

WELCOME ADDRESS
Ivan Todorov

It is a pleasant duty to welcome you to the Workshop on

New Mathematical Methods in Solvable Models and Gauge/String Dualities. This the first in-Person meeting including participation of Bulgarian faculty and students. organized by the International Center for Mathematical Sciences (ICMS) in Sofia. It is sponsored jointly by the Bulgarian Ministry of Science and Education and by the Simons Foundation.

The ICMS, the first such institution in the Balkans, was founded some three years ago. It was conceived and realized by a handful of people: Ludmil Katzarkov, its scientific director, the late Blagovest Sendov, its first director, Yuri Tschinkel, director of Mathematics and the Physical Sciences at the Simons Foundation, with the crucial blessing of Maxim Kontsevich of IHES. Its continued existence and financial support from the Bulgarian Ministry owe much to the insistence of Yulian Revalski, President of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Its Inaugural Conference (postponed, due to the COVID, from 2020) took place a month ago in Sofia with participation of luminaries such as Kontsevich, Griffiths, Bourguignon, Fukaya and this year's Fields Medalist Maryna Viazovska.

There is a tragic side to it. The ICMS came perhaps 30 years too late – presently, when gifted young people are leaving the country before entering university. But we cannot turn time backwards and should try to make the best of the now presented chance. In the words of Rudyard Kipling

... watch the things you gave your life to, broken

And stoop and build with worn out tools.

Thanks to all lecturers and participants whose presence here serves this purpose. Special thanks to Konstantin Zarembo who agreed to give an introductory 2-hour lecture for the benefit of students and of outsiders (like me) to the topic of the Workshop; and last but not least to Ivan Kostov and Valya Petkova, who worked hard to organize this meeting at difficult times.