

PRESS RELEASE

Shakespeare Forever: Special Launch Event for 'Hogarth Shakespeare' Edition

- Bertelsmann and Knaus Verlag host book launch at Bertelsmann Unter der Linden 1 in Berlin shortly before the 400th anniversary of the brilliant playwright's death
- Jeanette Winterson ("The Gap of Time"/ "The Winter's Tale") discusses her novel
- Staged readings by Samuel Finzi, Milan Peschel and other well-known actors

Berlin, April 14, 2016 – "What attracted me to the Shakespeare project is simply answered: Shakespeare!" This is how Howard Jacobson expresses his enthusiasm, and that alone already testifies to the self-evidence with which Shakespeare is still received, loved and discovered anew, 400 years after his death. The timelessness of his plays has recently been underscored by two reinterpretations of his works under the heading "Shakespeare retold": "Shylock Is My Name" by Man Booker Prize winner Howard Jacobson, and "The Gap of Time" by the renowned bestselling author Jeanette Winterson. On Thursday evening, Bertelsmann and the Verlagsgruppe Random House imprint Knaus Verlag present the two novels and the Shakespeare project in discussions with the participants and staged readings, to an audience of more than 100 invited guests from the literary and cultural scene.

The evening at Bertelsmann Unter der Linden 1 in Berlin revolves around the two novels and the writer Jeanette Winterson, who will speak with presenter Alf Mentzer: about what Shakespeare means to her, about her book and why she agreed to participate in the project. The actors Samuel Finzi, Milan Peschel, Uli Pleßmann, Larissa Fuchs and Stephan Schäfer will bring key passages from both new releases to life on stage, and show how Jacobson and Winterson have succeeded in retelling Shakespeare's plays as contemporary novels.

Winterson said that her fascination with "The Winter's Tale," which she has now set in the world of investment banking in contemporary London, stems from her personal experience as an adopted child as well as the essence of the play itself: "What Shakespeare is offering in his late plays is that chance of change. That suddenly you can see yourself differently and that things can be done differently and there is hope. To me, that's a very attractive message."

The work retold by Howard Jacobson has always been controversial, and the writer has taken on his task with a great sense of absurdity and ridicule. The author, himself of Jewish origin, believes that "The Merchant of Venice," which is often seen as an anti-Semitic

comedy, is “a funnier play than people often admit.” Some of the most horrible people in Shakespeare are in this play – and Jacobson’s idea is to approach them satirically. But, in his reading of the play, these horrible people do not include: Shylock.

The unique book launch at Bertelsmann Unter der Linden 1 in Berlin, shortly before the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, inaugurates a promising project initiated by the traditional English publisher Hogarth, a Penguin Random House imprint. Its German partner is Knaus Verlag. Eight internationally renowned authors retell the old Shakespearean plays for our time.

Alf Mentzer will also speak to Becky Hardie, Deputy Publishing Director at Hogarth, and Claudia Vidoni, Editorial Director Fiction at Knaus, about how this project came into being: “Hogarth offered internationally renowned and successful authors the opportunity to present their personal retelling of a work by William Shakespeare,” says Vidoni. “And almost all of them wanted to participate.” The novels will now be published in more than 20 countries.

It will be interesting to follow the further progress of the project, with the other retellings to be published in this order: Anne Tyler (*The Taming of the Shrew*) - Margaret Atwood (*The Tempest*) - Tracy Chevalier (*Othello*) - Jo Nesbø (*Macbeth*) - Edward St. Aubyn (*King Lear*) - Gillian Flynn (*Hamlet*). The novels “*The Gap of Time*” and “*Shylock*” were published on April 11.

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the broadcaster RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group, and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has 117,000 employees and generated revenues of €17.1 billion in the 2015 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world.

About Knaus Verlag

At the 1978 Frankfurt Book Fair, Dr. Albrecht Knaus presented the first publishing program of Albrecht Knaus Verlag, now part of Verlagsgruppe Random House. From the beginning, Knaus Verlag published both fiction and nonfiction. The program aims to be literary, entertaining and informative, fully in the present while remaining aware of the past. Wolfgang Ferchl has been Publishing Director of Knaus Verlag since 2009, and continues the imprint’s expansion together with Claudia Vidoni (Editorial Director Fiction), Britta Egetemeier (Editorial Director Nonfiction), Susanne Klein (Publicity Director). The many well-known authors who publish their works through Knaus include John Burnside, Thea Dorn, Jenny Erpenbeck, Jürgen von der Lippe, Walter Moers, Randall Munroe, Meike Winnemuth, Gabor Steingart, and Nassim Nicholas Taleb.

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