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WORLD.FOLKLORE.UNION

Editorial – Folk Culture – The Universal Language of Friendship and Peace



Folk culture is not a mere relic of the past, but a living vein, an unbroken sap that has nourished—and continues to nourish—the great cultural edifices of humanity. In customs, in songs, in dances, and in folk

poetry lies the beginning of all literatures. From there rose the voices of creators; from there was kindled the fire of inspiration that, over the centuries, led to the great masterpieces.

If we look closely, we discover that every classical literature draws its source from popular tradition. In Romania, ballads and doinas were breathed in and transfigured by Eminescu, Coșbuc, and Blaga. In Germany, Goethe gathered the songs of the people and bestowed upon them the nobility of the written word. In Spain, García Lorca lifted Andalusian melancholy to a universal level. In Greece, modern poets—from Dionysios Solomos to Giorgos Seferis—found their inspiration in ancient folk songs and in myths handed down from generation to generation. In Italy, Dante Alighieri, and later Giovanni Verga, wove into their works elements of oral tradition and folk song. In France, Victor Hugo and Lamartine drew upon the songs and legends of Brittany and Provence, giving them an artistic dimension of universal reach.

Such examples show clearly that without this lifeline, literature—and culture itself—would lack authenticity and depth.

Yet the value of folklore does not end with the past. It is a bridge between generations. The folk costume worn by a young person at a festival, the dances sung and played together

by children and grandparents, the joy of taking part in a celebration—all these show that tradition does not die; it is reborn in every generation with the same strength.

Moreover, folklore carries a universal vocation. From my experience as President of the World Folklore Union, I have witnessed how music, dance, and folk poetry bring different peoples closer together, even where diplomacy and politics sometimes falter. I have lived the emotion of moments when, on the same stage in Galilee, Arabs, Bedouins, and Jews performed together, and mutual applause erased the boundaries between them. What more vivid proof could there be that folklore is a universal language—one of joy and peace?

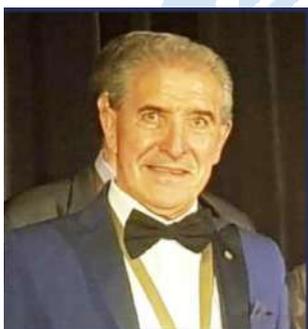
Such events, however, need people. People who believe, who gather energies, who open doors. In this regard, I wish to thank all our colleagues and friends represented in this issue of the I.G.F. magazine, who throughout the past year were actively involved in promoting folk culture, bringing visibility and respect to national and international stages.

In a world marked by conflict and uncertainty, folklore remains an invitation to friendship and closeness. It is, in truth, the common root of humanity—a root that unites generations and nations, calling us to rediscover ourselves, together, in the universal language of joy and peace.

In this spirit, I would like to extend my gratitude to all our colleagues and friends featured in this issue of the IGF magazine, who, throughout this year, have taken an active part in promoting folk culture, bringing visibility and esteem to it on both national and international stages.

**Dorel Cosma Phd.,
President IGF**

EVER MORE HUNGRY FOR CULTURE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE THERE IS NO FREEDOM, WITHOUT FREEDOM THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY



“Ever more hungry for culture. Investing in culture is strategic for our common future, above all because without knowledge there is no freedom, and without freedom there is no democracy.” With these words I greeted the audience in Rome during my presentation on the youth of folklore. And with these same words I wish to draw the attention of every reader who cares about freedom, peace, and culture. Today, more than ever, in every field of human activity, we must celebrate what is best in the Human Being—the being who thinks, loves, suffers, hopes, and rejoices. Indeed, whenever people have nourished their heart and mind with principles and values, civil society has seen tangible improvement.

Unfortunately, today’s world, caught in a profound cultural and moral crisis, seems to be sinking into absolute emptiness. Forgetting treasures such as love, fraternity, and mutual respect, we witness the triumph of selfishness, abuse, pride, and the thirst for power. A devastating hedonism that ruins everything. A faceless nihilism and relativism that lead nowhere. Above all, the human being is thought—thought that becomes culture, in the broadest sense of the word. Culture does not mean erudition alone. Young people must renew their interest in a solid cultural education, in information, knowledge, and understanding—the very foundations on which our community rests in everyday life.

We live in a complex society, where the difference is often made by the ability and

opportunity to access knowledge. Culture, constantly marginalized and treated as the “Cinderella” of public budgets, is the inevitable victim of drastic governmental cuts. There will always be some—echoing that minister of ill-fated memory who once declared that “you can’t eat culture”—who will argue that we must focus on other “more important” issues. I believe there has never been an era in human history in which culture was not created and consumed in one form or another. If creating and consuming culture were useless, someone would have managed to eliminate it long ago, forcing us poor humans to work only to produce consumer goods, without any possibility of using our imagination or confronting the imagination of others. Even in the darkest moments, we need to seek ideas, gestures, and images that remind us, in the freest way possible, of the wonders of the human soul and imagination.

Otherwise, in an age in which we are told, hour after hour, that everything is collapsing, who would still dream of joining a folklore group, who would still make theatre, who would still promote conferences or research?

Our hunger for knowledge and our curiosity are stronger than the pessimism that surrounds us. For this reason, cutting funds for culture, piling heaps of garbage beside archaeological monuments, or reducing the activity of museums, opera houses, or theatres is sheer madness. It has been proven that culturally fulfilled societies spend more even in non-cultural sectors. When we feel well within, we long to live more beautifully without—we want more orderly and appealing cities, we want to dress better.

To invest in ignorance—by reducing

investment in culture and education—means to generate dissatisfaction, violence, abuse, and cynicism. In a globalized economy, if we do not invest in knowledge, we will end up competing in the lower reaches of the market, with countries where labour rights are far less protected than ours. The challenge can be won only if we know how to unite knowledge with social innovation, technology, and research.

Every institution—national, regional, and local—must treat investment in young people as strategic and do everything possible so that no talent is wasted and no one abandons studies for lack of means. Dear political friends, strengthening the teaching of the humanities, encouraging research, and supporting the study of one's national traditions through scholarships does not mean throwing money

away—it means using it better. It is a necessary investment, for it deeply nurtures civic consciousness, social cohesion, and the well-being of all citizens.

It is almost like a calling that, at the right moment, the intervention of Professor Dorel Cosma—President of IGF, the World Federation of Folklore Groups—arrives through this article. His authoritative and effective contribution will undoubtedly produce positive effects. Culture, understood as an epiphany and testimony of traditions and folklore, has its roots in the language of our Latin Forefathers. **CULTURE IS LIFE.**

Benito Ripoli
IGF Senator

THE SYMPOSIUM “CLOSER THROUGH LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE”. “WEAVINGS OF WORDS” – AN INTERNATIONAL ANTHOLOGY OF LITERATURE ROOTED IN FOLK TRADITION



Whether expressed through words, colours, or sounds, art speaks about people, about the soul, about the light within us. Art and culture unite destinies.

Culture mirrors the way we relate to ourselves and the way we look at and treat others. As Nicolae Iorga said, “without the banner of culture, a people is a crowd, not an army.”

The days of 15–18 August, spent in Satu Mare in a festive atmosphere, forged a cultural, spiritual, literary, and artistic bond, for

the International Symposium “Closer through Literature and Folklore”, organised under the aegis of the IGF World Folklore Union, brought together writers from Turkey, France, Israel, Serbia, the Republic of Moldova, the USA, Germany, and Romania. Books, tradition, art, and the symbols characteristic of each culture testified to the respect and reverence shown for folklore, for the ancestral heritage of each nation represented at this event by people eager to learn and to express themselves in a single language—the language of the joy of being together.

