Diogenes

Book factsheet

Sasha Filipenko
Red Crosses

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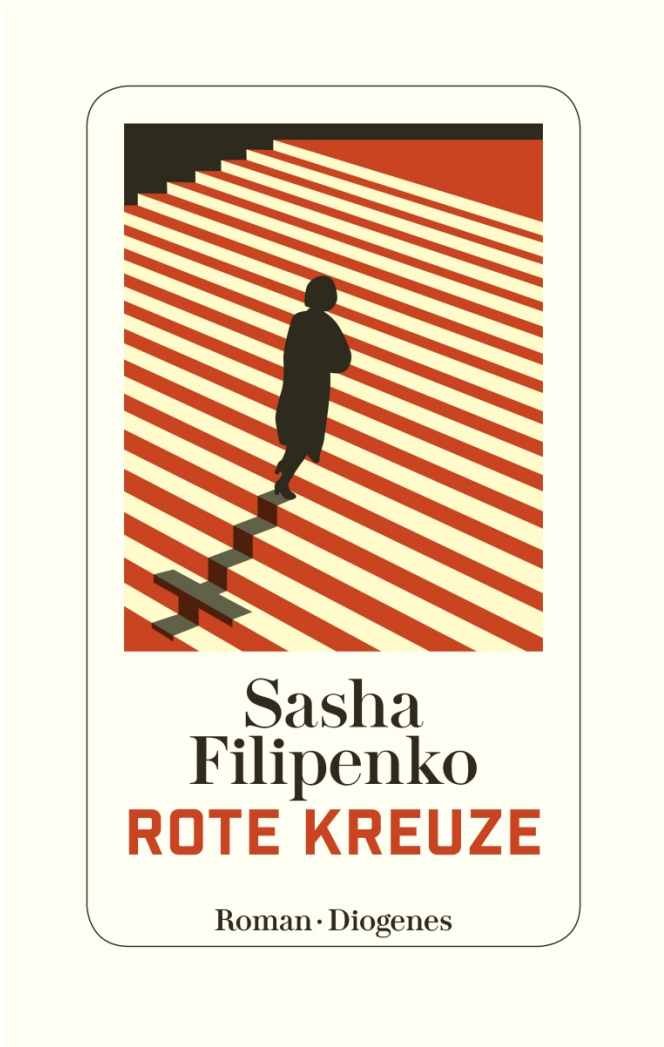

A great Russian novel in only 280 pages – from Stalin's terror to the present day.
One fights against forgetting, the other would like nothing more than that.
She is suffering from Alzheimer's, losing more and more memories. But once you meet this old lady, you'll never forget her.
Alexander is a young man whose life has been brutally torn in two. Tatiana Alexeyevna is over ninety and getting more forgetful by the day. The old lady tells her new neighbour her life story, encompassing the entire Russian 20th century and all its horrors. And she tells him: »God is afraid of me. There are too many uncomfortable questions coming His way.«
Bit by bit, the two recognize their own broken hearts in each other and forge an unlikely friendship, a pact against forgetting.

Contemporary Literature
288 pages
11.6 × 18.4 × 2.3 cm
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Thai (Library House)
Turkish (Iletisim)

Bestseller

Spiegel Bestseller

Awards

2025 Ruth Altenhofer wurde für ihre Übersetzung des Romans *Der Schatten einer offenen Tür* von Sasha Filipenko aus dem Russischen mit dem ›Sacher-Masoch-Preis‹ ausgezeichnet.
2024 ›Prix Transfuge du meilleur roman européen ‹ für *Kremulator*
2024 ›ProLitteris-Hauptpreis‹ für herausragende Leistungen in der Literatur und Kultur
2022 *Rote Kreuze* auf der Shortlist für ›EBRD Literaturpreis‹, vergeben von der Europäischen Bank für Wiederaufbau und Entwicklung für übersetzte Belletristik
2021 ›Writer in Residence‹ bis Juli 2021: Fondation Jan Michalski, Montricher, Nähe Genfersee, Schweiz
2020 ›Yasnaya Polyana Award‹ des Lev Tolstoy Museum für *Der Schatten einer offenen Tür*
2016 *Die Jagd* auf der Shortlist für den russischen ›Big Book Award‹
2016 ›Snob Award: Made in Russia‹ für *Die Jagd*
2014 ›Znamya Magazine Award‹ für *Der ehemalige Sohn*
2014 ›Russian Prize‹ für *Der ehemalige Sohn*

Praise

Red Crosses

»A tour de force. A book full of sound and fury, but also greatness and gentleness.« – Astrid de Larminat / Le Figaro littéraire, Paris



Photo: Lukas Lienhard / © Diogenes Verlag

Sasha Filipenko, born in Minsk in 1984, is a Belarusian author who writes in Russian. After leaving his training in classical music, he studied literature in St. Petersburg and worked as a journalist, scriptwriter, television presenter and gag writer for a satirical show. His novels *Red Crosses* and *The Hunt* were *Spiegel* bestsellers. Filipenko is an ardent football fan and lived in St. Petersburg until 2020. He had to leave Russia with his family and currently lives in Switzerland.



