METEORA van Spiros Stathoulopoulos

Vanaf 8 augustus in de filmtheaters

82 minuten | 2012 | Griekenland, Duitsland | Grieks gesproken

In het bergachtige gebied van centraal Griekenland liggen de kloosters van Meteora, bovenop hoge steentoppen en ver weg van zowel hemel als aarde. De jonge monnik Theodoros en non Urania hebben hun leven gewijd aan de strikte rituelen en levensstijl van hun gemeente. Maar de twee jonge mensen worden elke dag meer verscheurd door een groeiend verlangen naar elkaar. Zij zullen moeten kiezen tussen spirituele toewijding of wereldlijke passies.

Metéora maakte deel uit van de officiële competitie van het Filmfestival Berlijn 2012.

METEORA wordt in Nederland gedistribueerd door ABC/Cinemien.

Beeldmateriaal kan gedownload worden vanaf: www.cinemien.nl/pers of vanaf www.filmdepot.nl

Voor meer informatie: ABC/ Cinemien | Anne Kervers | anne@cinemien.nl | 0616274537

Cast & Crew

Theodoros (Monk)	Theo Alexander
Urania (Nun)	Tamila Koulieva
Directed by	Spiros Stathoulopoulos
Written by	Asimakis "Alfa" Pagidas, Spiros Stathoulopoulos
Produced by	Philippe Bober, Susanne Marian
Production Design	Aristotelis Karananos, Alexandra Siafkou
Costume Design	Alexandra Siafkou
Editing	George Cragg
Animation Supervisor	Frank Govaere
Animation Director	Matthias Daenschel
Animation Production Design	Anna Jander
Illustration Animationen	
Sound Mix	DIE BASISberlin - Ansgar Frerich
Sound Design	Sebastian Tesch
VFX Supervisor	Urban Vucer
Music Consultant	Ullrich Scheideler
Line Producers	Vasilis Stathoulopoulos, Rusta Mizani
Producer	Essential Filmproduktion GmbH
Production Greece	Polyplanity Productions
Production Manager	Sebastian Alten
With the support of	Filmförderungsanstalt In collaboration with ZDF / ARTE– Alexander Bohr, Meinolf Zurhorst

Spiros Stathoulopoulos

Spiros Stathoulopoulos is a Greek film director. Raised in the city of Thessaloniki, he began making movies at a young age. His family moved from Greece to Colombia when he was eight, and he earned his first award at the age of fourteen for the fiction video short, DIMENSION, which was broadcast nationwide. After he turned eighteen, he served in the Greek Army, which influenced another short film, NEKROPOLIS. By twenty-three, he had edited the feature film HABITOS SUCIOS for renowned Colombian director, Carlos Palau.

At twenty-nine, after moving to Los Angeles to finish a formal education in filmmaking and establishing his own production company, Kosmokrator Sinema, he completed his first feature film, PVC-1. This was selected for the Directors' Fortnight at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival. It also screened at the 2007 International Thessaloniki Film Festival, where it won him the Director's Award.

Filmography:

2003   Habitos Sucios (editor)

2007   PVC-1 (director, writer & cinematographer)

2012   Metéora (director, writer & cinematographer)

Director's Statement

Beginning in the Late Middle Ages, orthodox monks built monasteries on top of the sandstone monoliths of central Greece - masterful human creations fused to a magnificent natural phenomenon formed millions of years ago. The clouds, which glide below the monasteries, eclipse the monoliths generating an optical illusion of suspension between heaven and earth (in Greek "Metéoros" means "suspended, hovering").

My first memories of the rocky landscape and the monasteries of Metéora go back to my early childhood. Even after we moved with my family from Greece to Colombia, memories of Byzantine Icons and the archaic rituals of Orthodox services have remained with me ever since. Hence, my critical and at the same time respectful approach to the spirituality of the Orthodox belief is always paired with reflection upon childhood images of another home that was far away – yet deeply rooted within myself.

After my first film was made in Colombia, my maternal home, I felt it was time to devote myself to a film about my paternal home. My idea was related to the sight of the monasteries from my past memories, the landscape symbolizing two very different worlds: the individuality of rural life present in the valley on the one hand, and the monastic communion in the cloudy heights on the other.

