

Al Gore, Amos Oz share Dan David Prizes

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Seven individuals, including Nobel Prize laureate and former US vice president Al Gore and the dean of Israeli writers, Amos Oz, will receive Tel Aviv University's Dan David Prize in May, sharing the \$3 million award.

The awards are given each year for outstanding achievement to Israelis and foreigners who are committed to donate 10 percent of their prize money for 20 TAU doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships.

The prize is named for international businessman and philanthropist Dan David, whose foundation - located at the university - is chaired by TAU president Prof. Zvi Galil. The recipients will be honored at the campus on May 19 and receive their awards from President Shimon Peres.

The prize for the "Past" in the field of "Creative Rendering of the Past - Literature, Theater, Film" will be shared by Oz for portraying historical events while emphasizing the individual, and for his personal exploration of the tragic conflict between two nations; Tom Stoppard, the British playwright whose works "demonstrate farcical cleverness alongside profound humanity and faith in goodness, beauty and love"; and Atom Egoyan of Canada for his "superb modernist filmmaking, which explores Armenian history and culture.

Oz, one of the most widely read Israeli writers, has published numerous novels, novellas, short stories, essays, and occasionally even poetry over five decades. They include *The Hill of Evil Counsel* (1976), *Panther in the Basement* (1995), *My Michael* (1968), *Unto Death* (1971) and *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2002).

Oz expressed in his own words a basic theme in his works: "The fact that somewhere beyond race and religion and ideology and all other great dividers, the insecure, timid, hoping, craving and trembling self is very often very close to the next insecure, timid, craving, hoping, fearing, terrified self."

Since Stoppard established himself as one of the few undisputed masters of the modern stage in 1966 with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, he has returned repeatedly to the past as part of his ceaseless search for meaning in a bewildering universe. Often challenging prevailing intellectual and political views, he has insisted on the need to affirm absolute values. Language is slippery, philosophy is elusive, science often baffling - but in Stoppard's world there is a pervasive faith in goodness, beauty and love.

The foundation said that "Stoppard is as much showman as intellectual, as much entertainer as philosopher, as much joker as seeker of truth. He is the only playwright to be a member of the Order of Merit - Britain's highest honor."

Egoyan is a critically acclaimed and prize-winning Canadian-Armenian filmmaker who has directed feature, TV and documentary films. For *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997), he received an Academy Award nomination for Best Director.

His work often explores themes of alienation and isolation, typically set in contemporary situations and social contexts. Hints of his interest in Armenian history and culture appeared before his monumental *Ararat* (2002) in *Calendar* (1993), where the protagonist travels with his Armenian wife to Armenia to photograph churches for a calendar, which marks the passage of time throughout the movie. Egoyan, it said, is unique in his approach to structure: the story unfolds through the journey of the characters towards the discovery of "Truth."

The "Present" dimension in the field of "Social Responsibility with Particular Emphasis on the Environment" will be given to Gore for his "multiple contributions to creating greater worldwide awareness of the disastrous effects that man's energy consumption has on the environment."

Gore, said the award jury, was probably the single individual who has done the most to create greater worldwide awareness of the detrimental effects that man's energy consumption has had on the environment and the imperative for individuals and governments to take drastic action to avert climatic disaster.

"He has eloquently sounded the alarm on the importance of the threat to the global ecosystem posed by the world's current and increasing reliance on carbon dioxide emitting fossil fuels as its primary energy source," the jury said.

"His book, *Earth in the Balance*, first published in 1992 and translated since into many languages, remains a classic - not only a call to action but also an important educational resource. The Oscar-winning movie he produced more recently and in which he starred, *An Inconvenient Truth*, has carried the message to an even larger audience."

Three individuals will share the "Future" dimension prize in the field of Geosciences: Ellen Moseley-Thompson and Lonnie G. Thompson, from Ohio State University, for their "separate and joint efforts in studying the geological and environmental records in ice cores," and Geoffrey Eglinton of the University of Bristol for his "studies of organic chemical fossils, which revealed the inhabitants and climates of ancient worlds."

The Thompsons are a married scientific team and partners in planning experiments and interpreting results. They run a highly effective research group with an "outside" leader and an "inside" leader/analyst with very different skills, and have authored 150 papers on materials preserved in ice cores from Antarctica to Greenland. Lonnie Thompson leads the field operations on high-altitude tropical glaciers, while his wife conducts field and laboratory programs and reconstructs the conditions recorded by the ice.

"The constellation of laureates is particularly meaningful at this time," said philanthropist David on the announcement of the 2008 winners on Tuesday.

"On the one hand, [there are great creators depicting historical events in literature, theater and film; on the other [hand, there are] eminent scientists whose research predicts environmental disaster if we do not act; and in between a man working to promote awareness of this prediction and its remedies so that human history will continue to be told for generations to come."

Scholarship recipients join the on-line Dan David Prize Scholarship Recipients Forum, which serves as a platform to discuss research topics, present research and exchange ideas. The Dan David Prize also seeks to involve high school pupils through the "Name Your Hero" Essay Competition. Students submit their ideas for candidates and fields for the Dan David Prize. Selected students participate in an advanced writing workshop at TAU. Three first prizes of NIS 10,000 and six second prizes of NIS 5,000 are awarded.

The analytical work on the ice cores required major advances in the sampling and measurement of small samples. These high-resolution records provide unique data on the histories of remote regions, the roles of atmospheric dust and volcanic aerosols, abrupt changes in the global environment, and the impact of such environmental changes on human activities. The Thompsons showed it was possible to get deep cores from high peaks, preserve them during transport through tropical jungles and then extract ancient signals from them.

Englinton's laboratory introduced "molecular stratigraphy" as a means of following variations in ancient climates and drew on the work of oceanographers, paleontologists and geologists. He provided a basis for recognizing the origins of hydrocarbons in petroleum and other deposits and led in the elucidation of the origins of complex, biologically diagnostic molecules found in sediments. By studying how their structures were altered during storage in buried sediments, he established an entirely new means for examining the evolution of sedimentary basins and their resident fossil fuels.