

NEWS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTARY FILMS ACQUIRES VENICE FILM FESTIVAL AWARD-WINNER *THE TALE OF SILYAN*

The Cinematic Fable About a Wounded White Stork Rescued by an Unlikely Savior Hails From Academy Award®-Nominated Director, Tamara Kotevska, Executive Producer Davis Guggenheim, Concordia Studio, The Corner Shop and Ciconia Film

Previously Announced as North Macedonia's Submission for International Feature Film at 98th Academy Awards®

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(WASHINGTON, D.C. – Sept. 22, 2025) Fresh off premiering at Venice Film Festival and Toronto International Film Festival and being selected to represent North Macedonia in International Feature Film at the 98th Academy Awards®, National Geographic Documentary Films today announced it has acquired worldwide rights to “**The Tale of Silyan**” from the Oscar®-nominated director of “Honeyland,” **Tamara Kotevska**, in collaboration with Concordia Studio, The Corner Shop and Ciconia Film.

Winner of the “Best Film” Cinema and Arts Award at the 82nd Venice Film Festival, “The Tale of Silyan” is a poignant and visually arresting story set in the heart of rural North Macedonia. Nikola, a farmer grappling with the harsh realities of new government policies, finds himself unable to sell his land or crops. When his family leaves in search of a better life abroad, Nikola takes a job as a landfill attendant, where he encounters the injured white stork Silyan. As he nurses the bird back to health, an unlikely bond forms between man and animal. Woven through their journey is a rich North Macedonian folktale, infusing the film with a lyrical, mythical quality. The result is a deeply moving film that touches on climate change, economic migration, resilience and the quiet power of connection.

Critics describe the film as **“achingly beautiful”** (Indiewire, “The 15 Best New Films That Premiered at the Fall Festivals”); **“An absolute charmer... With masterly widescreen cinematography... seamless editing... and an evocative and multitextured score”** (The Hollywood Reporter, “Best of the Fall Fests: THR’s Critics Picks”); **“Exquisite... [an] idiosyncratic documentary gem... [a] gorgeous film”** (Screen International); and **“A beautifully mounted documentary-fable... An astute blend of environmental messaging and magical realism, all tightly structured and crafted”** (Business Doc Europe).

Toronto International Film Festival documentary programmer Thom Powers describes it as **“whimsical and breathtaking... As a documentary maker, Kotevska is working in her own register, deploying poetry instead of didacticism. There are visual moments so striking, they could be framed as photographs in a museum.”**

National Geographic Documentary Films will roll out “The Tale of Silyan” at festivals around the world before releasing it in theaters ahead of its global streaming debut on Disney+.

“‘The Tale of Silyan’ offers an irresistible blend of poetic storytelling, visual splendor, and emotional urgency. It is also a testament to the healing power of the natural world as seen through the unlikely friendship between a Macedonian farmer and a white stork. We are big admirers of Tamara’s double Oscar®-nominated documentary ‘Honeyland’ and are so happy to be working with this uniquely talented and empathic filmmaker on her beautiful new film,” said Carolyn Bernstein, EVP of Documentary Films at National Geographic.

“The white stork is a mythical creature in my home country of North Macedonia, so I’m thrilled to partner with National Geographic Documentary Films to be able to share an ancient tale from my childhood about these majestic birds with audiences at festivals, in cinemas and at home,” said Kotevska. “I have devoted my life as a filmmaker to two topics: migration and nature conservation. This film marries the two, as modern macro economics lead people to abandon fertile lands in search of work in urban cities, depleting the white storks’ natural food supply as farms become landfills. It is a stark warning about the direction we are heading.”

Kotevska and **Jean Dakar** (who doubles as cinematographer) produce for Ciconia Film, alongside The Corner Shop’s **Anna Hashmi**, as well as **Jordanco Petkovski**. The film is executive produced by Concordia Studio’s Oscar-winner **Davis Guggenheim** (“An Inconvenient Truth”), **Laurene Powell Jobs**, **Casey Meurer** and **Lizzie Fox**. **Martin Ivanov** is editor, and **Joe Wilson Davies** and **HunOuk Park** composed the music.

