

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

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INTERNATIONAL YOUTH LITERARY FESTIVAL "TIRANA GATE" 2023

October 2023

Wednesday, October 4

• National Historical Museum, “Unesco” Hall

Time 10:30

Opening ceremony, with the participation of organizers, authors, translators, art and culture personalities.

Time 11:00-12:00

Panel 1

**“Us and Them” - Divided Skies of Europe.
Why Doesn’t the West Understand the East?**

Participants: Andrej Nikolaidis (Montenegro); Enkel Demi (Albania); Ivona Djuric (Serbia); Arian Leka (Albania)

Moderator: Milena Selimi

Languages: Albanian, Montenegrin, Serbian

It doesn't matter if you're Montenegrin, Albanian, Kosovar, Romani, Serbian, Christian, Muslim, we are all Balkan people. Is this our curse or our blessing? How do They see us beyond Europe? Who are We and who are They? Is Southeastern Europe really so different from our surroundings, from what is familiar to us? What are the imagined distances, and what are the real distances? How significant are the differences between us and them, between Here and There? Is there still (or yet again) a world differentiation between “East” and “West”?

With the presence of author Nikolaidis expressing that writing is a process of uncoloring oneself, with Enkel Demi embracing us in a surrounded Shkodra, facing the one who promised that “it loves something of its own”, with Arian Leka seeking events Here and There, and Ivona Djuric for the screen. Us and Them brings together authors whose characters are determined to choose their own path, write stories in which children refuse to accept their predefined roles and question the assumed names and attitudes.

Time 12:00-12:30

AUTHORS READ

Olimbi Velaj (Albania); Liridon Mulaj (Albania); Slavica Gadzova Sviderska (North Macedonia); Arian Leka (Albania)

Time 12:30-13:30

Panel 2

**Am I Better Off in My Life Than This?! / For (fore) the City.
For (fore) the Oxymoron. / For (fore) Fate.**

Participants: Elena Prendzova (North Macedonia); Ervin Nezha (Albania); **Maklena Nika** (Albania)

Moderator: Alban Tufa

Languages: Albanian, Macedonian

Three authors who take us beyond ourselves. Who dare to enter closed mazes. What do we think as we walk through the streets of our childhood - what is missing in today's Skopje, Tirana, Elbasan? Is it the human, the sun, or the oxymoron? Nezha writes about the person who chooses its fate through dreams but doesn't forget to ask "Who am I?" or to confess "To die in the sun" opening the corridor to the predetermined fate of man. Nika keeps the sun even in the solitude of boredom, sadness, nostalgia, existence, and death. Slam poet Prendzova paraphrases a congested, drowned city, stagnant without flow while it should function as a single organism and tell a story that is whole.

Time 13:30-14:00

AUTHORS READ

Erina Çoku (Albania); Andrej Nikolaidis (Montenegro); Elena Prendzova (North Macedonia); Ervin Nezha (Albania)

Time 14:00-14:30

SCENIC READINGS

Scenic readings from the book club "Kamëz"

Moderator: Edona Marku

Time 14:30-16:00

Break

Time 16:00-16:30

LED Projections

Materials from the “TOENA” Archive / Youth Festival / Various Activities / Interviews

Time 16:30-17:30

Panel 3

Pre-war... post-war And Time in Between.

Participants: **Srđan Srdić** (Serbia); **Andreas Dushi** (Albania); **Elena Prendzova** (North Macedonia)

Moderator: **Ben Andoni**

Languages: **Albanian, Serbian, English**

How does the author confront pre-war and post-war? A hyper-realistic allegory of Balkan social and cultural stereotypes, experienced by us and observed and interpreted by others.

Time frozen in between - for all the unfulfilled love and hope; for an attempt at something different from previous generations.

Stories about the gap between the pre-war and post-war generations. A strange epiphany, with events based on the unexpected, fear, anxiety, Dushi's isolation, and Prendzova's slam poetry of revolt. How can one write with common techniques of the “street novel” and “Bildungsroman” - the proposal of the Serbian author Srdić.

