

Hans Christian Andersen Award 2018

Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center

Athens, Greece

Friday, 31 August 2018

Welcome by Hans Christian Andersen Jury President **Patricia Aldana**

Welcome to this beautiful building in this most magnificent city of Athens for the very special evening when the 2018 winners of the Hans Christian Andersen Award will be honoured as they deserve. I would like to welcome not only all the Congress participants, but also His Excellency Mr Yasuhiro Shimizu the Japanese Ambassador to Greece and his wife Mrs Yoshimi Shimizu and Mr Vladimir Grigoriev the Deputy Head for the Russian Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications.

I also want to take this opportunity to warmly thank Vassiliki Nika and her organizing committee for this fantastic congress and especially for this impressive venue for this Award evening.

However, before I do anything else I would like to once again thank our generous and wonderful sponsors, Nami Island Inc, the Minn family and Mr Kang. I would like to invite Mrs Lee to the stage to say a few words on behalf of our generous and engaged sponsor of the most prestigious international award for children's literature.

Greetings from the sponsor Nami Island Inc. by **Lee Kye Young**, Vice Chairperson of Nami Island

I would also like to welcome four Andersen nominees that are with us today. Please come to the stage to receive your diplomas as I call your name:

Vagelis Iliopoulos, Author from Greece

Jeannie Baker, Illustrator from Australia

Andres Konstantinides, Author from Cyprus

Farhad Hassanzadeh, Author from Iran

Gundega Muzikante, Illustrator from Latvia

In addition, I would like to invite the sister of Christos Dimos, the Illustrator nominee from

Greece, who would like to be here but cannot join us on health grounds, so I welcome Martha Dimou to receive his diploma on his behalf.

I would also like to invite Sunji Jamba from Mongolia to come to the stage to receive her brother's diploma. Sadly Dashdondog passed away after he was nominated.

It was an honour to chair this remarkable group of jurors from all over the world. They came from such diverse professional backgrounds and from very different countries and cultures. Yet the meetings and discussions were extremely harmonious and the process of selection remarkably consensual. It has been an honour to chair such a diverse jury and to see how people from around the world can respect, talk, listen, change, learn and even come to love one another. If only the rest of the world operated as IBBY does.

The jurors in alphabetical order by country, please stand if you are here with us:

Lola Rubio Argentina, an editor and librarian

Yasmine Motawy Egypt, a professor of children's literature

Eva Kaliskami Greece, a teacher

Yasuko Doi Japan, an international children's librarian in Osaka

Shereen Kreidieh Lebanon, a children's publisher

Dennis Beznosov Russia, an international children's librarian

Andrej Ilc Slovenia, a publisher of adult and children's books

Reina Duarte Spain, a children's publisher

María Beatriz Medina Venezuela, the director of the Banco del Libro and a professor

Junko Yokota USA, a children's literature specialist

We met for four days in Basel, Switzerland in January this year. The shortlist was selected there, as were the winners.

The jury would like to emphasize the high quality of many of the submissions, especially those on the shortlist.

The first criteria for the selection of the shortlist and the winners was the artistic excellence of the writing and of the art. Of great importance to the jury was the question: was the author or illustrator's ability to connect to children—the use of voice; the credibility of the child's world; the ability of children worldwide to connect with the work even if it was very culturally specific and authentic to the creator and her or his culture. The jurors were also interested to explore the creators' willingness to take creative risks. But ultimately, the selection of these shortlisted authors and illustrators, the winners, and of the fifteen books that the jurors recommend for worldwide translation, was the belief that these works should be read by children all over the world, be accessible and meaningful to them, and enrich their lives and understanding – in IBBY language—build bridges in a time when so many are being broken.

The shortlist for the illustrator category is:

Pablo Bernasconi from Argentina

Linda Wolfsgruber from Austria

Xiong Liang from China

Iwona Chmielewska from Poland

Igor Oleynikov from Russia

And Albertine from Switzerland

From this outstanding shortlist **Igor Oleynikov** from Russia was selected as the winner of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration.

This exceptional illustrator can bring the page alive in a way that must be the envy of his peers. He is a master of design and composition.

