



**Georgia**  
**Made by Characters**  
Guest of Honour  
Frankfurter Buchmesse 2018



10-14 October 2018  
**FRANKFURTER**  
**BUCHMESSE**  
Guest of Honour Georgia

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The only reason for my being here now is to grant my timid voice in support of a culture that has the honour to be present at an important platform like the Frankfurt Book Fair, particularly as it is represented here with the status of the guest country of honour.

There are forgotten cultures. There are dead and forgotten cultures that live in universities due to the efforts of individual researchers. And there are great cultures that no one needs as an example, as they have reached very high standards and it is so obvious that they are unattainable that you usually find yourself in awkward situations.

Among many such deaths and lives and simplicities and sophistications, there are ancient cultures that are either absolutely unknown to the present-day world or known to individual well-wishers. They have not died and have survived to the 21st century thanks to some supreme miracles.

It is a blessing to represent such a culture and to be able to say a couple of words about it.

The remote and unfamiliar culture may mean nothing for most people in the world, but it means not only "something", but also life for Georgians, because the history of Georgia that is equally unknown and mostly viewed in terms of politics has known centuries, when its existence or inexistence was determined precisely by its culture. The culture is stubborn, strange, and extremely humanist. It has been distorted many times, but it has nevertheless continued to be Georgian culture.

This is our history - ancient and full of blood and hardships, a story of sustaining oneself and surviving. Culture, together with other non-material assets, has been its positive side.

To put it short in order not to make you weary of the drama, we have Georgian literature here. It is 1,500 years old and it is not a short time to think about what is valuable in it and what is not.

Like any other literature, Georgian literature also focuses on people. The first story that was written by a 5th-century author would be quite understandable and worth of discussion in the present-day world. It is about woman and man, family, fidelity and politics, God, faith, and unswerving honesty.

All this is described in such a manner that it is easy to understand that not much has changed in the hearts and spirits of people over these 15 centuries.

Georgian literature is a part of Georgian culture that has been created with the Georgian alphabet, which is an ancient saviour of Georgia, both its people and culture. This is a great history. It is big luxury to have your own alphabet, none of whose letters is familiar to anyone. This is a major secret and pride. This is entertaining: It is cool to see people looking with astonishment at something written in Georgian. This is a small advantage a small country can have.



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It is with this alphabet that we write our prose and our history and this alphabet is probably one of the things that make us eternal. However, Georgia is a country of poetry. There is a joke saying that in the times of hardships and wars, it was not easy to write a novel, while a poem could be kept on a piece of paper that you placed on your knee, when writing it.

Even novels were written in verse in Georgia and history would also be preserved in the same form. There were poems everywhere - on the trees, handkerchiefs, drinking vessels, and desks. This is a strange tradition, which needs more work than just telling a story, but it is a standard. Poetry is high and to live in it is more than just to live.

Up to the present time, a poet was a figure in Georgia, who convinced people that their existence was joyful and unique, that their thoughts were genuine and sincere thoughts, and that art was something great.

You were aware that you were unable to do something, but there was a person, who conveyed your thoughts and sentiments for you. He expressed them, because you would never be able to express them to the same extent and with the same skill. A poet was such a person that in the country that had the 20-centuries-old tradition of absolute monarchy, kings were also among best poets. Compared to the concepts, where some lords concealed their being Shakespeares, the Georgian kings' being poets was often better than their everyday royal routine, while they were still alive. However, like everything in Georgia, this is a long and peculiar story, too.

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Of course, you can familiarise yourself with Georgia by travelling there.

However, it would nevertheless be better if Georgian literature told you what it has always had to say. It is about love, friendship, difficulties, death and life, war and peace, pain and joy, humour and tragedy, which are inseparable parts of our life like they are of your life and we can speak about and narrate this like not many in the world. We have centuries old traditions of doing this, but they are unknown to the world. Our literature is both our confession and our dream.

And since we are here today, I would also like to say that yes, poets and writers have always been major beloved heroes in Georgia - as they say today, recognisable faces. However, this has rarely made them happy. Their business has never protected them from hardships.

Today, like 70 or 220 years ago, a Georgian author can fall victim to his creation. He may have to search for some non-creative ways out or find shelter abroad. He may receive a puncher or public rage may force him to walk in the streets with his cap covering his eyes. However, despite great historic storms and changes, writers in Georgia continue to be absolutely special figures, who are always at some place, where everyone never is and at the same time, they are always at the place, where everyone gathers.

**The spoken word prevails.**