

Athens, May 5, 2022

PRESS RELEASE

Visual Arts Programme

THE ARTIST ON THE COMPOSER

A Greek National Opera – NEON co-production

Yorgos Lanthimos | BLEAT

6, 7, 8 May 2022

Stavros Niarchos Hall, Greek National Opera – SNFCC

The Artist on The Composer is an innovative collaboration between Greek National Opera and NEON Cultural Organization. It connects pioneering contemporary artists with classical music and opera, a synergy that results in a single new art form.

For the programme's second commission, the gifted and internationally renowned Greek film director Yorgos Lanthimos has created a new cinematic work, *Bleat*, to be presented with live orchestral accompaniment.

Curated by Giorgos Koumendakis (Artistic Director GNO) and Elina Kountouri (Director NEON), world premières of *Bleat* will take place on 6, 7 and 8 May 2022 at the Stavros Niarchos Hall at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center.

The short film is written, directed and produced by Yorgos Lanthimos and was shot on the Greek island of Tinos in February 2020. It features Oscar-winning American actress Emma Stone and acclaimed French actor Damien Bonnard; both will be present at the world-first premiere. Accompanying music by J. S. Bach / Knut Nystedt and Toshio Hosokawa will be performed live inside the Stavros Niarchos Hall by GNO musicians, the Chorus of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation and soloist Angelina Tkatcheva (cimbalom), by conductor Nicolas Vassiliou and chorus master Agathangelos Georgakatos.

Participation in the co-production of Greek National Opera is made possible by a Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) [www.SNF.org] grant for enhancing the GNO's artistic outreach.

NEON is solely funded by its founder Dimitris Daskalopoulos.

Bleat

Against the background of a barren and dry island, the film takes us to a rural community in Greece. The death of a much-loved young man weighs heavily in the air. Grieving villagers sit around the table at his wake, and a young woman lurches between devastation at the loss of her partner and an animal instinct for life.

The mood of *BLEAT* is sombre but intoxicating. It explores ideas of loneliness and connection; death, love and desire; and human and animal interaction (emphasised by the involvement of the Tinos community in making the film).

Lanthimos masterfully grasps the audience's attention as people, animals and landscape converge and collude in a raw and unsettling cycle of life and death. In Knut Nystedt's reinterpretation of Bach's funeral song and Toshio Hosokawa's music that accompany the film, the words suggest that death is not an ending but a new companion and a fresh encounter.

Dimitris Daskalopoulos, founder NEON says: "*At its foundation NEON decided to operate through joint actions, developing synergies with public and private cultural institutions. We have established a new model of collaboration, based on mutual trust, to contribute to the dissemination of art to the largest possible audience. Working with the Greek National Opera we are, once again, bringing together contemporary creativity and classic art forms because art, in all its forms, is the driving force that awakens and stimulates consciousness.*"

Elina Kountouri, Director NEON says: *“The pioneering and ambitious project The Artist on the Composer relies on our common objective to explore whether contemporary culture can deliver new narratives. Through our partnership with the Greek National Opera, we experiment and create a unique artistic collaboration, in this case an unprecedented “joint venture” between experimental cinema and classical music, leading to an experiential type of viewing.”*

Giorgos Koumendakis, Artistic Director GNO says: *“In the places I lived growing up, I heard tales passed meanderingly down the generations, tales impressed deeply in the lined faces of their elderly tellers. Tales in which sex is intertwined with faith and the living world, with faithlessness and death – you could never know for sure what had actually happened, and what was a figment of the imagination. I saw just such a story in Bleat, something between a dream state and reality. In the film’s black and white images, I saw the history of cinema unfold, through Lanthimos’ unique cinematic signature, in an incredibly contemporary way. As a man of music, what impressed me most was the way in which the film carves itself a voice through the music works that accompany it live. This synergy of art forms offers audiences a new kind of lived experience, and offers us a new way forward.”*

Panagiotis Pantelatos, SNF Communications Director says: *“We would like to express our warmest congratulations to all those who collaborated on Bleat, a creation that we have all been eagerly looking forward to experiencing. It is very important for the cultural sector in Greece to have the Greek National Opera (GNO) collaborating with leading cultural organizations such as NEON in Greece and major opera houses abroad, and to have it developing creative relationships with distinguished artists such as Yorgos Lanthimos. Under the artistic guidance of George Koumendakis—whose work we deeply appreciate—the GNO continues to make strides in achieving the global reach that it deserves to have. We at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) will continue to stand behind any collaboration that promotes culture and helps people move forward.”*

