

Thursday 19 September 2024  
11:30 – 13h00, DeSingel, Antwerp (Belgium Flanders)

### **ITI General Secretariat**

On behalf of the ITI General Secretariat, Chen Zhongwen was pleased to make a special announcement regarding a new artistic venture. During the 163rd Executive Council Session, it was decided to elevate ITI's artistic profile globally by embarking on the organization's first official production. The new project, *Star Returning*, was officially announced, co-produced with the Chinese Theatre Association, the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA), and the Daliangshan Festival. This groundbreaking production is directed by Lemi Ponifasio, ITI World Theatre Ambassador.

*Star Returning* will have its preview at the Daliangshan Festival on 10 November 2024, followed by its World Premiere at the prestigious Carthage Festival in Tunisia on 23 November 2024, one of the most renowned cultural festivals globally.

Lemi Ponifasio himself shared the profound vision of *Star Returning*. This opera-theatre work explores the cosmic origins and spiritual connections of the Yi people, indigenous to the mountainous Daliangshan area in Sichuan, China. The production draws from ancestral narratives, including the *Book of Origins*, the chants of the Bimo, and the traditional Torch Festival, which celebrates the survival, resilience, and deep cultural heritage of the Yi people.

*Star Returning* aims to act as a constellation, radiating both warmth and illumination, while telling the story of how the Yi people have journeyed through time and their place within the cosmos, the spiritual realm, the natural environment, and society.

Over the past six years, the ITI General Secretariat has fostered a close partnership with the Daliangshan Festival, resulting in fruitful collaboration. This year, seven international productions from ITI Centres, including Armenia, Georgia, Brazil, Iraq, and Germany, will be featured at the festival.

During the Congress, Ms. Zhang Beibei, a representative of the [Daliangshan Theatre Festival](#), presented the festival's background and its significance. The Daliangshan Theatre Festival, first established in 2019, is situated in a region with a rich and dramatic cultural legacy, surrounded by geological wonders and home to 14 ethnic groups, including the Yi and Tibetan peoples. Daliangshan is the largest Yi ethnic region in China and still preserves some of the world's oldest Naxi and Mosuo villages. The ancient Yi opera *Cuotaiji* is considered a living fossil of theatre.

In the early 20th century, American explorer Joseph Rock discovered Shangri-La in Daliangshan. Today, this region hosts both commercial satellite launches and the world's deepest dark matter laboratory, creating a rare combination of cutting-edge technology and ancient tradition.

The Daliangshan Theatre Festival embraces openness and internationalism, becoming an important platform for cultural and artistic exchange between East and West. The upcoming 6th edition of the festival, in November 2024, warmly welcomes theatre artists and enthusiasts to experience its unique blend of natural beauty and artistic innovation.

"Zimo gni! Kashasha!"

Zhang Beibei extend her best wishes and look forward to seeing more international artists in Daliangshan!