
Prague's Indie Writing Scene at DiverCity Week and Prague Microfestival

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From April 10th to April 13th, Týden Diverzity, or DiverCity Week, will be taking place in a recently renovated building at 4 Hybernská Street, Prague 1. This free four-day festival, run by Charles University's Faculty of Arts, is themed on 'City and Emotions', connecting Prague with exhibitions, lectures, discussions and workshops. Events begin at 10 am and continue into the evening each day of the festival. DiverCity Week's goal is to connect students, academics, artists and members of student and local Prague communities.

One way to bring people from different backgrounds together is through literature. Litteraria Pragensia Books and Equus Press, two literary publishers here in Prague that operate out of the Anglophone Literatures department at Charles University, are both affiliated with DiverCity Week and have a bookstand set up for the entire week. Although both presses occupy a unique place in the literary community in Prague, they represent two different ends of the literary spectrum. Equus Press is a small independent publishing house that describes itself as a product of the post-communist 'Prague Renaissance'. Equus' ambition is to publish new writing that is both innovative and broadly cosmopolitan. The more academically oriented Litteraria Pragensia publishes mainly critical theory, and is also responsible for the international poetry and art magazine VLAK.

David Vichnar, editor-in-chief of both imprints, comments that, "given our English-language focus, we obviously need international audiences to present our books to."

"Both Diversity Week and the upcoming Prague Microfestival are great events that enable us to do so."

Equus and Litteraria Pragensia share the intention to incorporate both Czech and international literary climates into their publishing activities in Prague. However, according to Vichnar, there is a difference in their approach: "Litteraria Pragensia seeks to promote the many traditions of literary Prague and present them to Anglophone readerships", whereas Equus Press publishes creative writing in English with a Prague connection, as well as English translations of significant existing works. Publications by Litteraria Pragensia include *From a Terrace in Prague*, *Abolishing Prague* and *The Return of Král Majáles*, an anthology of 'Prague renaissance' writers. Translations by Equus are often groundbreaking: Vichnar explains that it has recently published "a first-ever English translation of Prague-based German author Melchior Vischer and his 'dada novel', *Second Through Brain*".

The presses will have a bookstand at DiverCity Week, where enthusiastic volunteers will be selling books 10 am – 6 pm every day.

As part of DiverCity Week, Litteraria Pragensia and Equus Press will also host a bilingual reading of published authors, in both English and Czech, this Wednesday at 6 pm, Hybernská 4.

Live performance, Vichnar says, is something both Litteraria Pragensia and Equus Press are actively engaged in: "Live performance helps us to forge a public identity for both presses, reach out toward broader publics and get more people interested." The presses also organise a launch for every new book published, with all authors/editors and other contributors present. "It's always a great chance for us to network and find new readers!"

And what about the reading this Wednesday? "People can expect four Prague anglophone authors reading from their Prague-based works, in Czech translation", Vichnar says. The selection of authors present includes Louis Armand, Thor Garcia, Ken Nash and Phil Shoenfelt. Vichnar will read an English translation of all poetry.

Those enthused by this DiverCity Week preview can rest assured that the best is yet to come. The Prague Microfestival, featuring 26 authors in total including the four featured at DiverCity Week, as well as film, visual art, music, an art gallery, an experimental conference, and more, will take place May 18 to May 21, with programme and updates posted at www.praguemicrofestival.com.

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Litteraria Pragensia and Equus Press readings will take place on Wednesday 12 April, Hybernská 4, in the small conference room from 18:00 to 19:30.

Prague Microfestival runs 18-21 May. Check www.praguemicrofestival.com for news.