The protagonists of the film navigate between these two worlds: against their own wish, the monk Theodoros and the nun Urania have not managed to completely detach themselves from their earthly existence. From the monastic point of view, carnal desire represents an obstacle on the path toward the highest goal, while for the farmers reproduction is an essential component in the cycle of life. Both perspectives are of a spiritual nature and only differ in their manifestation.

To me the protagonists' craving, longing, and carnal desires are not to be perceived solely as sins. They quarrel with themselves, struggle, and have yet to find their definite place. They arrive at a crossroads where a decision has to be made.

It almost seems as if this struggle is mapped upon the image of the suspended monasteries - an allegory of the human soul that has been perpetually suspended between the spiritual and the secular existence.
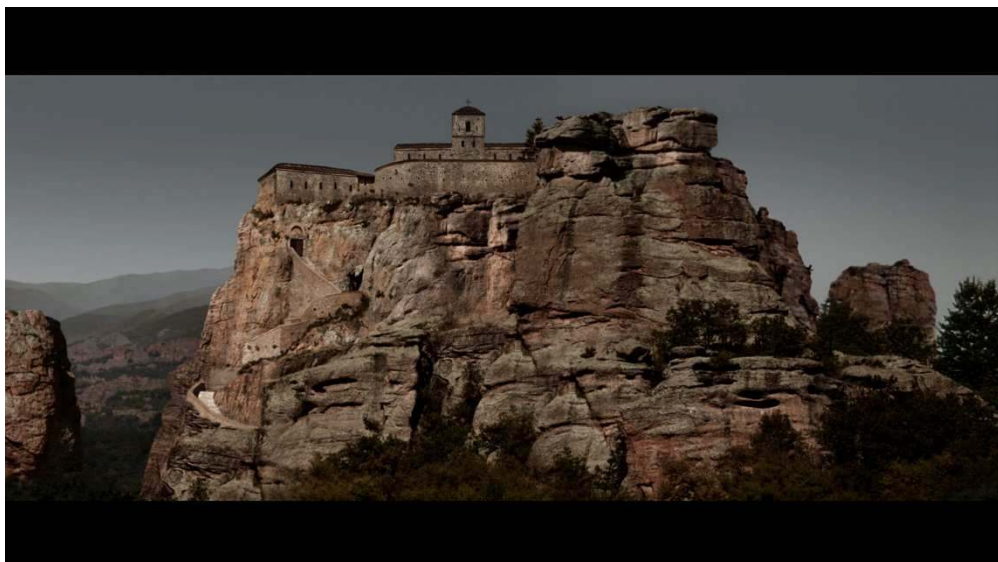
Theo Alexander
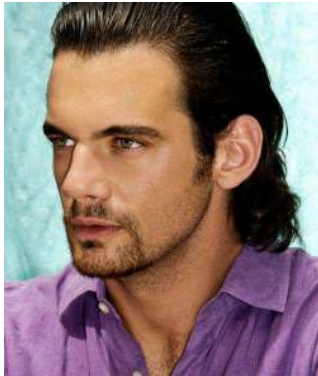
Theo Alexander was born in Athens, Greece. After completing his studies in Business Administration at Boston University he studied at the Circle in the Square Theatre Conservatory in New York. Since 2010 he is part of the celebrated HBO-Series TRUE BLOOD where he portrays the critically acclaimed role of "Talbot". As a producer he has developed and is currently producing two projects: "Amazons" with "Escape Artists" and the highly acclaimed novel of Nikos Kazantzakis (Zorba the Greek, The Last Temptation of Christ) "Freedom or Death".

Filmography:

2007	El Greco by Yannis Smaragdis
2007	Chuck by Jason Ensler
2008	CSI: NY - Like Water for Murder by Anthony Hemingway
2008	Pushing Daisies - Circus, Circus by Lawrence Trilling
2010 - 2014	True Blood by Michael Lehmann, Scott Winant, David Petrarca
2011	Losing Control by Valerie Weiss
2011	Should've been Romeo by Marc Bennett
2012	Meteora by Spiros Stathoulopoulos

Tamila Koulieva

Tamila Koulieva-Karantinaki was born in 1967 in Baku (Azerbaijan). After graduating from music school, she entered the Moscow National Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) and moved to Athens in 1992. Aside from her film acting career, Tamila also teaches acting, and took part to TV-series and plays. She staged in The Troyan Women (2001), Medea (2003), Iphigenia at Aulis (2008) or Beast on the Moon by Richard Kalinoski (1999, 2010) at the National Theatre of Greece.