This event was born a year ago in Satu Mare, with the aim of bringing writers from around the world closer together, creating a



bridge between contemporary literature and art, and national tradition and folklore.

The hosts of this year's edition were the same dedicated people: Robert Laszlo, manager of the County Centre for the Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture, writer and vice-president of the National Folklore Association, editor-in-chief of the cultural and attitude magazine *Cronograf*; Loredana Știrbu, editorial secretary of *Cronograf*, president of the *Cronograf* Literary Circle—a sensitive and talented writer who gathers lovers of the written word and is truly the “soul” of so many literary gatherings; and Felician Pop—poet, prose writer, journalist, and currently president of the Satu Mare branch of the Union of Professional Journalists of Romania.

Being within the realm of Satu Mare's literary life, I cannot fail to mention Adrian Lupescu, a young poet and folk singer-songwriter, active member of the *Cronograf* Circle, cultural programme producer and editor at *Gazeta de Nord Vest*.

The Symposium “Closer through Literature and Folklore” offered an exceptional occasion for launching the bilingual international anthology of literature rooted in folklore, *Weavings of Words*, a project in which we devotedly took part: writer Robert Laszlo; Mr. Dorel Cosma, President of the IGF World Folklore Union and coordinator of the online publication *BC Media*, member of *UZPR*, member of the Australian-Romanian Academy and of the board of a literary magazine in Paris, author of over forty books, honoured with the “*Omnia*” Award of the Romanian Writers' Union (Sibiu branch) and with numerous international distinctions in France, Turkey, Italy, and New York; Zorin Diaconescu—professor, journalist, poet, essayist, and promoter of literature on social media; myself, Cristina Mirela Rus, member of *UZPR*, author of numerous articles in *Răsunetul*, *BC Media*, *Mișcarea Literară*, and *Cronograf*, TV programme producer, recipient of the “*Doru Dinu Glăvan*” Journalism Literature

Award in 2021, holder of various cultural and literary distinctions, editor and reviewer of works by well-known writers from Bistrița; as well as Carmen Petruț, Doris Nedelea, and Florin Coșoiu.

The volume received an elegant graphic design worthy of its prestige, thanks to the efforts of *Nosa Nostra Publishing House of Bistrița*.

Those who honoured our invitation by sharing their style, ideas, thoughts, and emotions—and whose works appear in the pages of the Anthology—were writers and cultural personalities from Turkey: Murat Huryet, IGF Executive Council member since 2019, IGF President of Turkish Folk Dance since 2023, recipient of an IGF “*Oscar*” for his artistic achievements; Mesut Senol, member of *PEN Turkey*, the *Translators' Union*, the *Writers' Union of Turkey*, the *Turkish Journalists' Association*, and the *Union of Scientific and Literary Works*, participant in numerous national and international literary festivals; poet Filiz Civa, member of the *Writers' Union of Turkey* and *BESAM*; Mevlut Soysal, editor-in-chief and coordinator of local publications in Kocaeli, laureate of playwriting and storytelling competitions; Ergun Demir, journalist and editor-in-chief of a local news portal; Erdem Arcan, coordinator of the *Izmit Municipal Art Academy*, engaged in poetry and photography, president of the *Izmit Culture, Tourism, and Arts Commission*; Aslihan Ciftgu, passionate about poetry and fine arts, participant in national and international exhibitions, and promoter of traditional Turkish sword-and-shield dances.

From Israel: Nidal Kaseem, a key figure in cultural life and supporter of IGF activities in his capacity as legal advisor; and Afif Shlewet, an Arab writer and artist with numerous cultural achievements, participant in festivals and workshops at home and abroad, recipient of many awards both in literature and acting.

From Serbia: Milan Lukic, poet and editor-in-chief of the *Literary Journal of the*

Serbian Writers' Association, also passionate about theatre and folklore; and Milan Panic, whose successful work in culture and cultural heritage has promoted, through international literary events he coordinated, the unifying cultural values of peoples around the world. He is an editor of individual editions, graphic designer, and member of the Serbian Writers' Association, Matica, and other organisations.

From Germany—yet forever from HOME—comes Ioana Haidel, born in Oltenia and settled in Germany since 1998, with a career in IT and studies in medicine, though her first and everlasting love remains writing; she also translates into German, including her own novels, and collaborates with various newspapers in Romania and Germany. She is a member of the Romanian Writers' Union.

From the Republic of Moldova: Veta Ghimpu Munteanu—radio host, member of folk ensembles, protagonist of musical films, author of numerous publications and recipient of many distinctions, member of the Union of Musicians of Moldova, founder of the “Andrei Tamazlăcaru” library within the Chişinău Cultural Directorate, and initiator of the Moldovan book section at Mestre Library in Italy; and Silvia Zagoreanu—though not included in the Anthology, a valuable folk music singer, producer of folklore programmes at Radio Moldova, and Director of the Ungheni Municipal Cultural Centre.

The international literary tapestry of the Anthology also includes other distinguished names of writers who could not attend the Satu Mare event: Joel and Florence Conte-Taillason from Paris, France; Gino Leineweber from Germany; Theodor Damian from New York, USA; Prof. Dr. Bosko Suvajdzic from Serbia; and from Romania: Father Professor and writer Nicolae Feier—recipient in 2022 of one of the four Gold Star Awards (Ex-Oscar) granted worldwide by IGF for his cultural achievements, member of UZPR, author of over twenty-three volumes, and visiting professor who delivered

international lectures under the auspices of the Romanian Cultural Institute and IGF in Istanbul, Bari, and elsewhere; as well as Elena M. Cîmpan, Menuţ Maximilian, Gheorghe Mizgan, Dumitru Alexandru Bar, David Dorian, Veronica Ştir, Victor Ştir, and Alin Cordoş—people who carry fragments of their soul and of their nation's spirit beyond the country's borders, weaving them into the embroidery of words that forms their works.

The moments of refined celebration in Satu Mare were enriched by other events as well, such as the gathering at Beltiug, where we felt as though we were at a rustic feast—dancing, cheerful, and carefree, escaping for a few hours from the tumult of daily life and tasting the beauty and authenticity of those wonderful moments.

Together with our guests, beneath the scorching sun, we rejoiced—both there and in the day that followed—in a celebration of beauty through song and tradition at the Codru Folk Festival in Oţeloaia, Homoroade commune. On a stage set above Lake Oţeloaia, in a natural setting perfectly suited to the event, we admired the magnificent costumes, performances, and love for Romanian folk music shown by the ensembles, by children, young people, and adults alike, and by esteemed performers such as Nicolae Mureşan and Nicolae Mureşan Jr., Lavinia Goste and Marius Zorilă, Sava Negrean Brudaşcu, Petre Petruse, Veta Ghimpu Munteanu, and Silvia Zagoreanu.

The anthology *Weavings of Words*, in which literature intertwines so harmoniously with its folkloric roots, together with the Symposium “Closer through Literature and Folklore” and the folklore festivals that took place, all speak of that eternity which Blaga so beautifully said “was born in the village”, and of the soaring of thought and of the poetic and artistic soul toward the immortality of the word.