Time 17:30-18:00

AUTHORS READ

Shpëtim Selmani (Kosovo); Maklena Nika (Albania); Ivana Trajanoska (North Macedonia)

Ora 18:00-19:00

Panel 4

**The Balkans vs. time / The Balkans vs. stereotypes
I want to tell you something. But I forgot what!**

Participants: **Kristos Armando Gezos** (Greece); **Liridon Mulaj** (Albania); **Mihajlo Sviderski** (North Macedonia); **Namik Dokle** (Albania)

Moderator: **Arta Marku**

Languages: **Albanian, Greek, Macedonian**

What was “common” and specifically what is “the Balkans” for the Balkans?

The marginalized Balkan people are unpredictable, driven by disappointment, and usually their departure is their final destination, or they go down a barren path, resigning and falling into the abyss of memory; people who have no idea how to return, guided by a genetically encoded Balkan recipe for life. Hence, efforts exist, like returning in circles, or doing everything without time. How can we dialogue about identity between the individual and the collective? Does the Balkan mud remain a unique collective tragedy or a province with a contemporary façade - where grotesque cynicism is the main framework in which social degradation has formed?

Time 19:00-19:30

AUTHORS READ

Tobias Xhaxhiu (Albania); Mechtild Henneke (Germany); Anna Kove (Albania); Srđan Srdić (Serbia); Srđan Valjarević (Serbia); Kristos Armando Gezos (Greece)

Thursday, October 5

• National Historical Museum, “Unesco” Hall

Time 10:00-11:00

Panel 1

Post-Socialism / The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the real or imaginary return to Europe.

Participants: Srđan Valjarević (Serbia); Slavica Gadzova Sviderski (North Macedonia); Besnik Mustafaj (Albania)

Moderator: Ben Andoni

Languages: Albanian; English, Serbian

The fall of communism in the years 1989-1991 gave the “post-socialist” countries a real but also imaginary opportunity to return to Europe. However, stagnant systems combined with nationalism, autocracy, and populism show that the legacy of old regimes still continues. How can we define the current state of the post-Iron Curtain countries, without stigmatizing them or falling into well-worn stereotypes? How can we define times of change and transformation, which for many Eastern European countries have become a permanent state of existence? How is the violence of power defined, even in literature? Ben Andoni will delve into this topic with Serbian writer and

columnist Srđan Valjarević, poet Sviderski part of the generation born on the border of socialism, and author and politician Besnik Mustafaj. They will take into consideration Eastern Europe framework, as well as the ambivalences in defining and interpreting its historical heritage.

Time 11:15-11:45

AUTHORS READ

Eris Rusi (Albania); Andreas Dushi (Albania); Alban Tufa (Albania)

Time 12:00-13:00

Panel 2

The Future through the Past / How to preserve home, land, and the world in a (meta) physical sense?

Participants: **Bashkim Shehu** (Spain); **Mechthild Henneke** (Germany); **Shpëtim Selmani** (Kosovo); **Dorian Koçi** (Albania)

Moderator: **Anna Kove**

Languages: **Albanian, German**

“Ah, my Kosovo”, novel by journalist and author Mechthild Henneke, who worked in Kosovo for UNMIK and OSCE from 1999 to 2008, opens a path for “Ah”, what we couldn’t do. How capable are people in war? Do they become heroes when they surpass themselves and want to protect the land, the home, and their family? Is there a high price for heroism? Selmani, a witness to the Kosovo war with “The Ballad of Buburreci”, tells a great pain in the entire cycle dedicated to his childhood and the war in Kosovo. Can you make peace with your past? Is there balance in war? Does the evil have nationality? Does an individual save themselves by confronting the past, - asks Shehu.