Filmography:

1990	The Trap by Rasim Ismailov
1990	The Mystery of Handwritten Quran by Rafael Gaspariants
1991	A Dance in the Night (Gamis Tsekva) by Aleko Tsabadze
1997	Vassiliki by Vangelis Serdaris
1997	Tomorrow We'll Know by Andreas Thomopoulos
2001	Tomorrow is Another Day by Dora Masklavanou
2003	A Sea Apart by Ersi Danou
2004	Here We Are by Stavros Tsiolis

Interview with Spiros Stathoulopoulos

METEORA is an enigmatic story of love between a monk and a nun. Can you expand upon the relationship between the topography in the film and the theme of the story?
The origin of the word «Metéoros» is "suspended". When the monasteries are viewed from below, clouds conceal the monoliths and it seems as if the monasteries are floating in the heavens above. The main theme of METEORA is the suspension of the human soul between two poles. One pole is communal life, the monks and nuns with their communities. The other is life as an individual. In their love for one another, the monk and the nun have to make a decision between these two poles. In the film, this polarity is also mapped onto the topography: up above is life in the community; below is the individual. Central to the film is the place in-between, which I call the "area of suspension" – an area of conflict where the human soul is confronted with the decision of which direction to go.

The story has a timeless quality. The story could take place today or in the Middle Ages.
METEORA is timeless because the struggle in the film is timeless. The human struggle between the flesh and the soul has always existed. This timelessness is represented visually in the film: the monks still dress like they did a thousand years ago, the monasteries look essentially as they did back then, the rocks haven't changed. This quality is mixed with certain aspects of modernity. For example, you see a farmer wearing jeans, and he uses modern tools to inflate and skin the goat. So it is at the same time modern as it is archaic. The intention is to show that such fundamental themes exist and have always existed. And that we are still discussing them.

What is your own personal experience with Greek Orthodoxy?
I was raised in an environment where religion was abundant, both on my mother's and my father's side. In Thessaloniki, we lived within walking distance from at least ten Orthodox churches. Greeks born before Second World War are the last remaining generation of highly disciplined Orthodox who regularly attend Christian Orthodox churches exclusively (it is the case of my grandmother for example, who I convinced to play in the film). In my childhood I went on a road trip driving from the North to the South of Greece. When we reached the monasteries' area, I saw it for the first time through the window. I had seen before natural beauty and also beauty created by humans, but this was the first time I experienced perfect harmony between a magnificent natural phenomenon and one of the most striking architectural masterpieces of mankind. Since then, this image has stayed with me. Today, I

re-explore this setting not through the windshield of a car but through a camera lens – this time entering the Orthodox monastic life responsible for this miraculous creation.

What is the genesis of the animations and what is their function?
Visually speaking, I thought that using Orthodox Icons would be an ideal visual narrative device considering the fact that they belong to the universe of

the story. But in order to reach the optimum visual narrative power of this device I originated the animated Orthodox

Byzantine icons. Aside of using the animations to convey the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters and as a platform where their story could develop upon, the animations are also used to reference the many other myths, paradoxes and allegories of Greek or biblical origin that have underlying parallels with the story, such as Achilles and the Tortoise, Theseus and Ariadne in the labyrinth of Minotaur, redemption through the blood of Christ, and, of course, the story of Adam and Eve.

Does the inclination toward individuality differ for the monk and the nun? Are there connections between your first film PVC-1 and METEORA with regard to the filmmaking process or your personal approach?

There is a common interest of mine in both films: the concept of entrapment as a dramaturgical device. In PVC-1, the character is trapped in a bomb; in METEORA, the main protagonists feel trapped between their life in the community and their life as an individual. But the two films have opposite resolutions of their respective entrapment situations. In terms of my filmmaking approach, I shot PVC-1 with a stabilized tracking camera system and still shots in order to convey the physical sensation of claustrophobia, while METEORA was shot mostly on a tripod in order to convey a more psychological feeling of claustrophobia.

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