

Press release, 9 October 2018

# Georgia – Made by Characters

## The Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2018 is just as unique and artistic as its alphabet

FRANKFURT. Georgia, an age-old cultural nation, is Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse on 10–14 October 2018. The Georgian 'characters', the 33 elegantly curved letters of the unique alphabet, are included on UNESCO's cultural heritage list and have inspired the theme of this year's guest country appearance: Georgia – Made by Characters. The country on the threshold between Europe and the Caucasus is not only presenting the stories and works set down in this fascinating script, but also the characters behind them: authors, artists, musicians – in short, the Georgians themselves. Over the course of the guest country year, more than 150 new books have been published in the German-speaking market, and 70 German-language publishing houses have titles from or about Georgia in their programmes. A total of 200 books have been translated from Georgian into German since the founding of the Georgian National Book Center (2014) and the launch of the translation support programme (2011). More than 70 authors are coming to Germany to present their works in person at the Frankfurter Buchmesse and in the city of Frankfurt at a total of 350 events – from readings to conferences. Around 100 cultural events provide an opportunity to further explore the country. The centre of the Guest of Honour appearance is the Pavilion at the book fair site, the design of which was inspired by the 33 letters. An extensive literary and cultural programme of outstanding quality is presented here every day: from readings and discussions to classical and electronic music.

### From classics to contemporary – new books from and about Georgia

From historical epics and sharp-tongued satires to personal reports from the Gulag – the new releases in German reflect Georgia's historical and cultural diversity, which has a tradition that reaches back to the fifth century and to the hagiographic work *The Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik*.

A huge range of genres are also covered: novels, crime fiction, short stories, myths and fairy tales, Georgian epics, poetry anthologies, non-fiction, collections of critical essays and books for children and young adults. German readers can now also discover a number of classics of Georgian literature such as Shota Rustaveli's twelfth-century national epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, a modern prose version of which has just been published under the title *Der Held im Pardellfell*, told by Tilman Spreckelsen and illustrated by Kat Menschik (Galiani Verlag). Seven books by Mikheil Javakhishvili (1880–1937), the father of modern Georgian prose, are available in German. Otar Tschiladse (1933–2009) was a representative of world literature twice nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature: this year sees the publications in German of *Awelum* and *Der Korb* and *Der Garten der Dariatschangi* (Matthes & Seitz Berlin).

### More than 70 Georgian authors will be attending the Frankfurter Buchmesse

More than 70 Georgian authors will be making guest appearances and presenting their books in Frankfurt. Among them is Aka Morchiladze, one of the most highly respected contemporary Georgian writers. The author, who lives in London, has written more than 30 books, and a number of these have now been published in German for the first time: *Santa*



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*Esperanza* and *Obolé* (both with Mitteldeutscher Verlag), and *Reise nach Karabach* and *Der Filmvorführer* (both with Weidle Verlag). He and Nino Haratischvili, who is probably the best-known Georgian author in Germany, will speak at the opening ceremony of the Frankfurter Buchmesse. The Hamburg-based author presents her new book *Die Katze und der General* (Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt). Other active and engaged Georgian women writers will also be making appearances, among them Naira Gelashvili, a writer who is loved for her unconventional prose and who delivered a passionate plea for the power of imagination in her 1982 book *Ich fahre nach Madrid* (Verbrecher Verlag), which was published in Georgia under difficult circumstances. Tamta Melashvili, an activist in the feminist movement, will be presenting her latest work *Marines Engel* (Wieser Verlag), in which she seeks to understand through literature the origins of injustice, inequality and oppression. Ana Kordzaia-Samadashvili's novel *Wer hat die Tschaika getötet?* (Verlag Hans Schiler) is a plea for tolerance, while Nana Ekvimishvili gives the rebellious women and girls of Georgian society a voice and a face in her book *Das Birnenfeld* (Suhrkamp Verlag).

In *Heiliges Dunkel – Die letzten Tage des Gulag* (Mitteldeutscher Verlag), Levan Berdzenishvili, former Director of the Georgian National Library, opens up a dark chapter in the country's history with a reportage on his time as a political prisoner. With his classic novel *Das erste Gewand* (Carl Hanser Verlag), Guram Dochanashvili created a fable about tyranny and longing – a virtuosic literary masterpiece. Archil Kikodze captures the Georgian zeitgeist perfectly in his latest novel *Südelefant* (Ullstein Verlag). And, finally, Lasha Bugadze, who is always at the centre of public interest thanks to the sharp satirical edge with which he dissects social and political subjects, presents his new book *Der erste Russe* (Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt) in Frankfurt. Poetry, a very popular genre in Georgia, is also well represented, with some of the country's best-known poets – such as Besik Kharanauli – making appearances in Frankfurt.