The deal was negotiated by UTA Independent Film Group on behalf of the filmmakers.

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About Director/Producer Tamara Kotevska

Tamara Kotevska was born in Prilep, North Macedonia, and fell in love with filmmaking early on. At the age of 12, Kotevska picked up a VHS camera and began capturing childhood memories and neighborhood stories. In 2010, she won a U.S. exchange student scholarship and moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where she continued to study documentary filmmaking. Upon her return to North Macedonia, Kotevska began a two-year collaboration with director Ljubo Stefanov to co-direct LAKE OF APPLES (2016), a short documentary that received over ten grand in prizes at international documentary festivals around the world. After this film, Kotevska co-directed her debut feature-length documentary HONEYLAND. The film went on to win three awards at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival (Grand Jury Prize for World Cinema Documentary, Impact Award, Cinematography Award) and two Academy Award nominations in 2020 for Best Documentary Feature and Best International Feature. At the time, it was the only documentary film in history to be nominated in both categories. After HONEYLAND, Kotevska directed her second feature-length documentary, THE WALK, produced by the Academy Award-winning British production company Grain Media. THE WALK had its world premiere at DOC NYC 2023 and its European Premiere at CPH:DOX 2024. She is currently in post-production on her debut fiction film, MAN VS. FLOCK, and is developing a new documentary about the Dolgan mammoth tusk hunters, which will shoot in the northernmost area of the Siberian tundra. In her films, Kotevska aims to create new forms of filmmaking, unforgettable stories, strong characters and perception-shifting messages.

About National Geographic Documentary Films

National Geographic Documentary Films, part of a joint venture between The Walt Disney Company and the National Geographic Society, is committed to bringing the world premium, feature documentaries that cover timely, provocative and globally relevant stories from the very best documentary filmmakers. Its award-winning and critically acclaimed films reach 300 million people worldwide in 180 countries and 33 languages across the global National Geographic channels and direct-to-consumer platforms Disney+ and Hulu. Recent films include Oscar-nominated "Sugarcane," Oscar-nominated "Bobi Wine: The People's President," Oscar- and BAFTA-nominated "Fire of Love," three-time Emmy® Award winner "The First Wave," Emmy Award winner "Endurance," two-time Sundance Award winner "The Territory," BAFTA nominees "The Rescue" and "Becoming Cousteau," and Oscar and BAFTA winner "Free Solo," as well as this year's "Sally," "Lost in the Jungle," and "Love+War." For more information, visit films.nationalgeographic.com or find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

About Concordia Studio

Concordia Studio is a talent-first studio founded in 2020 by Oscar®-winning director Davis Guggenheim (INCONVENIENT TRUTH, WAITING FOR SUPERMAN) in partnership with Laurene Powell Jobs and Emerson Collective. Concordia produced 2025's acclaimed Sundance

documentary film DEAF PRESIDENT NOW! co-directed by Nyle DiMarco and Davis Guggenheim. The film was released on AppleTV+ in May, and was nominated for two Emmy® awards – “Outstanding Documentary” and “Outstanding Directing.” Concordia also produced 2023’s Sundance documentary film STILL: A MICHAEL J. FOX MOVIE, Guggenheim’s feature film about the life of beloved actor and advocate Michael J. Fox. The film garnered four Emmy® awards including “Outstanding Documentary,” and swept the 2023 Critics’ Choice Documentary Awards with five wins. Additional 2023 Concordia releases include Netflix’s WORKING: WHAT WE DO ALL DAY, a documentary series narrated by President Barack Obama that explores the ways we find meaning in work and how struggles connect us on a human level; HBO’s NAVAJO POLICE: CLASS 57, a documentary series chronicling a group of recruits that enter the Navajo Police Training Academy; and Apple TV+’s THE ENFIELD POLTERGEIST, a nonfiction genre horror series profiling Poltergeist of 1977 that inspired popular horror movies. Recently, Concordia produced GIRLS STATE, a follow up film to widely celebrated Emmy® award-winning documentary BOYS STATE, which had its world premiere at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival and debuted on Apple TV+; GIRLS STATE garnered three Emmy® awards.

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