Prof. Mirela Rus
Journalist BC Media, Romania



Forgotten Cultural Heritage: Social Memory and Power Relations from a Cultural Studies Perspective



Abstract

Cultural heritage is not merely a collection of values inherited from the past; it is also a dynamic field continuously reconstructed through contemporary power relations, representational practices, and identity politics. The cultural studies approach conceptualizes cultural heritage not as a fixed and neutral category, but as a site where meaning is negotiated and social power relations are reproduced. This article aims to examine the concept of forgotten cultural heritage within the theoretical framework of cultural studies, focusing on processes of forgetting in relation to hegemony, representation, selective memory, and cultural power. Based on qualitative literature review, the study analyzes how and why certain cultural elements are rendered invisible, while others are institutionalized as heritage. Finally, the article discusses the role of critical cultural policy and grassroots memory practices in re-circulating forgotten cultural heritage.

Keywords: Cultural studies, forgotten cultural heritage, social memory, hegemony, representation

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage is often presented as a shared value that must be preserved; however, cultural studies scholarship draws attention to its ideological and political dimensions. The question of which cultural elements are defined as “heritage” and which are rendered invisible

directly reflects the relationship between culture and power. In this context, forgotten cultural heritage should not be understood as an accidental loss, but as a structural process produced through mechanisms of selective memory.

This article approaches forgotten cultural heritage from a cultural studies perspective and aims to analyze the social, political, and ideological dynamics underlying practices of forgetting.

2. Cultural Studies and Cultural Heritage

2.1. Culture, Power, and Representation

The cultural studies tradition conceptualizes culture through everyday practices, processes of meaning-making, and power relations. According to Hall (1997), representation is not a simple reflection of reality but a process through which meaning is constructed. Cultural heritage, therefore, is shaped within regimes of representation that privilege certain narratives while marginalizing others.

2.2. Selective Memory and Hegemony

Social memory is inherently selective. When examined through Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, decisions regarding which elements of cultural heritage are preserved are largely determined by dominant cultural discourses. As a result, heritage associated with subcultures, local communities, and marginalized groups is often excluded and forgotten.

3. The Production of Forgotten Cultural Heritage

3.1. Institutional Memory and Mechanisms of Exclusion

Museums, archives, and official historical narratives function as institutional carriers of cultural heritage. However, these institutions often operate within specific ideological

frameworks, systematically excluding certain cultural practices from visibility and legitimacy.

3.2. Popular Culture and Invisibility

The dominance of popular culture diminishes the representational space of local and everyday cultural practices. Consumption-oriented cultural forms tend to overshadow traditional narratives, contributing to the gradual invisibility of non-commercial cultural heritage.

4. Forgotten Cultural Heritage, Identity, and Resistance

Forgotten cultural heritage should not be viewed solely as loss, but also as a potential site of resistance. Within cultural studies, memory practices are understood as spaces where alternative identities and counter-memories are produced in opposition to dominant narratives. Local storytelling, oral history, and everyday cultural practices constitute key tools of this resistance.

5. Re-Membering: Critical Cultural Policies

The reintegration of forgotten cultural heritage into public circulation requires not only preservation-oriented approaches but also critical and participatory cultural policies. In this context:

Grassroots Memory Practices: Empowering local communities to produce and sustain their own narratives;

Participatory Archives: Supporting non-

official and community-based memory spaces; Critical Academic Research: Making visible the ideological dimensions of cultural heritage.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined forgotten cultural heritage from a cultural studies perspective, highlighting the relationship between processes of forgetting and structures of power, representation, and hegemony. Re-membering cultural heritage should be understood not merely as an effort to preserve the past, but as an integral part of struggles for cultural justice and pluralism.

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Muratt Hürriyet - Turkey
IGF Board Member

THE GREAT EVENTS OF THE YEAR

IGF GOLD STAR TURKEY 2025 stands as the symbolic pinnacle of a rich international programme carried out under the aegis of IGF, alongside:

- **The International Symposium “Closer Through Literature and Folklore”** (2025 – Romania)

- **The “José Antonio Viñas” Caravan** (2025 – Israel)

- **The “Zenon Kolobich” Olympiad** (2025 – France)

- **The honorary titles “Meritorious Artist” and “Knight of World Culture”**

Together, these initiatives affirm the respect and gratitude that IGF extends to every guardian of the remarkable living treasure of world folk culture.



IGF GOLD STAR – TURKEY 2025



Izmit, a city of nearly 400,000 inhabitants located just 80 km from Istanbul, turned for several days into a great international stage of folklore and friendship among nations. The local symbol – the famous dessert Pismaniye, promoted throughout Turkey with eye-catching billboards from airports to city centers – became the emblem of a festival organized by the municipality under the leadership of Mayor Fatma Kaplan Hürriyet. The event brought together delegations from over 20 countries, uniting traditions, music, and dances from across the world.

In the elegant City Hall chamber, guests were warmly welcomed by the mayor. Official greetings and messages of cooperation were delivered by Dorel Cosma, President of the International Union of Folklore (IGF), Nicholas Charley, IGF Vice-President, Filippo Barbano, Mayor of San Giovanni Rotondo (Italy), Vitalie Vrabie, Mayor of Ungheni (Republic of Moldova), and Murat Hürriyet, President of the Folklore Federation of Turkey. The meeting concluded with an exchange of gifts and the joy of strengthened friendship.

The celebration opened with an impressive parade of joy: folk groups and brass bands from all delegations, led by the City Hall leadership and the IGF Executive Board, marched through the streets of Izmit. The entire community joined in – children, parents, and grandparents waving flags and applauding the performers. Balconies were filled with enthusiasm, creating an atmosphere of solidarity and mutual respect. It was a clear proof of the authorities' closeness to the people, of genuine appreciation for citizens, and of the total absence of political arrogance that, unfortunately, is still typical in other places.

In front of City Hall, special stands displayed Pismaniye, handicrafts, and traditional products, while local authorities visited each exhibitor to thank them personally. On the festival stage, before more than 2,000 spectators, ensembles from Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan performed colorful and energetic shows. A unique highlight was the open-air preparation of Pismaniye, symbolizing Turkish hospitality.

Romania was proudly represented by the "Meseşul" Ensemble from Zalău, coordinated by Paula Morar, Vice-President of the National Folklore Association of Romania. Fourteen dance couples presented suites and costumes from four ethnofolkloric regions of the country, receiving open applause and a well-deserved success. Equally appreciated were the ensembles delegated by IGF from Ukraine and Turkey, as well as all the other artistic performances.

The first day of the Izmit Festival was marked by joy, friendship, and a strong demonstration that folklore remains the universal language of nations.

D.C

GOLD STAR GALA



Undoubtedly, the IGF GOLD STAR Gala held in Izmit was a long-awaited event, both for the more than two thousand spectators and for the delegations and artists present from around the world.

The opening of the ceremony was led by Mayor Fatma Kaplan Hürriyet and IGF President Dorel Cosma, who highlighted the importance of these awards, granted annually to six or seven cultural personalities recognized for their outstanding contributions to world folk culture.

Each laureate took the stage accompanied by members of the IGF Executive Board and representatives of the local and central authorities of Turkey. Following a laudatory presentation shown in a short film, the trophies were handed over, and the national anthems of the laureates' countries were played as a mark of respect for their efforts and dedication. Finally, each awardee expressed their gratitude in a few words before returning on the red carpet, greeted with warm applause from the audience.

