

PRESS RELEASE

SOFA – SCHOOL OF FILM ADVANCEMENT Reveals the New Line-Up of its 7th Edition at Odesa International Film Festival

Odessa, July 19, 2019. **SOFA** is a training programme dedicated to bringing innovative projects of up-and-coming film professionals to life in regions where an independent film scene is still struggling to (re-)build a functioning infrastructure. With its unique focus on Middle and Eastern Europe, Germany (**SOFA's** Home), Greece, Israel, Central Asia, the republics of Caucasus and the MENA region, **SOFA** selects projects that promote and support the region's national film industries, its films and cinematic heritage. With its tailor-made workshops and hand-picked internationally renowned mentors, **SOFA** jumpstarts the projects and careers of a new generation of film professionals who will shape the future of their industries.

The New Participants

The following projects in development have been selected for the seventh edition of **SOFA**:

Bionaut Kids, a curated VOD platform offering animated films for curious kids and parents in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the first of its kind in the region. **Premysl Martinek**, who brings along an extensive background in distribution and film marketing, is in charge of the project.

Medea Sharikadze, promotion and event specialist from Georgia, convinced us with her vision of a **New Horizons Forum**, an interdisciplinary event taking place during CineDOC – Tbilisi International Film Festival in Georgia in 2021. Professionals from diverse fields of expertise will present and discuss their ideas on the topic of “When Present Meets Future”.

Taking a strong stand for outstanding first-time feature film directors from Greece and Georgia is **Viki Antonopoulou**, who has been working for major studios in Greece and the UK as well as managing NGOs. She developed the concept for **Attis – Bold Film Sales**, a boutique world sales company.

After returning to her hometown Ulcinj in 2016 and establishing a cultural production agency, **Drita Ljolla** is set to open the first arthouse cinema in Montenegro right on the border to Albania. **Dreams on Buckram** also aims to re-establish the identity of Ulcinj as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional place and revitalise the cultural centre of the seaside resort.

Award-winning multimedia artist **Pavel Braila** from the Republic of Moldova aims to bring new impetus to the Moldovan AV sector by initiating the world's first **International Wedding Film Festival**. Apart from agriculture and wine, weddings are the most thriving business in Moldova.

Last but not least, **Irena Gruca-Rozbicka**, award-winning founder of the Polish magazine FilmPRO, will introduce the successful German platform for film professionals **Crew United** into Poland and provide its flourishing film industry for the first time with a web-based network connecting all departments involved in the filmmaking process.

For more information on the 2019/20 participants and projects please go to <http://joinsofa.org/projects-participants/>

Past Success Stories

Thanks to the guidance and support from industry experts, many projects have been successfully given a boost by **SOFA**. Three of the recent flagship projects are: **Nafilm** – **National Film Museum** in Prague developed by **Terezie Křížková** (SOFA 2016/17) and Adéla Mrázová, which opened in mid-January 2019 and has attracted more than 55.000 visitors so far (www.nafilm.org). **Producer's MAP (Mentoring Action Plan)**, initiated by **Agnieszka Sekowska** from Poland (SOFA 2017/18), has been providing a broad range of professional workshops for emerging Polish producers since November 2018 with extensive insight and knowledge of the international film industry. Due to the political upheaval in the Ukraine it took **Ivan Kozlenko**, an alumnus of SOFA's first edition in 2013 and General Director of Dovzhenko Centre in Kiev since 2015, much longer than expected to open the centre's **Film Museum**. But in September 2019, his dream project will finally come to life. (www.dovzhenkocentre.org/eng/)

With their dedication and determination, **SOFA** alumni from 18 countries have managed to fill the void left after the demise of nationalised film industries with a lively and up-and-coming independent infrastructure. A quality that **SOFA**'s Head of Studies **Nikolaj Nikitin** especially cherishes: "So many of the dream projects selected achieve a great impact reaching out to thousands of film lovers and providing services and infrastructures in regions where an independent film scene is almost non-existent, where film funding or promotion, educational measures or any form of film presentation are often still at the very beginning and where only **SOFA** provides the much needed support and expertise to make these dream projects become reality."

SOFA becomes School of Film Advancement

Film is the most flexible art form of our times. With every new invention in the digital audio-visual industry, the art form film adapts itself to the technology's specific demands. Cinema as a cultural and social place has been film's favourite spot and media for over a century – but, for many years now, it's by no means the only one. Therefore **SOFA** commits itself to the advancement of the art form film on any given platform, by supporting projects that further explore film's potential in the audio-visual industry and guide it towards new audiences. Once selected for **SOFA**, the participants enroll in a training programme dedicated to the very needs to bring their ideas to life.

SOFA – School of Film Advancement is a joint project of Filmplus gUG (Cologne) and Institute for Democratic Changes (Tbilisi), funded by German Federal Foreign Office and **Creative Europe – MEDIA** Programme of the European Union. Furthermore, the 2019 workshop in Poland is supported by the Polish Film Institute, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, and Mazovia Warsaw Film Commission. In addition, the 2019 Lithuanian workshop will be funded by the Lithuanian Film Centre.

Dates for SOFA workshops 2019/20

August 18 – 23, 2019 in Warsaw

April 25 – 30, 2020 in Tbilisi

September 15 – 19, 2020 in Vilnius

The organizers also wish to thank the strategic partners: Goethe-Institut, EAVE, Meeting Point Vilnius, Midpoint, Network of Arab Alternative Screens (NAAS) and Odesa IFF.

www.joinsofa.org / www.facebook.com/SchoolofFilmAgents/

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