

ON SVETINA'S WORK

"Tales are full of life optimism, naive humor, and oxymora about how to do something out of nothing."

Ljubljana City Library

"Dozens of animal stories are written every day but not all of them are good, let alone wise. Twenty-one miniature stories from the picture book Hippopotamus Wisdom are definitely good and wise, that is why it is no surprise that animal stories by Toon Tellegan instantly come to reader's mind. /.../ In Hippopotamus Wisdom, written by Peter Svetina and illustrated by Damijan Stepančič, we came accross a variety of unusual literary characters, starting with hippopotamuses, grasshoppers, midges, a pelican, a dromedary, a gnu, and many others."

GAJA KOS, Sodobnost

"The Lumber Room by Peter Svetina is an organized chaos of small treasures, patiently waiting for the reader to pick them up and blow the dust off them. Because the romper room, be it in the attic, in the basement or in the children's room drawer, hides interesting, even mysterious things."

From the Večernica Award Jury

"Our imagination starts to run wild. O and A, Alpha and Omega, but in the reverse order? Does that mean that one can find in the romper room (of our brain) the whole world, only that it is, as on the Fool's Day, turned upside down? Impatiently we open the door to The Lumber Room."

MAJDA TRAVNIK VODE, Sodobnost

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PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVE



Peter Svetina

Peter Svetina was born in 1970 in Ljubljana. In 1995 he graduated with a degree in Slovenian Studies, and in 2001 he received a PhD for his dissertation on Old Slovenian poetry. His literary debut was a picture book *Little Walrus Who Did Not Want to Cut His Nails* (*O mrožku, ki si ni hotel striči nohtov*, 1999), which soon served as the basis for a puppet play. He writes for children as well as for young adults. His books include *Purple Town* (*Lila mesto*, 1999), *Vid's Angel* (*Vidov angel*, 2000), *Little Geese, Puppies and Donkeys* (*Goske, psički in oslički*, 2001), *The Secret of Milk Chocolate* (*Skrivnost mlečne čokolade*, 2002), *Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses* (*Ringaraja*, 2009), *Anton's Circus* (*Antonov cirkus*, 2009), *How Jaromir Sought Happiness* (*Kako je Jaromir iskal srečo*, 2010), *Hippopotamus Wisdom* (*Modrost nilskih konjev*, 2010), the poetry collections *By-World* (*Mimosvet*, 2001) and *Poems from*

the Washing Machine (*Pesmi iz pralnega stroja*, 2006), the youth novel *Cicadas Go Quiet at Midnight* (*Škržati umolknejo opolnoči*, 2005) and the youth detective novel *Fateful Covers* (*Usodne platnice*, 2001). His poems and stories have been translated into English, German and Korean. In addition to his literary work, he also writes scholarly texts on Old Slovene poetry, as well as on youth literature and detective novels. He translates from English, Czech, German and Croatian. He won numerous prizes, including the Best Debut Award of the 2001 Ljubljana Book Fair for his poetry collection for adults *The Café on the First Floor* (*Kavarna v prvem nadstropju*), the best original Slovenian picture book in 2008 for his *Mr Constantine's Hat* (*Klobuk gospoda Konstantina*), the "Golden Pear" Award for *Hippopotamus Wisdom*, and the 2013 "Večernica" award for the children's book *The Lumber Room* (*Ropotarna*, 2012).

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DZS, 2010

Hippopotamus Wisdom

Hubert and Marcel are hippopotamuses who do not take life as a bare fact, but come to know life, to taste it, reflect on it a bit, learn something about it – or perhaps not – and, especially, enjoy it with friends. Hubert and Marcel have the time to listen to silence and to rhyme rhymes. They do not rush into contact with the human world, and neither do the less central heroes of these 21 stories – Tanami the Zebra, Claudia the Skunk, Rudolf the Rhinoceros, pelicans, flies, penguins, and many more. Relaxation is one of the virtues of this text, and with that I'm thinking of both the relaxed ways of the heroes, who can forget about time, or who can find the time to fling mud-balls or to think about shelling peas, as well as relaxation on the

linguistic level of the text. The sentences, but also the stories as wholes, are clear and short, without any unnecessary baggage; they are full of dynamism, sometimes lyricism, while sometimes being concise, yet always full of humour and optimism. Occasionally the author deliberately foregoes adult auto-censoring and spices up the text here and there by depicting characters who are not always role models. This not only allows children to think independently, but encourages them by making them doubt, by giving them a chance to be wise. The short stories in the book *Hippopotamus Wisdom* can be read as individual chapters of a short children's novel or as stand-alone stories that arouse children's curiosity and make us laugh.

KATJA STERGAR

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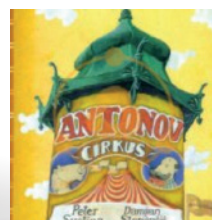
Pesmi iz pralnega stroja (Poems from the Washing Machine), Mladinska knjiga, 2006



Das kleine Walross bekommt eine Brille = Mrožek dobi očala (Little Walrus Gets Glasses), Drava, 2005



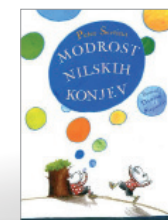
Der Hut des Herrn Konstantin = Klobuk gospoda Konstantina (Mr Constantine's Hat), Drava, 2008



Antonov cirkus (Anton's Circus), Vodnikova založba, 2009



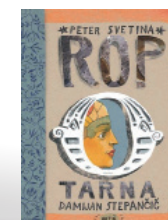
Ringaraja (Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses), Mladinska knjiga 2009



Modrost nilskih konjev (Hippopotamus Wisdom), DZS, 2010



Čudežni prstan (Magic Ring), Vodnikova založba, 2011



Ropotarna (The Lumber Room), Založba Miš, 2012