Central European Initiative (CEI) Fellowship for Writers in Residence

The recipient of the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence 2014 is MIRKO BOŽIĆ from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mirko Božić was born in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1982, where he also graduated in English and Croatian at the University of Mostar. He writes poetry, prose, columns and essays. His poems have been published in literary anthologies and numerous literary magazines in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad. He is the organizer of the first reading through Skype and video between Leipzig and Mostar in 2010 (in which six authors from Mostar and Leipzig participated). He was the creator of the United Literary Front, a network for young authors in the Balkans.

From the laudation by International jury for the CEI Fellowship 2014:

Mirko Božić’s literary project is a unique reading of the history of his motherland written on the basis of uncommon material tightly related to his family and personal life. By metaphorically interweaving two tragic events, the loss of his mother and the loss of his motherland, the author constructs his unconventional and personal demythologization of the prewar (Bosnian and Herzegovinian) time and space.

The literary encounters with his mother, family, exile and memories of his joyful youth spent in their joyful house that used to stand in the old town core of Mostar in the very quarter that the last war almost totally erased are set beneath the firmament doomed to witness a thorough collapse of the world – the disintegration of former Yugoslavia.

The author has proven to be a persuasive chronicler of Europe’s last slaughter. It was less than twenty years ago that former Yugoslavia and especially Bosnia, the country upon which Mirko Božić wishes to shed light in his new writing, awaited the end of the war. Clearly, one needs to distance oneself from one’s own stories in order to transfigure them into great literature. The commendable time-related distance not only allows the author to interweave the basic story with side ones, but also gives his literature the necessary breadth by providing a touch of poetry to the memories described in his prose.

International jury members for the CEI Fellowship for 2014:
Patrizia Vascotto, Italy, president
Ludwig Hartinger, Austria
Dragica Potočnjak, Slovenia
Namita Subiotto, Slovenia
Đurđa Stršoglavec, Slovenia
Previous CEI Fellowship recipients:
2013 – Artem Chapeye, Ukraine
2012 – Ajla Terzić, Bosnia and Herzegovina
2011 – Ognjen Spahić, Montenegro
2010 – Maja Hrgović, Croatia
2009 – Dragan Radovančević, Serbia
2008 – Ivana Sajko, Croatia
2007 – Marianna Kiyanovska, Ukraine
2006 – Goce Smilevski, Macedonia

About the CEI Fellowship
Since 2006 the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence has been presented by the Central European Initiative in collaboration with the Slovene Writers’ Association, as part of the Vilenica International Literary Festival. The Fellowship seeks to encourage cross-border cooperation and promotion in the field of literature for young writers from Central European Initiative member states that are not members of the European Union. The Fellowship, which is endowed with a cash award of 5,000 EUR, is intended to be used for a three-month residence in any CEI member state of the candidate’s choice. During this period the author is expected to work on the project indicated in the application form. The recipient of the fellowship was announced at the press conference on 21 August, the fellowship will be presented to him at the opening ceremony of the 29th Vilenica Festival on 3 September in Sežana, Slovenia.

About the Central European Initiative
The Central European Initiative (CEI), a regional intergovernmental forum open to change, is committed to supporting European integration through cooperation between and among its Member States and with the European Union, other interested public institutions or private and non-governmental organisations, as well as international and regional organisations. In order to offer a solid contribution to European integration the CEI combines multilateral diplomacy and project management, both as donor and recipient, while also bridging European macro-regions. The CEI, whose Headquarters is located in Trieste, is composed of 18 Member States: 10 EU members (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) and 8 non-EU members (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine). In December 2011, the CEI was granted observer status in the General Assembly of the United Nations. www.cei.int

About the Vilenica Festival
The Vilenica International Literary Festival, a gathering of poets, prose writers, dramatists and essayists from Central Europe and beyond, is organized by the Slovene Writers’ Association in collaboration with the Vilenica Cultural Society from Sežana. The festival takes place annually in Lipica and at other venues in Slovenia. Since the first Vilenica gathering in 1986, the climax of the event has been the presentation of the Vilenica International Literary Prize, in accordance with its statute to a Central European author for outstanding achievements in the field of literature and essay writing. The Prize Winner is selected by the Vilenica jury, while the official presentation takes place in the impressive atmosphere of the Karst cave which gave its name to both the prize and the festival. Along with the grand Vilenica Prize, another award is presented within the festival: the Crystal Vilenica. The youngest of all Vilenica prizes is the Young Vilenica awarded by the Vilenica Cultural Society from Sežana. Featuring numerous literary and cultural events – round-table discussions, literary readings, a book fair, symposia, presentations of contemporary literatures and literary publications – the Vilenica Festival takes place in the first week of September. The Vilenica jury, advised by the jury consultants, selects authors from Central Europe and beyond. At one of the several literary readings participants read their work, while the Vilenica Almanac features extracts of their writing in the original as well as in Slovenian and English translation. The theoretical part of the festival provides many opportunities for in-depth debates, while social events add to a relaxed atmosphere for socializing and meeting. www.vilenica.si