The first laureate to step on stage was Filippo Barbano, Mayor of San Giovanni Rotondo (Italy), nominated by the Puglia Folklore Federation, for his support of cultural

initiatives as well as for his past activity as a member of the local folk ensemble.

From the Republic of Moldova, the award went to the outstanding conductor Marin Bunea.

FITP Italy presented the award to maestro Marcello Perrone.

From Ukraine, the trophy was received by choreographer and director Zoryana Rybina from Lviv.

Poland nominated folk artist Wanda Lomnicka-Dulak.

From Romania, the award was presented to the First Vice President of the National Folklore Association, Robert László.

And from Turkey, the laureate was writer and cultural figure Suat Özdemir.

A special highlight of the evening was the granting of the high distinction Knight of World Culture to Murat Hürriyet, President of the Turkish Folklore Federation, in recognition of his remarkable contribution to promoting folk values and his strong support for IGF activities.

The evening concluded in a festive spirit, with performances by folk ensembles that crowned the celebration, joining the awardees on the stage of Izmit.

The IGF Cultural Triangle: EAST – WEST – ASIA



As part of the cultural events organized in Izmit – Turkey, a special meeting took place between three mayors who have established branches of the International Union of Folklore (IGF) in their cities: Filippo Barbano – mayor of San Giovanni Rotondo (Italy), Fatma Kaplan Hurriyet – mayor of Izmit (Turkey), and Vitalie Vrabie – mayor of Ungheni (Republic of Moldova). Together with IGF President Dorel Cosma, in the elegant office of the Mayor of Izmit, a cooperation protocol was signed, focusing primarily on cultural development, symbolically named The IGF Cultural Triangle: EAST – WEST – ASIA.

The protocol foresees the organization of international meetings in each of the three centers, where essential aspects of global cultural evolution will be presented and discussed. The program will include exhibitions,



symposiums, book launches, and joint activities with IGF member countries.

In Izmit, preparations have already begun for the opening of an International Museum of Folk Art, where Romania has donated the first exhibits. In San Giovanni Rotondo, the establishment of the IGF headquarters is underway, including its own performance hall, a museum, and an open-air amphitheater. In Ungheni, authorities are working on setting up a museum with similar international features, as well as an International Library dedicated to IGF member countries.

This joint initiative is also a signal for other countries, many of which have already expressed their intention to join the IGF Cultural Triangle, which will remain open to discussion during the upcoming IGF meetings.

Meeting of the IGF Executive Board – The “Cununa de pe Someș” Case on the International Agenda

The IGF Executive Board convened in Izmit, with important issues on the agenda for the years 2025 and 2026. The session, chaired by IGF President **Dorel Cosma**, included presentations

and debates on recent international events.

Robert László – First Vice President of the National Folklore Association of Romania and member of the IGF Board – presented



the results of the event held in Satu Mare: “Closer through Literature and Folklore”, which resulted in the publication of the international anthology “Fabrics of Words”, bringing together 33 writers from around the world. Murat Hurriyet spoke about the success of the events in Izmit, highlighting the excellent cooperation between IGF and local authorities during IGF Gold Star.

Future events were also announced: Israel – presented by Vice President **Amen Kassem**, France – by Deputy President **Nicholas Charlety**, and for 2026, Poland and Slovakia



– through Vice President **Malgosa Broda** and **Josef Revak**. The financial situation of IGF was presented by Treasurer **René Sourisso** and Deputy Treasurer **Pahone Pop**.

A crucial point of the discussions focused on

IGF’s mission to support authentic cultural values and to combat abusive political interference. In this respect, the dissolution of the professional ensemble “Cununa de pe Someș” from Bistrița, Romania, was considered an abnormal and abusive act, a serious blow to culture. This ensemble, which performed on almost all IGF international

stages and was admired for its value and professionalism, has been dismantled through a political decision under the false pretext of being “downgraded to amateur status.”

The IGF decided to issue an international note of protest addressed to the Romanian Government and Presidency, as well as to the European Commission, France, Italy, and the United States, requesting the immediate cessation of this abuse.

The message sent by the IGF Executive Board is clear:

“By saving today the ensemble Cununa de pe Someș, we are in fact saving world folklore culture from political interference and brutality.”



IGF CARAVAN – JOSE ANTONIO VIÑAS - ISRAEL



International Event in Haifa, Israel

In Haifa, Israel, representatives of the International Union of Folklore (IGF) gathered for a new edition of the prestigious international event dedicated to folk music performers from IGF member countries.

The hosts of the meeting, IGF Vice President Ameen Kassem and IGF Legal Expert, lawyer Nidal Kassem, distinguished themselves through their hospitality and professionalism, providing participants with excellent conditions, an engaging program, and, above all, complete safety. The atmosphere of peace and friendship dispelled any fears regarding the regional context, leaving room only for the voices of friendship, music, and the beauty of folklore, which resounded until late into the night.

The Caravan's program included exceptional visits: to Nazareth, where participants visited the two holy churches – Catholic and Orthodox –, to the historic city of Akko, as well as a relaxing boat trip. Participants also had the opportunity to experience both Bedouin and Jewish folklore, with artists performing together on stage in a spirit of respect and unity through tradition.

The IGF Caravan Gala brought together artists from Romania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and Poland, joined by dancers from Israel, thus creating a remarkable international

artistic mosaic. The event was honored by the presence of the IGF President, the Deputy President, and members of the Executive Board – a clear proof of the spirit of collegiality that must define the organization.



A special tribute was paid to the memory of the late IGF Vice President Jose Antonio Viñas, whose name is now linked to this international caravan. Sadly, the absence of representatives from his

native region and country was strongly felt, emphasizing once again that true recognition is expressed through deeds, not only words.

For their outstanding contribution to the success of the Haifa edition, colleagues Ameen and Nidal Kassem received the high distinction of “Knight of the World Popular Culture”, an acknowledgment of their organizational excellence and respect for international traditions.

It was also decided that this event will now be organized annually in Israel, confirming the quality and seriousness of the hosts. At the same time, together with IGF Deputy President Nicholas Charley, the organization announced the upcoming Choreographic Olympiad “Zenon Kolobyci”, which will take place in early December in Voiron, France.

Doris Nedelea
Journalist - IGF President Advisor



AMEEN KASSEM - Knight of World Popular Culture



NIDAL KASSEM - Knight of World Popular Culture



The “Zenon Kolobych” Choreographic Olympiad in Voiron – France



The second edition of the “Zenon Kolobych” Choreographic Olympiad concluded the series of major cultural events organized in 2025 by the International Union of Folklore (IGF). Held in Voiron, France—home to the IGF’s international headquarters—the event brought together representatives of folklore federations from seven countries, transforming the city into a vibrant festival of tradition, movement, and folk costume.

Participants from Ukraine, France, Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Israel, and Italy offered audiences and specialists alike true masterclasses in traditional choreography, showcasing the distinct character of each culture through authentic dances and spectacular costumes, rich in symbolism and history.

The official opening was led by Mr. Nicolas Charlety, Vice President of the IGF, who, together

with Mrs. Zelida Stuelsatz, stood at the heart of this large-scale event. In his address, IGF President Dorel Cosma greeted the organizers and attending delegations, thanking the artists for their dedication and professionalism, and underscoring the importance of such gatherings for the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

A particularly moving moment was the tribute to the great choreographer Zenon Kolobych, former member of the IGF Bureau and a towering figure of traditional dance. The presence of the master’s son, as well as the continuity of Ukrainian choreographic activity—even amid the difficult circumstances of war—offered a powerful message of hope, cultural resilience, and international solidarity.

