



PRESS CONTACT

For more information or to arrange an interview:

Lorna Garano

510-759-6655

lorna@baybookfest.org

WUNDERBAR TOGETHER!

The Bay Area Book Festival Partners with the Goethe-Institut San Francisco to Celebrate German Literature and German-American Friendship

Join us on May 4 and 5 in Downtown Berkeley, CA

The Bay Area Book Festival is collaborating with the Goethe-Institut San Francisco to celebrate German literature and culture at this year's Festival—part of the German Federal Foreign Office's initiative "[Wunderbar Together](#)." A rich program presents exciting authors, cultural leaders, and journalists, and allows festivalgoers to learn about German literature, language, and academic exchange.

The Wunderbar Together pavilion at the Festival's Outdoor Fair at Martin Luther King, Jr. Civic Center Park in downtown Berkeley will showcase German literature for all ages and offer a chance to learn German on the spot. The Pavilion also will present a poetry slam, face painting, and music.

Indoors, Wunderbar Together-sponsored events feature literary voices from Germany and Switzerland tackling issues such as immigration, belonging, history, class privilege, and the publishing industry itself. Events include (German authors appear in boldface):

- **Quest: Journeys Through Generations**

Michael Levitin, **Katja Petrowskaja**, Sarah Stone, moderated by Joan Frank

Saturday, May 4

10:00 AM - 11:15 AM, Brower Center - Tamalpais Room

What if. Maybe. It could be. Where does seeking the truth slide into imagination? These three writers conjure compelling stories of Jewish generations past and present. Michael Levitin writes of a perpetually cuckolded man who seeks wholeness by resolving the mystery of a postcard sent from the Siberian gulag. In a creative nonfiction narrative, German writer Katja Petrowskaja searches not only for her ancestors but their meaning to her and each other. Sarah Stone depicts a loving, dysfunctional half-Jewish family of performers, scientists, and activists who long to wake up the world but must first rescue each other, with a little help (and sometimes hindrance) from the occasional ghost or god.

- **Comic Consciousness: Graphic Novelists Tackle Cultural Identity and Crisis**

Nora Krug, Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez, Juliana "Jewels" Smith, moderated by Ajuan Mance

Saturday, May 4

11:45 AM - 1:00 PM, The Marsh - Theater

The book world can feel quite snobby at times, but comics don't care where you come from. Unintimidating and inviting, comics can open the door to tough conversations about gentrification, genocide, natural disasters, and other uncomfortable truths. Armed with humor, wit, and vulnerability, writer-graphic novelists Nora Krug ("Belonging"), Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez ("Ricanstruction"), and Juliana "Jewels" Smith ("(H)afrocentric Comics") dive into the task of turning their most naked fears and haunting questions about survival and belonging into compelling visual storytelling.

- **Which Side Are You On? Loyalty in Fiction**

Christian Kiefer, Lauren Wilkinson, **Takis Würger**, moderated by Frances Dinkespiel

Saturday, May 4

3:15 PM - 4:30 PM, Hotel Shattuck Plaza - Crystal Ballroom

Fiction can illuminate the lived experience of intense inner conflict. Torn between community and country, struggling with duty and desire, and stuck in the gray area between right and wrong, the characters in these novels are pulled in competing directions. Christian Kiefer ("Phantoms"), Lauren Wilkinson ("American Spy"), and Takis Würger ("The Club") create dynamic worlds in dazzling prose where dangerous secrets bubble just under the surface and protagonists must ask themselves who to believe and who to blame.

- **Courage in Publishing in an Age of Political Polarization**

Kwame Anthony Appiah, Jane Ciabattari, John Freeman, Carlos Lozada, **Michael Naumann**, Emily Nemens, moderated by Cherilyn Parsons

Sunday, May 5

10:00 AM - 11:15 AM, Hotel Shattuck Plaza - Crystal Ballroom

This roundtable brings together some of the leading lights in publishing to discuss the industry and the state of literature. Kwame Anthony Appiah is the weekly Ethicist columnist for The New York Times and author of "The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity." Jane Ciabattari is former president of the National Book Critics Circle and books columnist for BBC Culture and Literary Hub. John Freeman is a poet, author, former editor of Granta, and editor of Freeman's literary journal. Carlos Lozada is the nonfiction book critic for The Washington Post and a 2018 Pulitzer Prize finalist in criticism. Michael Naumann has been the German secretary of culture, publisher of Die Zeit,

and publisher at Rowohlt Verlag; at Henry Holt & Company in the 1990s he published Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses." Emily Nemens is a writer and editor of The Paris Review. Moderator Cheryl Parsons is the founder and director of the Bay Area Book Festival.

- **Seeking Connection: Literature from Germany and Switzerland**
Dorothee Elmiger, Nora Krug, Katja Petrowskaja, Takis Würger,
moderated by Sabine Kieselbach

Sunday, May 5

11:45 AM - 1:00 PM, Hotel Shattuck Plaza - Boiler Room

Where is my place in the world? Where do I belong? Four distinct voices from Germany and Switzerland explore these questions in their work, all bestsellers in Europe. In "Maybe Esther," Katja Petrowskaja creates a kind of literary family tree, in luminous prose delving into legends and history. Takis Würger's "The Club" is a smoldering story of class, privilege, love, and moral ambiguity, centered around an elite club at Cambridge University. In Dorothee Elmiger's "Shift Sleepers," refugees, workers, inspectors, artists, and ghosts meet in a forest and converse about the meaning of homeland, safety, happiness, and more. In "Belonging," Nora Krug confronts the hidden truths of her family's wartime past in Nazi Germany to comprehend the forces that have shaped her life, her generation, and history. Come discover these new voices in translation, one of the most exciting areas in literature today.

- **Literary Bravery: Sleepwalkers, Ghosts, and Radical Storytelling from Three International Luminaries**
Dorothee Elmiger, Laura Lindstedt, Mike McCormack, moderated by Anita Felicelli

Sunday, May 5

3:15 PM - 4:30 PM, Brower Center - Goldman Theater

Seven women meet in a white void immediately after death.... A man, not realizing he's dead, narrates his entire life in a single, riveting sentence.... Voices mingle in a shadowy forest, talking of borders, illegal crossings, and the market value of human beings. Take a liminal literary journey with three writers, who will describe how they created such brave, rule-breaking works of the imagination. Winners of the Finlandia Prize, the Goldsmiths Prize, and the Swiss Literature Award respectively, these international voices are taking the literary world by storm.

"**Wunderbar Together**" is initiated by the [German Federal Foreign Office](#), the [Goethe-Institut](#), and supported by the [Federation of German Industries \(BDI\)](#). The project is implemented in cooperation with the [Goethe-Institut San Francisco](#), and other project partners such as Deutsche Welle, DAAD, Charlie's Corner, the Berkeley Symphony, Books First, Pro Helvetia, and the Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco.

See all Festival events in our [general press release](#).

THE BAY AREA BOOK FESTIVAL

When

Saturday, May 4, 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m., and Sunday, May 5, 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Where

Downtown Berkeley, California

The Outdoor Fair is in Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

Indoor Festival events at various locations. See [Schedule](#) for more info.

Ticket Information

Outdoor venues, including the San Francisco Chronicle Stage, are free.

Guaranteed seating in indoor programs can be accessed through Priority Tickets at \$10/session. A General Admission Wristband allows space-available access to all sessions all weekend for only \$15. Go to www.baybookfest.org or find box offices on site. Youth under 18 can attend for free. A Friends program baybookfest.org/contribute-2/ allows attendees to receive wristbands and Priority Tickets while supporting the nonprofit festival.

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