# German Author Jenny Erpenbeck Wins International Booker Prize for Novel 'Kairos'



Jenny Erpenbeck, a celebrated German author, recently won the International Booker Prize for her novel "Kairos," which Michael Hofmann translated. The book delves into a volatile love affair between 19-year-old Katharina and Hans, a married writer and radio presenter 34 years her senior, set against the backdrop of East Berlin from 1988 to 1992. The narrative intertwines personal and political struggles, reflecting the turbulence of the period surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Despite Erpenbeck's acclaim in Germany, "Kairos" did not feature on the shortlists of the country’s prominent literary awards, causing a stir in the German literary scene upon winning the International Booker Prize. Erpenbeck, who has authored four novels since her debut "Visitation" in 2010, often explores complex historical periods in her work. Her previous novel, "The End of Days," won the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2015, and "Go, Went, Gone" was longlisted for the International Booker in 2017.

Hofmann, a distinguished poet, critic, and translator, collaborated with Erpenbeck for the first time on "Kairos." He describes the book as both irresistible and unpredictable. The novel, which Erpenbeck refers to as a "museum in the form of a book," captures the blend of personal experiences and historical reflections from East Germany, aiming to add depth and nuance to the often-simplified narratives about the region.

Erpenbeck's work provides a multidimensional view of East German life, beyond the well-known depictions of the Stasi and the Berlin Wall. Through "Kairos," she seeks to give voice to the East German stories and experiences, which she feels are underrepresented in both German and international literature. The novel's portrayal of the era's personal and political intersections offers readers a vivid exploration of the complexities of life during this transformative period in German history.