The Mayor of Voiron, Mr. Julien Polat, warmly welcomed the delegations, expressing gratitude for their presence and for the

diversity of choreography and the beauty of the costumes that brought so much energy, colour, vitality, and friendship to the city—ideals cherished and championed by the late Zenon Kolobych. Equally significant was the joint affirmation, voiced by the mayors of Izmit, Voiron, and Ungheni, of their firm desire to continue collaborating and supporting the major events organized under the auspices of the IGF, confirming the openness of local administrations toward intercultural dialogue and international projects devoted to safeguarding and promoting traditional cultural heritage.

An important step for the future of traditional dance was the inauguration of the Academy of Traditional Choreographic Dance, supported by UNESCO—a major achievement for IGF and for the international folkloric movement.

The event in Voiron reaffirmed that folklore is not merely memory, but also present and future, a bridge between peoples and a universal language of friendship.

Prof. Pahone Pop
IGF Treasurer Adj.



Opening Speech for the International Diploma Program “Choreographers of Traditional Dances of the World”

Mr. Mayor, Vice-President of the Department, Mrs Fatma Hurryet Mayor of Izmit, Mrs the representante of mayor of Hunguiens, Elected Officials, Mr. President of the World Federation of Folk Arts and Traditions (IGF),



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear artists, dear partners, dear friends,
It is with deep emotion and immense pride that we open today the first edition of this diploma program dedicated to choreographers of traditional dances from around the world.

This unique human and artistic adventure brings together creators from five continents. You carry within you the rhythms, gestures, and



memories of your cultures. Together, you will create connections, intertwine your heritages, and invent new forms of dialogue between traditions and the contemporary world.

This program was born from a simple yet powerful observation:

traditional dances are living languages.

They do not merely recount the past—they breathe, transform, and continue to write history.

During these ten days of training, the students will be simultaneously researchers, performers, educators and keepers of memory.

You will experience creation, transmission, listening, encounter and sometimes even self-reflection.

For learning to transmit is also learning to question, to transform, to reinvent.

We have chosen to name this first graduating class after Zenon Kolobych, in homage to a man whose life embodies a passion for movement and respect for one's roots.

Zenon Kolobych was a visionary choreographer, a seeker of danced memory, a creator of bridges between peoples.

He believed that every dance, however humble, carries within it a universal truth: that of the body that remembers, the body that speaks without words.

Naming this first graduating class in his honor is an affirmation of a lineage, a continuity.

It is to say that tradition is not a museum, but a movement;

that the dance of the world belongs to no one, because it belongs to everyone.

Dear participants,

you are the pioneers of this program, the founders of a history.

Your presence here involves much more than just training: it involves a perspective, an

ethic, a vision of the world.

Through your creations, your research, and your teaching, you will carry the banner of the Zenon Kolobych Class, a symbol of openness, dialogue, and respect.

You will be the ambassadors of a living dance, rooted in local traditions but open to the world.

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to:

- * The teaching and artistic team that designed this program with rigor and kindness,

- * The institutions and cultural partners who supported this initiative: the International Dance Council (UNESCO), the I.G.F., the French Confederation of Popular Arts and Traditions, the Order of Dance Masters of Provence, A.T.P. Salmorenc with its Center for World Cultures, as well as the city of Voiron.

- * The institutions and cultural partners who will be joining us; thank you in advance.

- * And of course, you, the choreographers from all over the world, for your trust, your curiosity, and your courage to explore together.

May this training program be a space for inspiration, research, and fraternity for you.

May it allow you to affirm your voices, to make your memories resonate, and to invent movements that speak of both yesterday and tomorrow.

On behalf of the entire team, I officially declare the

International Diploma Program "Choreographers of Traditional Dances of the World"

open and I wish a long and successful future to its first graduating class: the Zenon Kolobych Class.

Welcome to you all, and may dance continue to connect the world.

Nicolas Charlety
IGF President Adj.

Official Meeting with the Mayor of Voiron – Julien Polat

During the IGF Cultural Days held in Voiron, France, I had the pleasure of a special official meeting with Mayor Julien Polat. The reunion took place in a warm and open atmosphere and also brought together the Mayor of İzmit (Türkiye), Ms. Fatma Hürriyet, as well as Ms. Victoria Bernic, adviser to the Mayor of Ungheni, Republic of Moldova, Mr. Vitalie Vrabie.

The introductions were made by the IGF Vice-President, Nicolas Charlety, until the moment when Mayor Julien Polat reached me. What followed was a warm, brotherly embrace, which I felt to be sincere and full of respect toward a Honorary Citizen of Voiron, a distinction that he himself awarded me. I was truly honored by this welcome and by the exemplary way in which the French value and respect their honorary citizens — a model that many politicians traveling the world should learn from and bring home as an example of good practice.

The meeting continued with a presentation of the city of Voiron, followed by the remarks of the official guests. As President of IGF, for me and for IGF, Voiron is the second city of France, after Paris. The smiles in the room prompted me to explain: here in Voiron, thanks to the care and openness of the mayor, operates the official IGF headquarters, where our colleagues Nicolas and Zelida carry out intensive work in promoting world folk culture. Moreover, the fact that Mayor Polat awarded me the title of Honorary Citizen of Voiron during his first mandate binds me even more deeply to this city and strengthens my responsibility in coordinating the organization's international activity from here.

The Mayor of İzmit, Ms. Fatma Hürriyet, offered a brief presentation of her city and clearly expressed her intention to collaborate with IGF. In turn, Ms. Victoria Bernic conveyed

the greetings of the Mayor of Ungheni and extended an official invitation for cooperation and for visiting the Republic of Moldova.

The discussions continued with a focus on supporting and developing major cultural events under the aegis of IGF, in the spirit of friendship and respect for world folk culture. The meeting in Voiron confirmed once again that when local authorities, cultural institutions, and international representatives come together, they create the foundation for strong, valuable, and impactful global projects.



IGF Executive Board Meeting Held in Voiron, France



The members of the IGF Executive Board, together with invited representatives from France, Turkey, Moldova, Italy, Romania, Israel, and Ukraine, met in Voiron, France, for a working session focused on a brief analysis of the concluding year and the projects planned for 2026 and 2027.

At the beginning of the meeting, IGF President PhD Dorel Cosma requested a moment of silence in memory of the former IGF President Lillo Alesandro—a devoted artist, a defender of popular culture, and a symbol of human and friendly spirit worldwide—who passed away at the end of this year and was laid to rest in Messina. Farewell, Lillo, on your journey among the angels.

The session continued with the intervention of Mr. Fabrizio Cataneo, delegate of FITP, who presented several requests of the Italian Federation and conveyed FITP's openness to organizing upcoming international events. In his capacity as Secretary General of IOV, Mr. Cataneo also conveyed greetings and an open invitation for cooperation from the new IOV leadership.

IGF President Dorel Cosma thanked him for his presentation, reaffirming the respect and appreciation that IGF extends to FITP and announcing that, following the Board's analysis, an official response will be sent to Italy. He also underlined IGF's desire to continue the collaboration with IOV, based on the joint protocol established four years ago.