Coming from an early career as an animator, for Soyuzmultifilm, and the Russian branch of BBC's Christmas Films Studio Oleynikov, learned early how to make characters live and move.

In the early 1990s he began to collaborate with Tramway Magazine, described as “the ultimate perestroika-spirited periodical for kids of the new generation.” Perhaps this was formative in his unique, individual approach to character and story telling, which is as personal, as original, as can be found anywhere today.

Over the years his technique has evolved, becoming more refined, perhaps ever more sophisticated. But what does not change is his narrative skill bringing an extraordinary cast of characters to life—from young boys and girls, to witches and giants, to wolves and sharks, to fairies and trolls, to Joshua and Ruth from the Old Testament, to even a brilliant tiny mouse who goes to Harvard! Though he claims not to like illustrating cute children or beautiful girls, he is more than capable of creating beauty—in his landscapes and even in some of his characters. Beautiful or not, human or not, they burst with life, movement and expressivity. And they are exceptionally engaging.

Oleynikov brings the great Russian artistic vocabulary, style and passion to his work. He frequently illustrates the Russian masters, Pushkin, Gogol, Trotsky, Brodsky, bringing them to life and to our contemporary sensibility. His versions of the classics are always surprising, never what one might expect. He is equally brilliant with Andersen, Grimm, the Old Testament, and Lear. While he excels at the short form—poems, stories, traditional tales, he can also create marvelous picture books. His talent knows no bounds.

Children around the world would be greatly enriched by reading so many of the great authors, Russian and others, and by seeing them depicted in all their rich, and wild glory. And all of us who love the high art of illustration will be deeply enriched by spending hours pouring over his absolutely ravishing work.

Igor Oleynikov—please come to the stage.

Presentation of medal and diploma to illustrator winner by IBBY President **Wally De Doncker** and Jury President **Patricia Aldana**

*Acceptance speech by Illustrator winner **Igor Oleynikov** from Russia*

Now turning to writing.

The shortlist for the author category is:

Marie-Aude Murail from France

Farhad Hassanzadeh from Iran

Eiko Kadono from Japan

Joy Cowley from New Zealand

And Ulf Stark from Sweden, who very sadly passed away in June 2017 after his nomination.

From this equally outstanding shortlist, **Eiko Kadono** from Japan was selected as the winner of the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing.

There is an ineffable charm, compassion, and élan in the work of this great Japanese author, which belies the tragic circumstances of her childhood. Despite the death of her mother at a very young age, her evacuation to the countryside during the bombing of Tokyo when she was separated from her beloved father, or perhaps because of it, Kadono's characters are strong, fully rounded, complex, unorthodox, problem-solving children. Whether in her many marvelous and funny picture books, or her great series of novels about the witch Kiki, or her novel set during World War II about a brave girl who must walk through a terrifying tunnel of trees to get to school, Kadono's book are always surprising, engaging, and empowering. And almost always fun. And always life affirming.

Kadono has lived in Brazil and travelled widely throughout the world. While her stories are deeply rooted in Japan they show us a Japan that is filled with all kinds of unexpected people. Her female characters are singularly self-determining and enterprising; figuring out how to cope

with all kinds of complications without suffering too many self-doubts—though some of these do creep in. As such, they are perfect for this time when we are all seeking girls and women in books who can inspire and delight us with their agency.

The great Japanese creator, Hayao Miyasaki of Studio Ghibli, paid Kadono the honour of animating *Kiki's Delivery Service*.

The language in her picture books, especially, is notable for its playfulness and use of onomatopoeia. How I wish I could read her in Japanese. And of course, the beautiful but simple language in her novels makes them extremely readable. Kadono's readers, young and old will find in her books the courage to be themselves, to take on unexpected challenges, to be open to those who are unlike themselves while also deep down sharing so much with them. At times such as these the books created by this wonderful writer Eiko Kadono are what we and our children need to find our way through the woods.

Eiko Kadono, please come to the stage.

Presentation of medal and diploma to author winner by IBBY President **Wally De Doncker** and Jury President **Patricia Aldana**

*Acceptance speech by Author winner **Eiko Kadono** from Japan*

Thank you. Now enjoy your meal!