



Athens, 6 October 2023

Press Release

First international presentation of Yorgos Lanthimos' *Bleat* at the 61st New York Film Festival draws massive applause

The second commission of the *Artist on the Composer* programme –run by the Greek National Opera in partnership with NEON– was given its international premiere in New York to great success. Yorgos Lanthimos' *Bleat*, accompanied by live music ensembles, was presented on Wednesday, 4 October 2023 at 18.15 inside a packed Alice Tully Hall at the Lincoln Center as part of the 61st New York Film Festival. This project is a co-production between the GNO and [NEON](https://www.neon.org.gr), an organisation funded by its founder Dimitris Daskalopoulos. The [Greek National Opera](https://www.gno.gr)'s participation in this co-production and its US premiere was made possible by a grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) [[www.SNF.org](https://www.snf.org)] to enhance the GNO's artistic outreach.

The highly-anticipated, sold-out international premiere of *Bleat* at the New York Film Festival took place in the presence of its director Yorgos Lanthimos and star Emma Stone, whose presence was made possible by SAG-AFTRA granting the project an interim agreement. The pair were rewarded with the warmest of applause by the audience. **The music script for *Bleat* comprises pieces by J. S. Bach / Knut Nystedt and Toshio Hokosawa, performed live by the Greek National Opera musicians Nikos Nikopoulos (flute), Renato Ripo (cello), Dimitry Safarian-Simonenko (oboe), Georgia Xagara (harp), Sofia Tamvakopoulou (piano), and Alexis Theophylactou (violin), conducted by Nicolas Vassiliou; by the cimbalom soloist Angelina Tkatcheva; and by the Cantori New York choir, with Agathangelos Georgakatos serving as chorus master.**

Directly after the presentation of *Bleat*, NYFF Artistic Director Dennis Lim thanked the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Greek National Opera, and NEON, and welcomed Yorgos Lanthimos and Emma Stone to the stage for a short Q&A on the *Artist on the Composer* programme, the music script, the challenges the project's two leads faced, the director's influences, and the working relationship between the filmmaker and his female lead.

Yorgos Lanthimos, who mentioned that a major influence on *Bleat* was the Takis Kanellopoulos documentary *Macedonian Wedding* (1960), also noted –among other things– that “NEON and the Greek National Opera came up with the idea. It was very exciting and charming for me to think about making something that would involve a film in its most primitive form – just a silent film, a narrative. Just to start from scratch and make something really simple and elemental. And, of course, to have the opportunity to research music and listen to it. And for that we worked with Giorgos Koumendakis, the director of the Greek National Opera [...]. I think we decided on the music kind of in parallel with me coming up with the idea of what the film element might be. [...] I had music on my mind, I spent some time on Tinos [...]. I just tried to allow myself to be free in how I associate things to come up with the story of this.”

Emma Stone spoke extensively and enthusiastically about the film shoot that took place on the island of Tinos back in February 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic, and about the performative freedom actors enjoy when making a silent film, noting: “I wish often that we

could cut many lines of dialogue because I think people can say a lot more without speaking. *Bleat* was like a dream come true. [...] This was my first time in Greece [and] on Tinos. It was so beautiful and, since there was not any dialogue, you got to sort of live in the landscape of this beautiful place. It was magical.” In closing, she jokingly asked Lanthimos if they could make only short films once the strike is over, without any dialogue, and ideally all shot on Tinos.

This presentation of *Bleat* was attended by the *Artist on the Composer* programme curators Giorgos Koumendakis (GNO Artistic Director) and Elina Kountouri (NEON Director), and by the Co-President of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Andreas C. Dracopoulos.

The *Artist on the Composer* programme –run by the Greek National Opera in partnership with the NEON Organisation for Culture and Development (www.neon.org.gr)– is connecting pioneering contemporary artists and filmmakers/producers with orchestral music performed live. Through works that spring from the programme’s new commissions, each artist responds to, and enters into dialogue with pieces by classical composers, free from every standard operatic convention, trope and storyline, in the hope of reaching audiences who may never have connected with opera before. *Bleat* will only ever be presented accompanied by a live music ensemble and choir.

Visual arts programme – a GNO & NEON co-production

The Artist on the Composer

Yorgos Lanthimos’ *Bleat*

New York Film Festival #NYFF61

4 October 2023 – Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center

The Artist on the Composer programme curators: **Giorgos Koumendakis – Elina Kountouri**

Producer, screenwriter, director: **Yorgos Lanthimos**

Starring: **Emma Stone, Damien Bonnard**

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

Conductor: **Nicolas Vassiliou**

Chorus master: **Agathangelos Georgakatos**

Cimbalom: **Angelina Tkatcheva**

Nikos Nikopoulos (flute), **Renato Ripo** (cello), **Dimitry Safarian-Simonenko** (oboe), **Sofia Tamvakopoulou** (piano), **Alexis Theophylactou** (violin), **Georgia Xagara** (harp), the **Cantori New York** choir (Artistic director: Mark Shapiro)

Production design: **Anna Georgiadou** / Costume design: **Angelos Mentis** / Choreography:

Christos Papadopoulos / Director of photography: **Thodoris Mihopoulos** / Editor: **Yorgos Mavropsaridis**

Executive producer: **Rebecca Skinner** / Producer: **Eleni Kossyfidou**

This NYFF presentation of *Bleat* is supported by **Superprime Films**.

Lead Donor of the GNO, GNO Co-production Donor & US Premiere Donor



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