The Shadow of an Open Door
272 pages
2024
Award winner



The Hunt
288 pages
2022
Award winner
Bestseller

Praise (cont'd)

»An important, necessary book. Both for Russia, which suffers from historic amnesia, and Europe which is also running the risk of losing its historic memory.« – Dmitry Glukhovsky / (Russian author)

»With *Red Crosses*, Sasha Filipenko has written the novel of the Russian 20th century.« – Alemannò Partenopeo / literaturzeitschrift.de

»He allows the injustice suffered by the woman to simply take hold – no explanations are necessary, particularly for the author's compatriots.« – Torsten Kohlschein / Freie Presse, Chemnitz

»Filipenko's book is a tale of a poignant fate, interspersed with extracts from original documents.« – Ruhr Nachrichten, Dortmund

»With *Red Crosses*, comedian and author Sasha Filipenko has created a moving testament to Russian history.« – Gala, Hamburg

»The way in which Tatjana and Alexander's fates become increasingly entwined and their encounter gives rise to something new, something hopeful, is both mesmerising and beautiful.« – Annegret Arnold / Bayern 2, Munich

»Sasha Filipenko has a talent for bringing his characters to life within the novel's historical context.« – Anton Thuswaldner / Salzburger Nachrichten, Salzburg

»One of the best books to be released this spring. A wonderful, gripping story with touches of humour.« – Helmut Zechner / ORF 2, Vienna

»In a captivating yet matter-of-fact way, Sasha Filipenko tells the story of the Soviet Union from beginning to end – and beyond.« – radio fm4 (ORF), Vienna

»First, this book is very sophisticatedly constructed. Second, it tells an outrageous story.« – Peer Teuwsen / Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag, Zurich

»Sasha Filipenko expertly links past and present, building a bridge between intimacy and otherness.« – Kurier, Vienna

»He has pulled off the impressive feat of condensing Russian history, up to the present day, into 280 pages.« – Augsburger Allgemeine, Augsburg

»A truly important book.« – NDR Kultur, Hamburg

»This is gripping contemporary history that exerts a unique pull on the reader.« – Ursula May / HR2 Kultur, Frankfurt

»Filipenko impressively demonstrates how it could affect anyone – and how many tried to stay human in spite of it.« – Brigitte, Hamburg

Praise (cont'd)

»You learn something about the Stalin era, as well as about people's suffering during and after the Second World War; this is powerful, impressive reading.« – Michael Opitz / Deutschlandfunk Kultur, Cologne

»In this novel he [the author] combines research with a story that is highly readable and sensitively written, despite the gloomy details of Tatjana's life during the Stalin era« – Erika Achermann / Aargauer Zeitung, Aarau

»The idiosyncrasies and particular quirkiness of the characters make them especially lovable, ensuring light-hearted moments despite the serious subject matter.« – Christin Deja / Märkische Allgemeine, Potsdam

»He deftly forges links with modern-day Russia, a land that often suppresses the sinister aspects of its history.« – Felix Münger / SRF 1, Zurich

»Young Sasha Filipenko has written an essential book which is here to stay.« – Marko Martin / Die Welt, Berlin

»A moving meditation on memory, forgetfulness, and the thirst for connection.« – Hamilton Cain / Oprah Daily, New York

»This author brings freshness and wit to a familiar story of Soviet tragedy.« – Publishers Weekly, New York

»The urgency and misery of Tatiana's story collides with the apathy of Alexander's generation towards the past. The result is moving and profound.« – The Times, London

»[. . .] one of three strong novels in translation [. . .] the tender story of a 90-year-old woman recalling the horrors she and her fellow Soviets have endured.« – The Independent, London

Sasha Filipenko

»There is something unshakable to Sasha Filipenko's literature – impressive.« – Nora Zukker / Tages-Anzeiger, Zurich

»Filipenko is a relatable intellectual and a first-class writer who is gradually becoming known and appreciated in the West.« – Wlodek Goldkorn / L'Espresso, Rome

»Sasha Filipenko is one of those young writers who immediately gained a reputation for being a serious author. If you want to get inside the head of modern, young Russia, read Filipenko.« – Svetlana Alexievich / (›Nobel Prize‹ winner 2015)

Praise (cont'd)

»Sasha Filipenko's books are based on thorough documental research – material that he turns into fictional literature with linguistic innovation and acumen. Sasha Filipenko possesses the ability to depict dismal circumstances with powerful metaphors, rendering the absurdity of political and existential situations. With satire and finesse, he reconstructs the intimate and the mundane that lets humans persevere – or keeps them caught – in objectively unbearable situations. His humour is brilliant and conveys complex historical contexts to the readers, employing human fates as examples. By bestowing this award on Sasha Filipenko, the jury also wants to honour an author whose career has been marked by substantial personal and political risks. Both of which reflect in his writing. Sasha Filipenko is an invaluable witness who contributes, as an intermediary, to the understanding of the contemporary geopolitical situation.« – Pro Litteris Award Jury