Time 13:00-13:30

AUTHORS READ

Namik Dokle (Albania); Ivona Djuric (Serbia); Bashkim Shehu (Albania)

Time 13:30-14:00

Projeksione në LED

LED Projections / Materials from the “TOENA” Archive / Youth Festival / Various Activities /Interviews

Time 14:00-16:30

Break

Time 16:30-17:00

AUTHORS READ

Vladimir Ilievski (North Macedonia); Mihajlo Sviderski (North Macedonia); Majlinda Rama (Albania); Arlind Farizi (North Macedonia)

Time 17:00-18:00

Panel 3

Born to read.

Participants: Merita Isufi (London); Anisa Ymeri (Albania); Irena Toçi (Albania); Kozeta Mustafaraj (Albania)

Moderator: Milena Selimi

Language: Albanian

A panel of new mothers: reading out loud the fairy tales from the mother's womb. Silence is learned in the mother's womb - says poet Madzirov. Big movements have always been born from small groups that come together with common customs and ideas. Creating reading laboratories, reading groups in various forms and ways helps to redirect attention to reading.

Time 18:00-19:00

Panel 4

Bujrum, if you dare, read the silence! / For (fore) Yourself. / For (fore) the Other.

Participants: Vladimir Ilievski (North Macedonia); Olimbi Velaj (Albania); Erina Çoku (Albania); Arlind Farizi (North Macedonia)

Moderator: Luela Myftari

Languages: Albanian, Macedonian

The symbol of silence, as the antipode of word that is the source of everything, is often found in both Macedonian and Albanian poetry. It is the source of the unspoken, the silent, the hidden, wisdom, sadness, and more. The poet in Velaj's verses is an emotional observer of his surroundings. The writer is an emotional laboratory, while Ilievski dares to touch history as a powerful, objective, and true literary basis for the storytelling in the novel "Dry Paint". Erina Çoku brings us the memory, which is not the sum of lived events but is a misty, nonetheless surreal world deposited in the depths of the soul.

Time 19:00-19:30

SCENIC READINGS

Scenic readings “Preza Book Club”.
Gentian Ballaqeni & Band “The Grandfathers Brothers”.

Friday, October 6

• National Historical Museum, “Unesco” Hall

Time 10:00-11:00

Panel 1

Failed times and fluid transitions in literature.
Finding the right person for the right story.

Participants: **Ylljet Aliçka** (Albania); **Tobias Xhaxhiu** (Albania);
Kristos Armando Gezos (Greece); **Majlinda Rama** (Albania)

Moderator: **Arta Marku**

Languages: **Albanian, Greek**

It’s a good idea to add a phrase at the end of your cold conversation with a stranger in search of a story: Are you the right person to talk about this? The author and the quest, the research, and the character uncoloring process. How does time, people, and the environment influence the enrichment of information?

Time is the home of uncertainty. People define it when they want to escape from reality and begin to divide it into the past and the future: “places” where they want to live. The home, for a while now, is not a matter of physical dimension anymore, especially after so many wars and exoduses imprinted on the common memory of our humanity. The search for a new home is the generator of human curiosity and the rebellious spirit of creativity.

Time 11:00-11:30

SCENIC READINGS

Scenic readings - High school book clubs in Tirana

Time 11:30-12:30

Panel 2

My Parents. / This story belongs to You too!

Participants: **Ivana Trajanoska** (North Macedonia); **Eris Rusi** (Albania); **Alban Tufa** (Albania)

Moderator: Milena Selimi
Languages: Albanian, Macedonian

Memory, which is not the sum of memories of lived events but rather a hazy, fantastical world, deposited in the recesses of the soul and with an unique atmosphere that it constitutes the natural habitat of the author's imagination or the metabolism between imagination and events in what we call the real world. Freedom, something that must be learned. Today's progress in civilization, unfortunately, is measured by the dimension of material wealth, consumerism, possession, individualism, rather than the dimension of spiritual wealth, knowledge, understanding, and love. How does literature navigate toward change?

Time 12:30-13:00

AUTHORS READ

Readings for Preschool Children.

Merita Isufi (London); Rudina Çupi (Albania)

Time 13:00

Closing of the third edition of the International Literary Festival for Youth "Tirana Gate" 2023.

