



Welcome to the first production in Synetic's 20th Anniversary season — a two-part celebration of virtual and in-person experiences that commemorates our legacy and expands the boundaries of Synetic's artistry with new technologies and engaging narratives. Over the past two decades, our work has become synonymous with cinema and though we cannot be together in our theater, it has been refreshing to reimagine how the Synetic form translates to this "virtual stage."

Joy! was brought to us by Chris Rushing, Synetic's Education Director. When he pitched the project, I was fascinated by the idea of presenting two distinct stories that share the same narrative structure. He introduced me to the idea of Dan Harmon's Story Circle, which breaks down the hero's journey. Chris saw a parallel in this familiar trope and in the notion that joy is something that must be sought out, especially in a muddled and corrupt world. To have a veteran Syneticon like Vato and a newcomer to our work like Maria perform in rotating repertory was an added bonus. The two of them offer two very distinct experiences for our audiences and I urge you to witness both of their performances.

For the past several weeks, I have been directing my son. Usually when I work alongside Vato, the circumstances are different. The cast is usually a large ensemble and he's playing a character that is different from himself. In *Joy!*, he is the sole performer and is tasked with telling his story. I have enjoyed watching him strip away the confines of character and simply be himself. It has also been rewarding to witness how his development and the story of Synetic intersect.

Our audiences have come to know Maria Simpkins through memorable performances in *The Snow Queen* and *The Decameron*. Every time she steps on the stage, or more recently on the screen, you can't help but fall in love with her personality and her story. The heart and soul Maria brings to this production is truly the perfect salve for Zoom fatigue. With the aid of Katherine DuBois, a veteran Syneticon and our own Company Director, Maria's production is filled with humor and pathos and offers a completely different perspective on the pursuit to manifest joy.

I would like to extend a thank you to our Board for their guidance through these trying times, our staff who worked tirelessly this summer to reimagine our 20th Anniversary season, the creative teams for both of these tremendous pieces, and to you — our audience — for continuing to lean into our work with curiosity and endless support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Tsikurishvili'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paata Tsikurishvili
Founding Artistic Director