You can find a list of new publications at [www.georgia-characters.com/Translations.aspx](http://www.georgia-characters.com/Translations.aspx)

### **Surrounded by the 33 letters: The Guest of Honour Pavilion at the Frankfurter Buchmesse**

The Guest of Honour Pavilion (Forum/Level 1) is the main place where you can experience the diversity of Georgian literature and culture. The letters of the Georgian alphabet, which was added to UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list in 2016, play a prominent role in the space designed by the George Bokhua Studio and Multiverse Architecture in Tbilisi. Not only are the new Georgian publications presented in the environment inspired by the 33 characters – 33 doors will also open here, 33 songs will sound out, 33 boats will sail and 33 loaves of bread will be baked. The Pavilion is the stage for an extensive programme of readings and live music. Each day of the book fair comes to an end with the Happy Hour at 5 p.m., which includes anything from the techno sounds of the resident DJ from Tbilisi's famous Bassiani nightclub or a performance by the Georgian National Ballet Sukhishvili. Georgian wine and typical Georgian delicacies will really whet the appetite of visitors. And the guest country programme will come to a close in a grand finale – the traditional Handover Ceremony with Georgian author Zurab Karumidze and Norwegian writer Åsne Seierstad (14 Oct, 3.30 p.m.).

Visitors can also encounter Georgian authors, artists and creatives in events and readings around the rest of the book fair site, for example, at Georgia's National Stand (Hall 5.0, B100), at the Literature for Children and Young Adults Stand (Hall 3.0, F152) at THE ARTS+ (Hall 4.1, N67, N71 etc), on the Agora, and in the Gourmet Gallery (Hall 3.1, L140, L146). „Science – Made by Characters“ and the Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency will present themselves (Hall 4.2, E93, B85). There is also a whole host of lectures and readings in other places, such as during the city's reading festival OPEN BOOKS, and at BOOKFEST, the festival of the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

### **Exhibitions, performances, films: Georgia in Frankfurt**

Outside the book fair, countless other events – from theatre productions and performances to exhibitions – provide even more insights into Georgia's diverse cultural landscape. The programme presented by Frankfurt's museums and cultural institutions combines the best of prehistory, ancient and contemporary art, photography, architecture, design, typography and illustration. Highlights include the exhibition 'Medea's Love and the Quest for the Golden Fleece' at the Liebieghaus Skulpturensammlung, with exceptional archaeological finds and antique artworks from Georgia, as well as 'Gold & Wine. Georgia's Oldest Treasures' organised by the Archäologisches Museum Frankfurt. Under the title 'Tiflis on my Mind' at the Klingspor Museum in Offenbach, the Georgian alphabet will be the central focus of an exhibition for the first time. Lovers of contemporary art can look forward to the screening 'All is fair in Dreams and War' by Andro Wekua, one of Georgia's most popular contemporary artists, and the first solo exhibition dedicated to Thea Djordjadze, one of Georgia's most high-profile artists. World-famous musicians are on hand to provide a musical taster of the guest country, including the pianist Khatia Buniatishvili at the book fair opening ceremony, the jazz pianist Beka Gochiashvili and many others at the concert from the cultural TV channel ARTE, and – last but not least – the violinist Lisa Batiashvili with the Georgian Philharmonic Orchestra and the Gori Women's Choir in a concert at the Alte Oper Frankfurt. The programme also includes a series of productions by leading Georgian theatre ensembles, including the renowned Rezo Gabriadze Puppet Theatre, the Tumanishvili Film Actors Theatre and the Tskhinvali State Theatre. There is also plenty to keep film lovers happy, including a film series at the Deutsches Filmmuseum and a book launch and film screening dedicated to the Georgian filmmaker, scriptwriter, actor and painter Kote Mikaberidze.

### **Georgia is cooking – culinary experiences around Frankfurt**

Not only in the Georgia Pavilion or the Gourmet Gallery can book fair visitors experience a taste of Georgia. Using the tagline 'Georgia is cooking', promoter **Leon Joskowitz** joins forces with five top Georgian chefs and culinary ambassadors – like the celebrated chef **Tekuna Gachechiladze** – to share the experience of the country's culinary diversity around Frankfurt, for example, during the 'Books n' Wines' series.

More information can be found at [www.georgia-characters.com](http://www.georgia-characters.com)