite of her. This form of facing the Other One is actually a radical form of what art does or is supposed to do in the world it is created in. The same goes for literature created in the world that has lost its footing or is overpowered by catastrophe, threat, aggression, which we witness right now. Some of (post)Yugoslav authors wondered about the experience of author's responsibility during and after wars in the nineties. Very often, those that advocated in favour of the concept of ethical responsibility were characterized as *controversial authors*. Today, thirty years after the breakup of Yugoslavia, this trend is almost completely pushed out by the wave of corporate literature. However, on the other hand, do those writers that refer to their exclusive artistic status contribute to truth and humanistic development of mankind, as a rule? Or do some of them produce ideological, nationalistic and chauvinistic myths and thus contribute to negative trends in politics of their countries? Critical questioning of the role of literature in society is required, even when we are witnesses to how some regimes ruin freedom of words altogether. Yet, does it mean that everything written is automatically wise, peaceful and worth taking and memorizing in social structures with existing freedom of expression?

What happens with literature in the conditions of global war threat, nuclear catastrophe, continuing pandemic, ecological disaster? Many Ukrainian writers write about what goes on and many are actively participating in defence of their country, Serhiy Zhadan being one of the most famous ones. He was born in 1974 in Luhansk Oblast, and lives in Kharkiv; he

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regularly posts his diary entries from Kharkiv and photos of humanitarian and military aid on Facebook, as he delivers them all over the city with other volunteering citizens. During our Festival, we will ask ourselves what writers and translators can do to stop the war as soon as possible and to renew destroyed bridges of communication and understanding, just like what kind of solidarity writers from countries in war can expect from their colleagues in other countries.

The world is in a chaos and literature industry has continued to function according to the principle of the lists of best-selling books. How relevant is the experience of engaged authors from Yugoslavia breakup period today, when modern Europe is faced with imminent war danger? Which literary strategies can authors use today if they decide to talk about here and now? How relevant for forming of literary resistance today is feminist persistence on fight against established patriarchy of global male military concept? Are contemporary writers present at all in the articulation of response to unprecedented crisis, that is no longer of a regional character, but is a matter of concern for every living being on this planet?

POLIP 2022 is dedicated to this phenomenon of radical meeting of literature and reality, arising from performance, but in writing practice can be very well confirmed as an unavoidable dimension of survival — not only of art, but of human community as well.

**From the editorial board**