

SOFA 2021: Tbilisi Workshop Again Digital

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic **SOFA – School of Film Advancement** will hold its Tbilisi workshop for the second time in a digital form. With the experience of three online workshops in 2020, SOFA is putting a great effort in preparing the best possible digital performance for their participants and guests.

The March 22-26 workshop will focus on marketing and finance strategies of the participants' projects. SOFA has prepared a wide range of lectures, keynotes and “one-on-one” meetings fitted to the participants' individual needs. Since the workshop cannot take place in Georgia, the team made an effort to bring the experience of this wonderful country and its culture closer to digital life.

Nikolaj Nikitin, SOFA Director: “SOFA and Georgia will online remain a perfect match. We are very happy to cooperate with our precious Georgian partners whose spirit and professional perspective constantly proves to be a huge benefit for projects and participants.”

The ten participants with nine projects of the 2020/2021 edition, who will e-meet a selected round of experts and tutors, are: **Victoria Aleksanyan** (Armenia), **Elkjana Gjipali** (Albania), **Stefanie Gödicke** (Germany), **Rufat Hasanov** (Azerbaijan), **Leonid Kalitenya** (Belarus), **Jasna Pintarič** (Slovenia), **Janka Pozsonyi** (Hungary), **Philipp Maurice Raube** (Germany), **Willy Rollé** (Germany/France) and **Rita Stanelytė** (Lithuania).

The adapted and further developed curriculum of the digital Tbilisi workshop will be supported by a lead-team of experts: **Renaud Redien-Collot** (Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Léonard de Vinci Business School, Paris), **Peter Rommel**, (Rommel Film, Berlin) **Sabine Schmitt** (Social Media Marketing expert, Berlin), **Tamara Tatishvili** (MEDICI Head of Training, Georgia/Belgium), **Levan Nanobashvili** (Lawyer in the field of international media law, Georgia), **Carolina Jochheim** (German Federal Foreign Office, Berlin) and **Wato Tsereteli** (Artist, Curator, Georgia).

“Now it is more important than ever to organize the SOFA marketing workshop in Georgia, even if it is online.” explains Tamara Tatishvili, SOFA's regional coordinator and mentor. “Eastern partnership countries face severe realities as a result of global health crisis. It unfolds on political, social and cultural levels and endangers fragile local film structures and their functioning. Due to this, individual cultural practitioners are at risk and need greater support. With the SOFA workshop we will signal that established international partnerships are there for all participants, we will bring new speakers to the region and we will demonstrate solidarity which is lacking locally.”

In addition to lectures by first-rate speakers, participants and guests of the “e-Tbilisi” workshop will have an opportunity to get acquainted with Georgian culture. A cooking lesson with the Georgian celebrity cook **Meriko Gubeladze** will bring local culinary specialities to the SOFA participants’ homes. And an online screening of Georgian animation films followed by a talk with its producer **Vladimer Katcharava** (20 Steps production) will put focus on this branch of filmmaking. “For our industry development organizing SOFA in Georgia is very important for several reasons”, says Katcharava. “First, Georgia gets on international level among other European countries and institutions. And second, international experts and participants give us the opportunity to introduce our country and industry and also gives local professionals the better possibility to cooperate afterwards on the business level as well.”

In the meantime, two projects of the SOFA 2019/2020 edition have been officially launched: Since February 2021 Irena Gruca-Rozbicka’s project Crew United Poland is online to connect film creatives from Poland. And with its appearance in Tiger Competition at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Viki Antonopoulou’s company Endorphin Film Sales has entering the stage of the international film industry. Congratulations!

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SOFA – School of Film Advancement is a programme of workshops aimed at strengthening national film industries and the European cinematic landscape, as well as kick-starting projects in the realm of cinema. SOFA helps its participants to advance their ideas into concrete projects, opening up new avenues towards application for financing programmes and final implementation. SOFA’s focus on cultural managers and film entrepreneurs rather than producers and directors has made it a unique programme on the international film/AV scene.

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