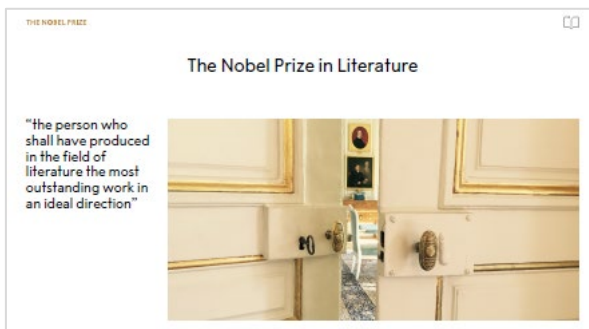


Speaker's manuscript – Literature prize 2023

Jon Fosse

The Nobel Prize in Literature

- The Nobel Prize in Literature is one of the five prizes founded by Alfred Nobel and awarded on 10 December every year.
- Before Nobel died on 10 December 1896, he wrote in his will that the largest part of his fortune should be used to fund a prize to those who “have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind”.
- One of the five prizes should be awarded to “the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”.
- The Nobel Prize in Literature has mainly been awarded to authors who have written works of fiction – such as novels, short stories, poetry collections and theatrical plays. In 2016 the prize went to a musician and songwriter, when Bob Dylan became the literature laureate.



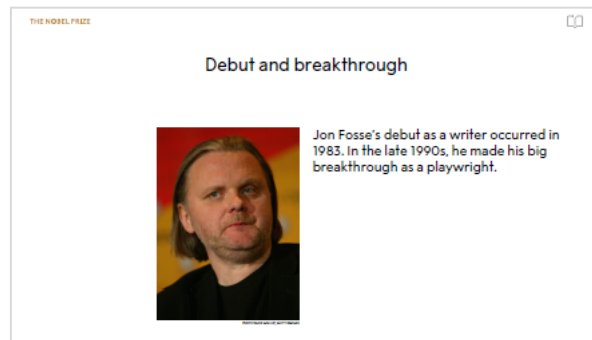
The 2023 literature prize

- Jon Fosse was born in 1959 in Haugesund on the west coast of Norway. He writes in Nynorsk, one of Norway's two written languages. Today he lives in Oslo and outside of Vienna, Austria.
- Jon Fosse writes in various genres and has published many plays, novels, poetry collections, essays and children's books.
- He is best known for his plays, but he sees himself as a poet at heart. This is what he said in an interview in the Swedish Television literature program *Babel*: “I have never felt like a playwright. I've felt like a writer. When you've stripped it all down, I've felt like a kind of poet.”



Debut and breakthrough

- Jon Fosse made his debut in 1983 with the novel *Raudt, svart* (*Red, Black*). It's about a young man whose father is dying. Using everyday language, Fosse depicts strong, wounded emotions – and thus set the tone for his continued writing.
- This debut was followed by several novels, poetry collections and plays before Fosse's big international breakthrough came in 1999, with a production in Paris of the play *Someone is Going to Come*.



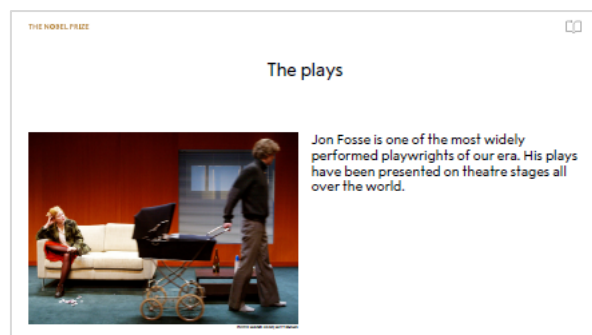
Recurring themes throughout Fosse's works

- In his plays, novels and poems, Jon Fosse depicts feelings and experiences that many people can relate to, but which can be difficult to capture in words. He “gives voice to the unsayable”, as the Swedish Academy writes in its prize citation. This can include anxiety, uncertainty, disorientation and questions about the meaning of life.
- Although many of his works are dark, there is great warmth in his “stark images of human experience”, the Swedish Academy writes in its presentation of Fosse's works.



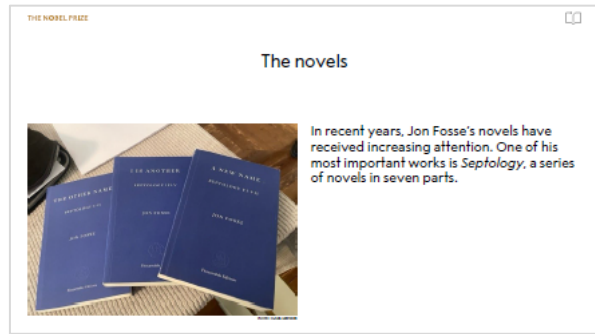
The plays

- Jon Fosse has written about forty plays.
- Since his breakthrough, his plays have been presented on theatre stages all over the world. For many years, he has been one of the most widely performed playwrights internationally.
- Among the things that make his plays so “innovative”, as the prize citation puts it, is his ability to let simple, everyday phrases express strong emotions.
- One technique he uses to charge his plays with maximum emotion – and capture the anxiety and uncertainty that his characters often feel – is to use pauses, silence and short, truncated responses. His style is usually described as “Fosse's minimalism”.



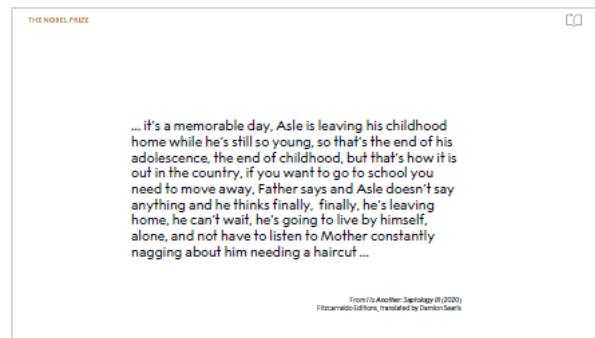
The novels

- In addition to his plays, Jon Fosse's novels have attracted a great deal of international attention, especially in recent years.
- The language of his novels is poetic, with retakes and repetitions. Their style is also characterised by the minimalism recognisable from his plays, where seemingly simple language is charged with strong emotions.
- One of his most important works in the novel genre is *Septology*, which consists of seven parts published in three volumes. It's about two friends and artists who are both named Asle. They live very different lives, while at the same time being some kind of doppelgängers. Like other novels by Fosse, *Septology* is written without any periods (full stops).



Excerpt from *I Is Another: Septology III*

- In the third part of *Septology* the other Asle, who is not the novel's narrator, has become a teenager and is getting ready to move away from home to start high school. In this excerpt, he is about to be separated from his parents. His father talks about what a big day it is, now that his only child will be moving.



... it's a memorable day, Asle is leaving his childhood home while he's still so young, so that's the end of his adolescence, the end of childhood, but that's how it is out in the country, if you want to go to school you need to move away, Father says and Asle doesn't say anything and he thinks finally, finally, he's leaving home, he can't wait, he's going to live by himself, alone, and not have to listen to Mother constantly nagging about him needing a haircut ...

From *I Is Another: Septology III* (2020)
Fitzcarraldo Editions, translated by Damion Searls