The meeting proceeded with interventions from Nicolas Charlety, René Sourissou, Nidal Kassem, Silvia Zagoreanu, Pahone Pop, Lucian Stroe, Iulian Praja, and Murrat Hurryiet. The events of 2025 were highly appreciated, with special congratulations to the organizers: Ameen and Nidal Kassem, Murrat Hurryiet, Nicholas and Zelida Charlety.

IGF Treasurer René Sourissou insisted on the obligation of each federation to pay its membership fees on time, noting the existence of certain arrears that must be addressed and, if necessary, sanctioned with exclusion from IGF. The IGF President approved these observations and requested the list of federations with outstanding dues so that appropriate measures can be taken.

The Board then approved the proposals for the upcoming events calendar:

2026

- IGF GOLD STAR – Former IGF Oscar – Poland

(Scheduled for June, together with the Executive Board meeting)

- “Zenon Kolobych” Olympiad – Israel (Together with the Executive Board meeting – scheduled for September or October)

- “José Antonio Viñas” Caravan (Exact period to be announced by the organizers)

• International Symposium “Closer Through Literature and Folklore” – Romania, Bistrița - January

2027

- IGF GOLD STAR – Former IGF Oscar – Moldova/Romania

(Together with the Executive Board meeting)

- “Zenon Kolobych” Olympiad – Italy (Period to be announced by FITP)

• International Symposium “Closer Through Folklore” – Romania

(Period to be announced by the Romanian Federation)



• “José Antonio Viñas” Caravan & IGF General Assembly – France

(Dates to be announced by the organizers)

In the final part of the session, IGF President Dorel Cosma thanked all colleagues for their involvement and for the large-scale national and international events organized throughout the year. He announced IGF’s intention to

apply for membership with UNESCO, based on the required official documentation, and confirmed that together with Nicolas Charlety, Nidal Kassem, and René Sourissou, he will coordinate the preparation and submission of the necessary materials.

He also announced the preparation of the new issue of the IGF magazine and invited all colleagues to contribute with articles. Warm thanks and congratulations were extended to the Charlety family for their impeccable organization of the Kolobych Olympiad.

At the end, the IGF President addressed all IGF colleagues and artistic groups with the greeting:

Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with joy and accomplishments!

Iulian Praja
IGF President’s Advisor

The Joy of Book Launches

About the emotion of meeting readers and the true meaning of a book launch

The publication of a new volume is, for any writer, a true event — the crowning of hard work, of thoughts patiently written down, and of the dream to share a part of oneself with others. A book launch thus becomes not only a cultural moment but also a deeply personal one: a reunion with those who still read, who still cherish the written word, and who respect the author’s effort.

Unfortunately, book launches are no longer what they used to be. Too often, aspects arise that have little to do with literature — financial constraints or the hierarchical position of those who organize the event. When one depends on financial support, relationships, or influence, the atmosphere changes: some attend not out of genuine cultural interest, but simply to be seen. That’s life — it goes on, with its good and

bad sides alike.

And yet, there are still moments that restore your faith. When you look into the audience and see sincerity, when you recognize people who have come out of friendship rather than obligation, you know that the joy of the launch is real.

At my latest book launch, I felt truly rich. I was surrounded by wonderful people — old and new friends, enthusiastic readers, and the most beautiful audience imaginable, ranging in age from one month to over eighty years!

My granddaughter Ilinca, only one month old, was the youngest participant, sitting quietly beside her siblings, Nectaria and Ianis. They may not have understood much of what the “gentlemen” up front were saying, but I’m sure that in years to come they will remember — at



least from the photos — their first presence at a book launch.

It was a warm day, filled with emotion and sincere embraces. I am deeply grateful to all those who were there, who encouraged me, and who turned that moment into a true celebration of the soul.

In a world that often rushes and overlooks what really matters, friendship and genuine appreciation remain the most precious gifts.

Dorel Cosma



Philanthropy – A Bridge Between Culture and Peace



Professor Dorel Cosma is the President of the World Folklore Union and the director of the journal BC Media in Bistrița, Transylvania.

He is the author of a substantial body of literary works, ranging from poetry to the novel, with notable incursions into satire.

He associates the “Caravan” of the World Folklore Union—travelling across the globe—with the presentation of his own creations in the literary field.

Thus, throughout the year 2025, his path led him, among other places, to Haifa in Israel in September, and to Vienna, Austria, at the beginning of October.

A great friend of France, he also made a stop in Paris, an essential crossroads of world culture.

In the prestigious setting of the Salon of the Brasserie *Le Fouquet's*, he was warmly welcomed on Saturday, October 25, by Joël and Florence Conte-Taillasson.

Among his many responsibilities, Joël Conte-Taillasson is the President of the association *Rencontres Européennes – Europoésie* and the President of the Grand Literary Prize of the Arts-Sciences-Letters Academic Society.

Florence Conte-Taillasson is an administrator of the same academic society, as well as a poet and visual artist.

At Édith Piaf's favourite table, Professor Dorel Cosma presented the volumes through which he guides his readers and listeners into the universe of his own creativity—always intertwined with the soul of his homeland, Romania.

The writer's depth and the richness of his

inspiration are reflected in a wide range of works published by Nosa Nostra Publishing House in Romania.

The international anthology “*Țesături de cuvânt – Tissus de mots*” unfolds like a bridge between cultures, bringing together authors from three continents:

America (USA), Asia (Israel and Turkey), and Europe (Germany, France, Serbia, the Republic of Moldova, and Romania).

The volume was coordinated by Dorel Cosma together with Robert Laszlo, Carmen Petruț, Mirela Rus, Doris Nedelea, and Zorin Diaconescu.

The poetry volume “*Poduri de timp – Ponts du temps*” renders the bond between past and timelessness, between moments of doubt and the breath of the soul, between the dawn of thought and philosophical reflection.

He extends this vision through a series of interviews with international cultural personalities.

The work “*Cafeneaua BC*” represents a splendid expansion of horizons united through the human voice transposed into writing.

Irony and satire complete this impressive palette in the novel “*Tromboniada*”, which reveals a profound lucidity in perceiving reality and the human condition.

Professor Dorel Cosma is an active witness of our time, who aspires—through every movement of his pen and every vibration of his voice—to create an environment where altruism, harmony, and peace prevail.

Joël Conte-Taillasson
Writer, president Rencontres Européennes
– Europoésie - Paris, France

THE ROMANIAN CULTURAL AUTUMN IN VIENNA

The Romanian diaspora was recently invited to an outstanding cultural event held in the very heart of Vienna. The manifestation, organized under the title “Romanian Cultural Autumn in Vienna”, brought together numerous writers, scientists, musicians, and visual artists from Austria, Germany, England and Romania to speak about Romanian culture and its involvement in the international cultural sphere.

The event’s organizer, journalist and cultural promoter Ioan Godja, succeeded in gathering a large and enthusiastic audience who attentively followed the presentations and even engaged with thoughtful questions and remarks.

After the opening greetings delivered by Ioan Godja and Father Ovidiu Pinte, the program continued with a series of literary and scientific presentations. The book launches were well received, featuring authors such as Hans Dana, Petru Iacob, Dorel Cosma, Timea Roman, Virgil Ioniță, Romeo Couți, Luminița Nielsen, Renate Don, Ion Dulugeac, Ioan Gligor Stopița, George V. Precup, and Ionela Flood.

