

NEWS

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## Leo Tolstoy Museum Estate and Samsung – Co-founders of the Yasnaya Polyana Book Award – Open the New Literary Season

*In honor of the 15-year anniversary of the Award the cofounders and members of the jury presented the development program and talked about their plans for 2017*

**Moscow, February 2 2017** — Leo Tolstoy Museum Estate Yasnaya Polyana and Samsung Electronics, co-founders of the annual Yasnaya Polyana Book Award, have opened the new literary season and presented a detailed program for the evolution of the Award.

In 2017 the Award celebrates its 15-year anniversary. This anniversary season the Award undergoes an evolution in its structure. From now on it has three nominations.

*“The fifteenth anniversary season will be signified by massive changes. We took a risk and presented the Yasnaya Polyana Award in its more concentrated and pure form. I would like to thank Samsung for its consistent support of Russian literature and the Yasnaya Polyana Award,”* — said **Vladimir Tolstoy, Yasnaya Polyana Book Award jury chairman and adviser to the President of the Russian Federation on cultural issues.**

**Modern Russian Prose** becomes the main nomination of the Award. It singles out a work of a modern author that stands out and carries the ideals of the love for humankind and deserves to be read right away because it sets the stage for trends in the literature of today. Publishing houses, “thick” literature journals, prize winners of the past years and writers’ unions can nominate works for participation in the competition.

*“The revision of the nomination list serves as evidence of the fact that the Yasnaya Polyana Award is alive. Leaving out the Childhood. Boyhood. Youth nomination does not mean that we refuse to consider literature for the younger generation; from now on it will be competing on par with modern Russian prose. And so it should. Tolstoy wrote The Prisoner of the Caucasus specifically for the children, and eventually it became a novel for everyone. This seems to be the right way to go for the literature for the younger generation,”* said **Pavel Basinsky, Yasnaya Polyana jury member, Russian scholar and critic.**

The nomination **Foreign Literature** remains unchanged. Similar to past years it will single out the most important foreign novel of the twenty-first century and its translation into Russian. The long list is put together by the limited number of experts in the nomination: literary critics, translators and publishers.

*“The Foreign Literature nomination is one of the most successful ideas not only for our award, but for the whole literature world. We should show interest not only towards Russian literature, but to foreign literature as well and to the context in which Russian literature exists. In whose other name can we award a foreign author? Only in Leo Tolstoy’s name. A wonderful nomination,”* commented **Evgeny Vodolazkin, Yasnaya Polyana jury member, writer and PhD in philology.**

*“For the time being we leave out the Modern Classics nomination. Among the winners in this nomination in the past years are Valentin Rasputin, Andrey Bitov, Yuri Bondarev, Fazil Iskander, Vladimir Makanin. It seems like currently there are no names that we could compare to these side by side. We do not exclude the possibility that in the future we will return to this nomination – time will tell,”* commented **Vladimir Tolstoy, the jury chairman.**

In the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Yasnaya Polyana Book Award a new nomination joins the list: **The Event** nomination.

The goal was to celebrate the most significant event in the cultural life as seen by the jury and experts (a festival, a theatrical performance, a mass medium, a documentary, a novel screen adaptation).

*“We have high hopes for the nomination *The Event*, which will become a surprise both for the public and for the winners. So far we do not know who the winners will be – play or movie directors, documentary authors or journalists. We ourselves are very excited to see who the winners will be, but so far we are keeping it in secret,”* said **Aleksey Varlamov, Yasnaya Polyana jury member, Russian prose writer and researcher of the Russian literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

In the Award’s anniversary year the prize fund distribution among winners in different nomination also changed:

- *Modern Russian Prose* nomination — three million rubles. For 2017 the prize fund for this nomination increased by almost 150%. The sums for shortlist finalists remained unchanged and stand at one million rubles each;
- *Foreign Literature* nomination will also consist of two parts: the foreign writer winner will receive one million two hundred thousand rubles, and the translator of the winning novel into Russian will receive 500,000 rubles. The increase in the prize sum for the translator by 250% is intended to signify the importance of their work;
- The winner in the new nomination *The Event* will receive 500,000 rubles.

The special Samsung prize nomination *Readers’ Choice* remains a part of the Award. The author of the book that received the majority of votes in the readers’ open web poll will receive this prize and get a chance to visit the Republic of Korea.

Apart from that, in the anniversary year for the Award Leo Tolstoy Museum Estate and Samsung Electronics will organize a range of events with the participation of Yasnaya Polyana jury members and nomination winners. These events would include public lectures and meetings with readers, literary exhibitions and festivals, joint projects with theaters and much more.

*“Since Samsung began its work in Russia it has actively supported cultural projects. Among them is the long-term partnership with the Bolshoi Theater, the State Hermitage Museum and the Peterhof State Museum Reserve. 2017 is the anniversary year for our partnership with Leo Tolstoy’s Museum Estate Yasnaya Polyana, and our joint project, the Yasnaya Polyana Award celebrates its 15-year anniversary. We greatly value this partnership and are proud of the fact that the Award is among the most well-known and respected Russian literary awards,”* commented **Kim Ui Tack, head of Samsung Electronics CIS.**

The annual Book Award Yasnaya Polyana was cofounded by Leo Tolstoy Estate Museum and Samsung Electronics in 2003. Every year prizes are awarded to authors whose works follow the humanistic and moral ideals of classical Russian literature. The jury members select the best traditional form literary reads in their respected categories. Currently it is the broadest annual literary award in Russia.

More detailed information is available on the [website of the Award](#).

## **About the Award**

The Award supports the traditions of classical Russian literature and relevant trends of modern Russian literature. Among the members of the jury which is chaired by the great grandson of the writer Vladimir Tolstoy, are famous Russian writers, literary critics and public figures. The Award winners in different years were Narine Abgaryan, Vladimir Grigorenko, Guzel Yahina, Evgeny Vodolazkin, Aleksey Ivanov, Zakhar Prilepin, Vasily Golovanov, Mikhail Tarkovsky, Roman Senchin.

## **Jury members:**

- **Lev Anninsky**, Soviet and Russian literary critic, writer, publicist and literary scholar;
- **Pavel Basinsky**, Russian literary scholar and critic;
- **Aleksey Varlamov**, Russian prose writer, researcher of Russian literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- **Evgene Vodolazkin**, writer, PhD in philology, winner of the Yasnaya Polyana Book Award;

- **Valentin Kurbatov**, writer, pulicist, literary critic;
- **Vladislav Otroshenko**, Russian writer and essayist, winner of the Yasnaya Polyana Book Award;
- **Vladimir Tolstoy**, jury chairman, adviser to the President of the Russian Federation on culture, journalist.

**Samsung Electronics** has been in Russia for 25 years and actively participated in the social and cultural life of the country. Samsung Electronics has been the oldest official sponsor of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater (since 1991), partner of the State Hermitage Museum (since 1997), and of the Peterhof State Museum Reserve (since 2013). Since 2003 together with Leo Tolstoy Museum Estate Yasnaya Polyana Samsung acts as a cofounder of the annual Yasnaya Polyana Book Award. Samsung Electronics actively supports modern art exhibitions.

#### **About Leo Tolstoy's Museum Estate Yasnaya Polyana**

Leo Tolstoy's Museum Estate Yasnaya Polyana is a literary museum that was opened in 1921 in writer Leo Tolstoy's (1828-1910) family estate. Here he was born and lived most of his life, and here he was buried on the edge of the ravine. Every year a lot of people come here from all over the world. Today Yasnaya Polyana is a large museum complex and an acknowledged cultural center of a global scale.