

Daniil Pashkoff Prize 2014
Greetings from the City of Braunschweig

Dr. Annette Boldt-Stülzebach

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than 10 years the Daniil Pashkoff Prize for Creative Writing in English by a Non-Native Speaker has been awarded in Brunswick. And from the start I have been following the development of this unusual prize with growing interest. It holds the peak position in the range of literary awards in the Federal Republic of Germany. The award is unique as no other prize is directed at this clientele, authors who are writing in English, even though they may have been born in Germany, Poland, India, Africa, Russia or elsewhere.

The Pashkoff Prize is measured solely on this factor: the selling of an act of cultural bravura. On behalf of the City of Brunswick I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for this enrichment of our cultural offerings, and at this point I would like to say thank you again to Lawrence Guntner on behalf of all supporters of this prize.

But Writers Ink. realized from the beginning that a prize alone was not enough. Aware that such a prize required the sustainable promotion of literature and a steady supply of literary communication, Writers Ink. has offered over the years workshops in creative writing, readings, analysis and discussion of self-generated texts and public events with well-known representatives of creative writing.

I am very happy that these workshops and events take place for the most part in the Raabe-Haus: Literature Centre Braunschweig and that you as members of Writers Ink. have found your permanent “residence” there. With its writing program and the Pashkoff Prize, Writers Ink. enriches our community’s promotion of literature and reading skills immensely.

For a city that awards two long-established and major literary prizes - the Wilhelm Raabe Literature Prize and the Frederick Gerstäcker Youth Literature Prize – the support of literary and reading skills is central to its cultural policy.

Brunswick is known as a “city of science” and is engaged in a global dialogue with numerous well-known scientists, engineers and company representatives from different nations, who are guests within this city’s walls. So the willingness to communicate in foreign languages, first and foremost in English, has high priority. With the increasing number of citizens of so-called “immigrant background” - now more than 40,000 people from over 150 nations - Brunswick needs to make attractive offers that will further this dialogue, not only in German but also in English. The demands of interculturality and globalization will lead to increasing expectations on Brunswick, not only on pupils and students in the region but also on the city itself. The oft-cited European dialogue and understanding between peoples insists on forums and formats that promote an exchange between people of different nations. The Pashkoff Prize, now famous throughout Europe, has found its place here.

After having heard this, you will not be surprised to learn that the City of Brunswick, in particular the Department of Culture and Science, which has supported this literary prize from the beginning, will continue to do so in future. I am pleased that over the years many supporters have sustained this prize with their expertise, their communication forums and their financial resources.

Presumably, the day is not far off when one of the many talents that has been awarded the Pashkoff Prize will be making headlines in literary life. After the many years in which I have followed enthusiastically the readings at the award ceremony and the publications of the poems and essays, I am convinced that the quality of the authors' work will prevail if they decide to make writing their profession. Again this evening, I am looking forward to the new poems we will be hearing.

Allow me one more remark with this year in mind. This prize has brought us together this evening. We can listen to the stories and poems written in the English language, the language of friends and neighbors. It is necessary that we can make ourselves mutually understood, not only for economic reasons. The ability to understand a foreign language, especially the language that most of our European partners as well as our partners all over the world can understand, and the ability to express ourselves in this language are the first steps toward a serious outreach to each other.

I want to underline something, which I do very often: and that is that this is the basis for designing a common future in peace. Soon we will be commemorating the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the so called "ur-catastrophe" of the 20th century, and not only in this city. Every time we engage in communication, in comprehension, in remembrance and reconciliation, in aiming at common goals and cultural similarities such as literature, we are, in my view, making important contributions to paving the way toward good neighborhoods. The Pashkoff Prize is one of these wonderful contributions.

I want to thank all authors for having taken part in this competition, I thank all members of the juries for all their time and efforts. I congratulate those of you who will be the lucky ones to be awarded a Pashkoff Prize certificate - I think all of you are winners for having taken part! And I wish you, ladies and gentlemen, a wonderful evening.