The event also showcased fine art exhibitions and traditional folk performances. The folk segment was beautifully represented by Doina and Adela Rădămăneștean and Magdela Stoi, while sculptor Daniel Bucur impressed the audience with the variety, expressiveness, and subtle coherence of his works.

An exceptional musical moment was offered by violinist Tudor Andrei, trained in London and Vienna, whose sensitive performance added emotion and refinement



to this cultural encounter.

Equally appreciated was the special book and literary press stand, where visitors could explore recent Romanian publications. Writers Ioan Gligor Stopița, Dorel Cosma, and George V. Precup – members of the Writers’ Union of Romania, Sibiu branch – together with novelist Ion Dulugeac, presented representative works reflecting contemporary life in Romania as well as international cultural themes.

The event once again confirmed the power of Romanian culture to unite people and the diaspora’s deep desire to remain connected to authentic values, contributing with dignity to the European cultural dialogue.

Ioan Godja

Journalist, director RTV Vienna, Austria



THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL–CONTEST “PETRE SABĂDEANU” 10th Edition – A Celebration of Authentic Folklore in Târgu Mureș



Târgu Mureș once again became a true symbol of Romanian traditional music with the 10th anniversary edition of the National Festival–Contest “Petre Sabădeanu”, an event that filled to capacity the hall of the Professional Ensemble “Mureșul”. Young folk singers from all over the country gathered under the banner of Romanian traditional music, transforming the competition into a genuine celebration of authenticity.

Following the preselection held at the Center for Traditional Culture in Târgu Mureș, 15 contestants remained in the competition, bringing to the stage not only their voices, but also the beauty of folk costumes from their home regions. The musical accompaniment was provided with great professionalism by the “Rapsodia Călimanilor” Ensemble Orchestra from Toplița, conducted by maestro Loránt Bodor.

The Festival Gala brought to the spotlight renowned invited artists such as Ciprian Istrate, Ioan Dordoi, and others who offered memorable and emotional performances.

The Grand Prize of the “Petre Sabădeanu” Festival – Târgu Mureș, 2025 was awarded to the talented young singer Patricia Moldovan from Baia Mare. In addition to the trophy and the organizers’ awards, Patricia will represent

Romania at the prestigious international event IGF Caravan “José Antonio Viñas” in 2027, marking an important milestone in her artistic career.

This anniversary edition was also an opportunity to express deep appreciation for the distinguished Mureș artist Nelu Șoptorean, the initiator and spirit behind the early editions of the festival, who continues to support traditional culture. The commune of Sîntana de Mureș, the birthplace of the great folk singer Petre Sabădeanu, was represented by its proud mayor Dumitru Moldovan, local council members, and many locals who attended and supported the event.

The high artistic level of the contestants, the energy of the young dancers, the performances of the invited artists, and the enthusiasm of the audience all contributed to an atmosphere of true celebration. TVR producer Gheorghita Nicolae, vice-president of the National Folklore Association of Romania, emphasized the significance and beauty of the event.

The festival was impeccably organized by the Mureș County Center for Popular Creation, under the leadership of manager Iulian Praja, actor and dedicated promoter of Mureș traditions. The work and commitment of the organizing team turned this edition into a cultural landmark of exceptional quality.

The 10th edition of the “Petre Sabădeanu” Festival will remain in the memory of all participants as a celebration of authentic values, and a powerful reminder that tradition lives on through the people who cherish and pass it forward.

Carmen Petruț
Journalist BC Media, Romania

ELEGANCE, COLOR, AND RHYTHM IN SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO, ITALY

For three days, the city of Padre Pio dressed in festive attire under the direction of the master and cultural figure Benito Ripoli. The events took place on three different stages, offering the public memorable moments from the city's cultural life.

The first evening was held at the San Giovanni Rotondo Theater, where elegance and refinement were on full display. Here, excellence awards were presented to those who made significant contributions to promoting the city's image. Ten personalities were honored under the endorsement of the Puglia authorities and the San Giovanni Rotondo Local Council. Cultural and scientific figures were moved by the attention received in a packed hall.

Among the laureates was the writer Dorel Cosma, who, as an honorary citizen of the city, received the San Giovanni Rotondo Literature Award. The award moments were interspersed with musical performances, highlighting the talent and professionalism of Benito Ripoli, also honored with the title of Knight of World Culture by IGF. Visibly emotional, Benito noted that the event marked "the end of one story and the continuation of an endless love."

The following days continued with the same festive atmosphere, featuring exceptional guests: the mandolin orchestra, the local San Giovanni Rotondo ensemble, the Little Tony group from Rome, and the Sicilian Caridi ensemble led by Tobia Rinaldo. The highlight was the performance of the formidable GARGANEZII orchestra, led by Antonio Ripoli, Benito's son, proving that talent runs in the family.

The audience was also impressed by classical music moments performed by renowned artists: Dario Sebastiani, Marialuigia

Martino, and Constantino, who received frenzied applause for their stage performances, demonstrating the appreciation and respect for the man and artist Benito Ripoli.

Doris Nedelea

Journalist, IGF President's Advisor





OPEN LETTER TO MY FELLOW CITIZENS OF SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO

Dear fellow citizens of the city of San Giovanni Rotondo,

There are moments in a person's life when time seems to stand still, making room for gratitude. I am living such a moment today, as I recall with deep emotion the day when this blessed city granted me the supreme honor of being named an Honorary Citizen of San Giovanni Rotondo. It is an honor not carried on paper, but in the soul, and one that binds me forever to this place of faith, dignity, and timeless values.

Today we are gathered to celebrate a man and a life devoted entirely to culture: sixty years of artistic activity by Mr. Benito Ripoli. Sixty years of work, sacrifice, vision, and dedication. For me, nearly half of this journey has intertwined with my own path, and my testimony comes not only from respect, but from a deep friendship built over time.

I came to know Benito Ripoli in the early years, when he assumed leadership of the FITP, carrying on his shoulders the responsibility of a great mission: to restore to popular culture the dignity it truly deserves. With determination and courage, he opened new paths, expanded folkloric events throughout Italy, and carried the name of our culture beyond national borders to international recognition.

His destiny then called him to even greater responsibilities: Deputy President of the IGF, Senator, and a steadfast supporter and promoter of people of value. Many of those who today stand at the forefront of Italian and international popular culture owe their rise to the trust, support, and vision of Benito Ripoli.

I have admired his organizational strength—at times fiery, at times uncompromising—but always illuminated by profound kindness and

sincere respect for humanity. A spirit that seems to spring from the very blessing of this land, marked by the presence of Padre Pio, an invisible thread of faith, humanity, and love for one's fellow human beings.

Time, however, spares no one. A day comes when the body asks for rest and daily effort must be tempered. Yet the love for what we have built never fades. The love for the identity of peoples, for the traditions that define them, for the roots that give meaning to both present and future, remains forever alive.

In this history of values, the name Benito Ripoli is written with honor. For him, promoting the name San Giovanni Rotondo has never been a duty, but a true vocation. Today the world speaks of our city not only as the place that gave humanity Padre Pio, but also as the city that gave universal culture Benito Ripoli. A city without such a name must go in search of one; we are blessed to already have it.

I am honored to call him my friend and to have been a witness and participant in many of his achievements. If I stood by his side at the beginning of his assumption of high offices in Italy and within the IGF, I could not be absent today, as we mark a life of sixty years devoted to art and culture.

