

Bettembourg, 6 December 2022



The Prix Laurence, a springboard for young authors

When “Moien” meets “Hello”: the 2022 edition of the Prix Laurence, a literary competition for young authors, brought together authors from Luxembourg and the Greater Region, from Kaunas (Lithuania), as well as from Valpaços (Portugal) and Flaibano (Italy), partner cities of the municipality of Bettembourg.

We met the winners of the 2022 edition, Ognyan 'Flame' Darinov and Marie Viry for a short interview.

You have won the Prix Laurence 2022, how valuable is this award to you?

Ognyan 'Flame' Darinov: It is a beautiful moment of recognition. It is gratifying to see that your poetry can be read, understood and well received. In addition, for the Prix Laurence, you have to read your text in front of an audience, and I really like this performance aspect.

What does writing mean to you? Is it a need or a compulsion?

It's not really a need, more a form of therapy. By writing, you put into words what you are experiencing. It's an exercise in self-understanding. I am a doctoral student in English literature at the University of Luxembourg. So for me, writing is not a profession. I do it for the love of literature.

The poem you won the prize for, *The Laddie at the Lake*, is a conversation in two languages: English and Italian. Is this an echo of Luxembourg's multiculturalism?

When I arrived from Bulgaria, I heard that everyone spoke five languages! In Europe, one language is no longer enough to communicate. So we have to find a new form of poetry to tell the world as it is. Writing in several languages is also technically very interesting: you have to find a new rhythm, a harmony between two worlds that are not supposed to have one. Managing to make Italian and English rhyme was a very pleasant challenge!

Writing has always been a passion for you?

Marie Viry: This may come as a surprise but not really! Literature has always been with me but I first appreciated its scientific side, the fact of analysing texts. Producing texts was not an obsession, it came later. Analysing and writing do not give the same pleasure.

How do you approach competitions such as the Prix Laurence?

I find it very complicated to determine a ranking on the quality of texts. This is true for all art forms. How can you tell if one work is better than another? Of course, winning the Prix Laurence made me very happy; it was a very nice surprise! I really liked the fact that we were asked to read our texts at the finale. Reading aloud conveys a lot, you can better see between the lines.

As a high school student, do you manage to find as much time as you want to write?

That's the big problem! I am a member of the Youth Parliament and a Youth Rights Ambassador for UNICEF, for whom we are currently writing the Youth Rights Booklet. I think that politics, literature and philosophy form a triptych. They are three passions and I cannot imagine one without the others. Even though all these activities bring me a lot of happiness, they also take up a lot of my time. However, I am growing and cultivating myself through them.

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