Yorgos Lanthimos said at the press conference: *“The proposal by Greek National Opera and NEON was very interesting, as with this film I return to an early stage of cinematography, black and white, silent. The challenge of making a silent movie that is presented in the specific conditions with a live orchestral accompaniment was very inspiring.”*

Emma Stone said: *“I was thrilled to have the opportunity to travel to Athens and Tinos and be part of this project. It was really a gift to experience the island and to work with Yorgos (Lanthimos) again.”*

The Artist on the Composer programme – run by Greek National Opera and NEON – connects pioneering contemporary artists, filmmakers and producers with live performances of orchestral music. For each new commission, the artist responds to and enters into dialogue with pieces by classical composers. Freed from standard musical conventions and storylines, the intention is to reach audiences who may never have previously connected with opera.

A new work by Nikos Navridis was the first commission of the programme in 2019; an installation that deconstructed the operatic principles of experiencing a classical musical theme, in a unique collaboration with musicians, choreographers and performers.

Visual Arts Programme • New production • World premiere
Music and Visual Arts Cycle • **A GNO and NEON co-production**

The Artist on the Composer

The Artist on the Composer programme curators: **Giorgos Koumendakis** (GNO Artistic Director) – **Elina Kountouri** (NEON Director)

Second Commission **Yorgos Lanthimos: *Bleat***

6, 7, 8 May 2022

Start times: 18.00, 20.00, 22.00

Stavros Niarchos Hall of the Greek National Opera – SNFCC

Producer, scriptwriter, director: **Yorgos Lanthimos**

Starring: **Emma Stone, Damien Bonnard**

Music: **Johann Sebastian Bach / Knut Nystedt, Toshio Hosokawa**

Cimbalom: **Angelina Tkatcheva**

Conductor **Nicolas Vassiliou**

With the participation of the **GNO musicians: Nikos Nikopoulos** (Flute), **Dimitry Safarian-Simonenko** (Oboe), **Anna Dermani** (Harp), **Sophia Tamvakopoulou** (Piano), **Alexis Theophylactou** (Violin), **Marina Kolovou** (Cello)

Chorus master: **Agathangelos Georgakatos**

With the participation of the **Chorus of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation**

Set designer: **Anna Georgiadou**

Costume designer: **Angelos Mentis**
Choreographer: **Christos Papadopoulos**
Director of photography: **Thodoros Mihopoulos**
Film editor: **Yorgos Mavropsaridis**
Executive producer: **Rebecca Skinner**
Producer: **Eleni Kossyfidou**

The film contains nudity.

Tickets: 10 euros (ticket revenues will support the work of the Greek National Opera)
Advance bookings: ticketservices.gr/en, GNO Box Office – SNFCC (+30 2130885700, 09.00-21.00 daily)

nationalopera.gr/en

www.neon.org.gr/en

Lead Donor of the GNO / GNO's participation supported by SNF



ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ ΝΙΑΡΧΟΣ
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

NOTES TO EDITORS

For the first time in its history, **Greek National Opera** pursues the interface between opera and visual arts, through the three-year "music and visual arts" cycle in collaboration with NEON. In newly-commissioned works, each artist creates a dialogue with the work of a classical composer neglecting familiar operatic conventions and narratives, aspiring to open to an audience that wasn't previously interested in opera. The said creative dialogue between contemporary artists with a "live" orchestral music performance aims at further exploring how one can manage, transform and utilize a state-of-the-art opera house.

NEON is a non-profit organisation that works to bring contemporary culture closer to everyone. It is committed to broadening the appreciation, understanding, and creation of contemporary art in Greece, and to the firm belief that this is a key tool for growth and development. NEON, founded in 2013 by collector and entrepreneur Dimitris Daskalopoulos, breaks with the convention that limits the contemporary art foundation of a collector to a single place. NEON's space is the city. It acts on a multitude of initiatives, spaces, and civic and social contexts seeking to expose the ability of contemporary art to stimulate, inspire and affect the individual and society at large. NEON constructively collaborates with cultural institutions and supports the programmes of public and private institutions to enhance increased access and inventive interaction with contemporary art.

PRESS ENQUIRIES

Greek National Opera Press Office
Vasilis Louras
T: +30 2130885740, +30 6936197889
E: pressoffice@nationalopera.gr

NEON
Melissa Emery, SUTTON
T: +44 (0)20 7183 3577
E: melissa@suttoncomms.com