

Ladies and gentlemen, dear international guests,

Welcome to this significant and poignant occasion, the Georgian Showcase, a pivotal element of the 15th-anniversary edition of the Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre. As we gather here today, we are acutely aware of the profound geo-political changes and the distressing turmoil in Ukraine that have a ripple effect on the world and our region, intertwining with the sensitive dynamics of Georgian politics.

In the face of these challenging times, we believe more than ever in the transformative power of art and culture to bridge divides, nurture understanding, and promote peace and democracy. Theatre, in its essence, is a mirror to society, reflecting its triumphs, tribulations, and the human spirit that perseveres through adversity.

As we navigate this festival, we honor the resilience of the human spirit—the spirit that continues to seek connection, understanding, and unity, even in the darkest of times. Through festival-recommended shows, premieres, and diverse choices in the long list of performances and artistic expressions showcased here, we hope to find solace, inspiration, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Today, as we commence this event, we acknowledge a critical concern: GEORGIAN CULTURE, in all its facets, is in danger and we hope you'll help us spread the word.

#### GEORGIAN THEATRE IS IN DANGER!

The Ministry of Culture did not appoint a single candidate critical of the government as artistic director of state theaters. They were restricted in their right to participate in the competition and became victims of discriminatory actions and public humiliation.

#### GEORGIAN CINEMA IS IN DANGER!

The Ministry of Culture has appointed a propagandist TV presenter as the director of the National Film Center of Georgia. This has limited the independence of a vital institution in our cultural landscape and questioned its credibility. More than 400 filmmakers are boycotting the change.

#### GEORGIAN LITERATURE IS IN DANGER!

The Ministry of Culture has appointed a party member from the ruling party as the director of the House of Writers of Georgia. The most significant part of Georgian writers announces a boycott and demands a politically impartial literary space.

#### MUSEUMS OF GEORGIA ARE IN DANGER!

The Ministry of Culture started a campaign of mass persecution in the National Museum. They fired those specialists who were critical of the ruling party or were involved in trade union activities. Former employees of the penitentiary system were appointed to leading positions.

## GEORGIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE IS IN DANGER!

The nepotistic approach to running institutions has threatened our rich cultural heritage. Archeological monuments of world importance are under threat. Several of the most important historical monuments have already been irreparably damaged.

In the face of these challenges, it is our duty as artists, creators, and advocates of culture to stand united. Let us use this festival not only as a platform for artistic expression but also as a space to raise our voices and protect our values.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our international guests, whose presence adds immeasurable value to this event. Your commitment to fostering cultural exchange and promoting understanding is a beacon of hope in these challenging times. We stand united in our belief in the power of free speech, in the power of independent and free art to heal, unite, and transcend boundaries. Together, we can spark change and ensure a vibrant and free artistic landscape for future generations.

Dear Guests, we hope for your invaluable support, let the Georgian Showcase of the 15th-anniversary edition of the Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre be the unyielding safeguard of freedom and democracy.

Thank you!

Data Tavadze

Director at Royal District Theatre

Member of the Artistic Board of Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre