

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today awarded the Young Cultural Figure Award of the Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic to Theatre NO99 dramatist Eero Epner; the special award was given to gallerist Olga Temnikova.

"Eero Epner, the diversity in your interests is impressive: you feel yourself equally at home in the world of theatre and art, you write and you teach. Your sharp theatre speaks to us and make us think," President Ilves stated and then added: "Without you, Theatre NO99 would not be what we know it as today. I do believe that Eero is one of the cultural figures who has had the strongest influence on Estonian cultural landscape over the last ten years."

The Head of State thanked gallerist Olga Temnikova, who won the special award, for introducing Estonian art both at home and abroad. "This is not an easy job; we could even say this is a Herculean task, one which you have accomplished with an easy elegance. One needs creativity, sensitivity and a quick wit to do such a job. Such a vocation is a talent one is born with; it is not something one can simply learn," said President Ilves.

Theatre NO99 dramatist Eero Epner stated in his address that the Young Cultural Figure Award is not only a recognition of the individual creativity of a single person, but represents the appreciation of collective will and efforts. "It is impossible to do anything alone in theatre," he added.

According to gallerist Olga Temnikova, there are many among her colleagues who are involved in introducing modern art, all of whom are worthy of the same recognition.

Eero Epner, who graduated cum laude from the University of Tartu in the speciality of history of art, has worked as a dramatist at Theatre NO99 since 2005 and as a lecturer of history of art and dramaturgy at the Drama School of the Estonian Academy of Art and Theatre since 2010.

Epner has, over the last decade, considerably contributed to Estonian culture and understanding related developments; he has become one of the most important representatives of the modern Estonian sense of theatre. He has written and composed texts for the stage plays of Theatre NO99 and always takes part in the collective creative process. Epner has published

numerous reviews on theatre, articles and essays that discuss theatre theories. As an art critic, he has put together several exhibitions (at the Estonian Museum of Art, Tallinn Art Hall, Gallery HAUS) and edited and written introductions to numerous books on art. In 2012, he launched a series of Theatre NO99 lectures on modern art and theatre in both Estonian and Russian language schools and the TV series, "NO99 Kunstikool" (NO99 Art School), aimed at the popularisation of modern art, on ETV.

Gallerist Olga Temnikova, who won the special award, is known to the public of Estonia, above all, as a promoter of Estonian modern art. She began her career as a gallerist in 2005, as a manager of the modern art gallery 2005 ArtDepoo, which was the first gallery committed to modern Estonian art. In 2010 she established Temnikova & Kasela Gallery with Indrek Kasela, the main purpose of the gallery being to represent Estonian artists and promote their careers, enhancing the visibility of Estonian art at an international level. Over the last four years she has taken part in more than 20 fairs and exhibitions, bringing Estonian art to an audience of approximately 300,000.

In addition, Temnikova has organised the Kaido Ole exhibition in St. Petersburg; exhibitions of works of Merike Estna and Sigrid Viir in New York; a group exhibition of Marko Mäetamm in Washington and Moscow, and an exhibition of Jaan Toomik in Moscow. She has contributed to the publication of books and catalogues of several artists.

A cultural figure of Estonian descent aged 35 or younger whose accomplishments in the field of creative arts have won wide recognition or who has, in his or her works or activities in the field of creative arts, considerably contributed to making Estonia and Estonian culture known outside the country can apply for the award. The award money is 5,000 euros and the special award is 3,000 euros.

Previous laureates of the Young Cultural Figure Award include pianist Mihkel Poll (2013), jewel artist Tanel Veenre (2012), composer Risto Joost (2011); editor of the Ööülikool (Night University) series Jaan Tootsen (2010); actor, theatre director and translator Marius Peterson (2009); poet Kristiina Ehin (2008); ballerina Luana Georg (2007); composer Helena Tulve (2006); theatre director Jaanus Rohumaa (2005); conductor Anu Tali (2004); literary critic Jan Kaus (2003) and composer Tõnu Kõrvits (2002).

In 2002 the special award was given to folk musician Krista Sildoja, and in 2011 the special award went to Igor Kotjuh, the poet, essayist, translator and an individual who is shaping a

society liberated from prejudice.

The Young Cultural Figure Award is financed by Indrek Neivelt, a member of the Board of the Cultural Foundation.

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