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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Booker Nominees Listed

By Aliide Naylor

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The "long list" for the Russian equivalent of the prestigious literary award was announced at a press conference on Wednesday. Twenty-four hopefuls have entered the running, whittled down from 87. The final shortlist of six candidates is to be announced on October 3.

The award is considered one of the most prestigious literary honors in the country, and this year marks the 22nd time it will be granted to one of the prime writing talents in Russia.

This year's nominees include Yevgeny Vodolazkin for "Laurus," which has been signed to six countries including the UK; five-time nominee Alexei Slapovsky for "Back," and scholar, columnist, and one-time "Student Booker" winner Maya Kucherskaya for "Aunt Motya." The selection of candidates span a vast array of literary styles.

Winners will receive 1.5 million rubles ($45,552), with the six finalists each being given a lump sum of 150,000 rubles. The final winner will be announced on December 4.

"This list contains many new names, and the quality of the works of those who could be called

novices are comparable with the masters," said chairman of the jury, Andrei Dmitriyev, who won the prize last year.

He has observed the competition since 2004 and declared that with each year the list of applicants has become thicker and more interesting. He aired hopes that, in line with the aim of the prize, it would draw attention to and encourage the spread of serious prose.

"The decline of Russian literature is only spoken about by people who do not read, or read sporadically," he said.

The 2013 Jury also includes novelist and philosopher Vladimir Kantor, poet and executive secretary of a journal entitled "Problems of Literature," Yelena Pogorelaya, critic and deputy chief editor of the Yekaterinburg-based literary magazine "Ural" Sergei Belyakov, and rock musician Yevgeny Margulis.

First established in 1991, the award consolidated itself as the first non-governmental literary prize since 1917.

It was inaugurated by English businessman Sir Michael Harris Caine who headed up Booker Bros. and Booker PLC and helped establish the Man Booker Prize.

Alongside the main award, a "Student Booker" competition takes place. The student adaptation has a parallel student jury and includes winners of critical essays on the Booker novels. It was launched in 2004 as part of an initiative by the Center for the Study of Modern Russian Literature at the State Humanitarian University.

Dmitriyev's prizewinning entry last year was a novel about a young man trying to avoid being conscripted into the army by seeking refuge in a decaying village, meeting an equally lonely counterpart.

"The Villager and the Teenager" was also chosen from a collective of six hopeful finalists in a December ruling.

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