



## Children's literature, Trends & Taboos Nordic writers' evening

**Time:** 13 November, 2012, 18.00–20.00

**Location:** Vilnius University, Universiteto g. 3, Aula (in the main building)

*The Scandinavian Center at Vilnius University in cooperation with The Nordic Council of Ministers office in Lithuania and the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish Embassy invites everybody to take part in an interesting evening with four Nordic writers. The event will focus on trends and taboos in children's literature.*

### **The Theme**

Children's literature has for decades had a central position in the Nordic countries, with writers influencing and being important to several generations. The genre is getting wide attention both in the media and the academia, the publishing houses and book clubs. But since good books for children are in fact read by adults, to children, it's more and more often called "all ages" books, fading out the issue of age when talking about quality literature. One of the most essential questions is still what kind of literature, topics and trends we want to explore with children.

### **The program**

The audience will meet four Nordic writers who write and illustrate books for children. Some of their books have also been made into films. Each author will read a short passage of their writing in original language, followed by a Lithuanian translation. After the readings we will have a panel discussion about the theme *Trends and taboos in children's literature*. We will discuss questions such as: Which trends do we see in Nordic children's literature these days? Is it mostly entertaining, didactical or about taboos? Is it possible to write about taboos for children without taking away their faith in life? And do children need to deal with taboos? Which position can and should children's literature have in the society? In the end the authors will answer questions from the audience.

## The writers

**Cecilie Eken** (born 1970) is a Danish author of children's literature. At the young age of 15 she finished her first novel and has now written fourteen novels, three picture books and four short stories. In 2008 Cecilie Eken received the award Forfatterprisen for her authorship. In addition to writing she teaches writing courses for children and teachers in elementary school. She characterizes her novels as being "adventurous stories". A part of her inspiration comes from her (nightly) dreams, as her imagination is put in motion by them. All of her stories contain the elements of fairy tale and magic as she believes this genre contains unique possibilities to verbalize the things we all have to relate to in life; good and evil, love, death, fear and courage etc.

Cecilie Eken has a lot to say but how the readers interpret her stories is up to them. She believes that there are as many versions of her books as there are readers.

**Svein Nyhus** (born 1962) is a Norwegian illustrator and writer of children's books. Educated at the Norwegian National Academy of Craft and Art Industry (Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole, Oslo), he is illustrating his own texts as well as books written by his wife, the Norwegian poet Gro Dahle. Their cooperation has led to many highly acclaimed books which have won several prizes. For example, *Snill* ("Nice"), a picture book for children, won the "Brage Prize" for literature in 2002. Then, in 2003 with the "Best Children's Book Prize" (by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture) for *Sinna Mann (Angry Man)*, a book about a boy witnessing domestic violence. Nyhus' own books have also won several prizes. In 2004 he illustrated "Why Kings and Queens Don't Wear Crowns", a picture book written by Princess Märtha Louise of Norway. Nyhus is known to mix a simple language and caricatured figures, with wonder and earnest. This way he conveys deep wisdom about the world and life, in a way that is entertaining and beautiful for both children and adults. His books have been translated into several languages.

**Timo Parvela** (born 1964) is one of the most read and lauded authors of children's books in Finland. After graduating from Teacher Training College in 1988, he worked for six years as an elementary school teacher. Since 1996 he has been a freelance writer. His first novel *Poika* (The boy) was published in 1989. Timo Parvela is most famous for his *Ella series* (from 1995). Ella is a 7 year old school girl, whose life young readers follow at primary school and at home. The Ella books have become cult classics. The newest book has been published this year and in December will be released the first Ella film *Ella ja kaverit* (Ella and her friends). Timo Parvela has published a Fantasy Trilogy *Sammon vartijat* (The Guardians of Sampo, 2007-2009), based on the Finnish national Epic Kalevala. In this trilogy the author is concerned with the narrative possibilities on contemporary fantasy literature and is developing his own narrative strategies. He has received many awards. The most important are Finlandia Junior Prize for children's and youth literature in 2006 and the Topelius prize in 2007. Timo Parvela has also written television screenplays both for children's audiences and for adults. His books have been published in 15 countries. Timo Parvela is able to capture the child's mindset in situations familiar to home and school, and he always does it with a sense of humor and a touch of magic.

**Viveka Sjögren** (born 1966) is a Swedish illustrator and writer who manages to treat serious subjects with a sense of humour. She is also a teacher of writing skills at Skrivarakademin (Writing Academy) in Stockholm. A number of her books have been published, among them the novel *I den tysta minuten mellan* which was nominated for the August Prize in 2011. She has also written children's books usually with her own illustrations, often with difficult and serious themes like abused children, immigration problems or death like in the book mentioned above. She has also received many awards for her work. In her books she is dealing with the big problems of life in a way, which makes it easy for anybody to identify with and understand. The story is often placed in the Swedish countryside, where Viveka herself is living. She is a creative person, with great insights in people's minds and with a great sense of empathy, which makes her convincing in her stories. Viveka Sjögren has once said that she has a lot of stories to tell and we look forward to reading them.

**Moderator: Professor Kestutis Urba**