Together, we had the privilege of bringing before His Holiness Pope Francis authentic values of world popular culture, values blessed and cherished by His Holiness. These are moments that are never forgotten and that give meaning to an entire lifetime.

Today I find myself once again here, in San Giovanni Rotondo—a city where, through Benito Ripoli, I have gained true friends and deep human bonds. I wish you, dear friend, good health from the bottom of my heart, and I am convinced that all the citizens of San

Giovanni Rotondo respect you and deeply appreciate the tireless work you have carried out.

May we remain united in health, hope, and strength, trusting that we will continue, for as long as we are granted, to create together beautiful and meaningful events worthy of the name San Giovanni Rotondo and of the great family of world popular culture.

With deep emotion, respect, and gratitude,
Dorel Cosma



IGF OFFICIAL STATEMENT – In Memory of Lillo Alessandro



Through his work, he strengthened international cooperation, supported numerous festivals and promoted cultural dialogue among nations. He loved music, dance and the beauty of folk costumes and his passion inspired the entire IGF community.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and to all who were close to him.

Farewell, Lillo. You will remain forever in our hearts.

The International Folklore Federation IGF announces with deep sorrow the passing of Lillo Alessandro, former IGF President for three terms and President of FITP Italy. Lillo Alessandro was one of the most distinguished personalities in world folklore, a devoted leader and a true ambassador of tradition.



IGF International Symposium in Bistrița, Romania



“Culture is the best and safest wealth of a people.” — Mihai Eminescu

Culture is to a nation what the soul is to the body. And if the body is the temple of the soul, then culture is the very sanctuary where values are born—and also the guardian that shields us from oblivion. The past week was devoted to culture and, above all, to the “angel” of Romanian poetry—Mihai Eminescu, as he was called by one of the great figures of our national culture and spirituality.

Artists and cultural figures from every field paid homage to culture and to the great poet. In Bistrița, two grand events took place—both resonating well beyond Romania’s borders.

The first, held on January 14th, was the **International Symposium – “The Role of IGF in Promoting and Supporting National Cultures.”** Organized under the auspices of BC Media, IGF, the Cultural Association “*Pecetea lui Solomon*” Bistrița, UZP, and the Sibiu branch of the Writers’ Union of Romania, the heartfelt organizer and moderator of the event was, as always, **Professor Dr. Dorel Cosma**, President of IGF, joined by **Zorin Diaconescu**, president of *Conexiuni*, writer, and digital creator.

The special guests of the symposium were IGF senators **Benito Ripoli** and **Luigi Pompilio** (Italy), IGF Vice President **Ameen Kassem** (Israel), and **Pahone Pop**, Executive President of ANFR and IGF Deputy Treasurer. The evening’s

warm host was the **Diana Hotel Complex**.

The **Bistrița Writers’ Society** was represented by poets and authors who delighted the audience with their verse and prose, presenting their own literary creations or their ongoing work: **Corina Negrea**, **Alexandru Uiuiu**, **Maria Blaga**, **Victor Știr**, **Dumitru Alexandru Bar**, **Rodica Fercana**, **Alin Cordoș**, **Father Professor Nicolae Feier**, and **Mirela Rus**.

Joining them were **Archpriest Alexandru Vidican**, **Father Dr. Emanuel Vidican**, and **Professor Rozalia Fucă Tomescu**, conductor of the “*Coroana*” Choir, as well as **Călin Pop**, writer and poet. **Lucian Stroie**, a folk craftsman devoted to authentic beauty, presented two exquisite traditional costumes, one of which was a replica of Queen Marie’s attire.

Crowning this celebration of art and word, the audience was enchanted by the voices of Italian tenor **Dario Sebastiani** and soprano **Marialuigia Martino**. Actor and man of culture **Iulian Praja** (Târgu Mureș) paid tribute to Eminescu’s genius with a recitation of the poem “*Rugăciune*” (*Prayer*).

The Italian delegation offered a special award to **Professor Dr. Dorel Cosma**, in remembrance of the long-standing cultural collaboration between the two nations. Gratitude was also extended to **Vice President Ameen Kassem**, for his consistent hospitality toward Romanian representatives during their visits to Israel for major cultural and folkloric events. Deeply moved, Mr. Cosma thanked the guests for their kind words and for their participation in a symposium where culture, literature, and art themselves became bridges between nations.

The celebration continued on the afternoon of **January 15th**, in an atmosphere imbued with emotion and national pride. Tributes were paid

to excellence in music, literature, and folklore. The same organizing institutions, in the same gracious venue, under the coordination of **Dorel Cosma**—our “**Apollo of Culture**,” as Father Professor Nicolae Feier fondly called him—offered a true feast of music, poetry, dance, artistic debuts, fine and folk art, and book exhibitions.

Among the performers were **Mihaela and Ciprian Istrate**, living treasures of the Romanian folk song and newly honored as *Emeritus Artists*, the **Balada Ensemble**, tenors **Dario Sebastiani** and **Florin Ormenișan**, soprano **Marialuigia Martino**, the **Vintara Group**, and actor **Iulian Praja**, who also moderated the event. Their performances elevated Romanian and international culture alike to regal heights.

Diplomas and awards for excellence were presented for artistic and cultural achievements to distinguished guests such as **Zorin Diaconescu**, **Father Professor Nicolae Feier** (researcher, historian, and writer), **Professor Cristina Mirela Rus** (writer and editor-in-chief of BC Media), **Lucian Stroe** (promoter of authentic folk art), **Professor Claudiu Copaciu** (mentor of the modern stage), **Ioan Simionca** (architect of ancestral dance), **Benito Ripoli**, **Luigi Pompilio**, and **Ameen Kassem**, alongside many others who support Romanian and international folklore.

Special recognition was also given (in absentia) to **Joel and Florence Conte Taillason** (France), **Zelida and Nicholas Charlety** (France), **Theodor Damian** (New York), **Fatma and Murrat Hurryiet** (Turkey), and **Ioan Godja** (Vienna) for their outstanding cultural collaboration with Romanian artists and writers.

Whether expressed through word, color, or sound, **art and culture speak of humanity, of the soul, of the light within us**. What would our lives be without art, without music, without artists—those who give labor, sweat, and spirit upon the altar of creation and of authentic folklore? In a world shadowed by confusion and appearances, artists and cultural figures

choose depth and truth, striving to awaken and keep alive our spiritual memory.

When word or verse, born of divine inspiration, meets music and melody—when art unites destinies—what springs forth is the heartbeat of humanity. **Culture is what binds us; it is what makes us alike.**

The word “*culture*” comes from the Latin *colere*—“to cultivate,” “to honor.” As a creation of the human spirit, culture is our exclusive heritage. It reflects how we see ourselves and how we regard and treat others. As **Nicolae Iorga** once said: “*Without the banner of culture, a people is but a crowd, not an army.*”

Cultural expressions—literature, art, language, religion—intertwined with a community’s beliefs and values, define its very essence. People of culture, though of different nationalities, speak the same language—for culture unites and forges bonds between communities, serving as the link that connects them. Our artistic side helps us reveal who we are and to see the world through each other’s eyes.

Let us be proud that we have values that define us and people who exalt our cultural identity—such as **Professor Dr. Dorel Cosma**, President of the World Folklore Union—and all those who, together with him, transform moments like **January 15th, Culture Day**, into true hymns of homage to **beauty and creative spirit**.

Prof. Mirela Rus,
Journalist BC Media, Romania



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