For us at the Onassis Foundation, Culture is more than the arts, and Education is more than academic degrees, in the same way that the City is more than just a town. After all, in Greek as well as in Latin the word civilization is derived from the word for city—civitas in Latin, and πόλις/πολιτισμός in Greek. Essentially, we regard both Culture and Education as core vehicles for social solidarity, paths for demonstrating that values such as democracy, human rights and social equality should not be taken for granted.

The Birds by Aristophanes is about building a utopian community that gives humankind the form of a free bird. Utopias are not real. They express the dream for an ideal city and society. We will never reach them, but it is our duty as citizens—and, for us, as leaders of a Public Benefit Foundation—to pursue them. We cannot change the world, but we must do whatever it takes to make it better, inspiring others to do the same.

When the Onassis Cultural Centre Athens (Stegi), staged The Birds at the Ancient Theater of Epidaurus (and later in Athens), a totally new approach was sought. Consequently, the selection of Nikos Karathanos seemed like a natural choice. The performances were enthusiastically received by the public and critics alike, and were all completely sold out.

Today, the Onassis Foundation is delighted to present The Birds in New York at St. Ann’s Warehouse.

Aristophanes is considered to be the foremost exponent of the classical Athenian comedy. All his comedies are distinguished by a narrative superstructure that covers, thinly, a serious undercurrent. Aristophanes was conservative but profoundly democratic. He loved his city and its institutions deeply, but his love did not preclude him from seeing its flaws and the issues arising from how the democratic Athenian ideals were actually implemented. In The Birds satire, hyperbole, foul language and cynical criticism combine to showcase the tension between “what is” and “what should be.” Other possible, but equally valid interpretations of the play will depend on the personal, philosophical and even theological questions facing any modern Athenian: love, faith, the essence of humanity are dissected and exposed in a moving, comic and deeply thoughtful way.

Karathanos presents his equally valid personal interpretation. Love and the essence of humanity are dissected and exposed in a moving, comic and deeply thoughtful way.

Alongside the play itself we are staging a series of events comprising Birds: A Festival Inspired by Aristophanes. The Onassis Foundation this season invites the New York audience to explore themes ranging from political satire to democracy to social and political awareness, through art, talks, concerts, film programs and children activities, and to revel in what we hope represents the long endurance of the Greek thespian tradition.

Birds: A Festival Inspired by Aristophanes would have not been possible without the fruitful collaboration, first and foremost, of St. Ann’s Warehouse. We wish to thank Ms. Susan Feldman and her team for making this journey of The Birds to New York possible. We know they took a risk but feel confident it was worth it. We also wish to thank the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum, Metrograph, the New-York Historical Society, The New York Public Library, and Stella Adler Studio of Acting, who have all enhanced this festival by partnering with the Onassis Foundation to create unique programs, and by generously sharing their talents and venues.

A warm thank-you to the festival’s curators and to the Greek and American artists who contributed their original works to the visual art installation at St. Ann’s Warehouse.

Moreover, I wish to thank the teams of the Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens as well as New York, in particular Karen Brooks Hopkins and Afrodití Panagiotaou, Violaine Huisman and Amalia Cosmetatou, for their enthusiasm and dedication in organizing a festival that, by taking into account the values and issues at the core of a Classical Greek play, reminds us of the relevance of our common humanistic heritage to our society and times.

Finally, it is worth noting that The Birds is not the first Onassis Cultural Centre Athens production that transcends the Greek borders and spreads its wings into the global cultural scene. More than 40 Greek productions so far have succeeded in winning over the global audience and in presenting the fresh, new wave of Greek theater, dance and music to the world.

This becomes a solid demonstration of how the Onassis Foundation’s vision, which is about portraying Greece at its best, is consistently and systematically brought to life.

Dr. Anthony S. Papadimitriou
President, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation
Aristophanes' The Birds gave the word “Cloudcuckooland” to the English language, denoting the cerebral space inhabited by unrealistic dreamers. It is a translation of the Greek name Nephelokokkygia, the city-state built by the titular birds of the ancient comedy. This theatrical genre was officially born in 486 BC, by being integrated, for the first time, into the program of the drama competitions of the Classical Athenian state. In an outdoor theater in the sanctuary of the wine-god Dionysus on the southern slope of the Acropolis, a musical chorus of masked men dressed in obscene costumes accompanied knockabout actors who cracked jokes and shouted versified abuse at an audience of tipsy citizens. Comedy was introduced after the Athenian democratic revolution of 507 BC, and it insulted rulers and well-known citizens. Only eleven Athenian democratic comedies survive, all by one dramatist, Aristophanes. Their premieres ran from 425 to 388 BC.

The Birds was first performed in the spring of 414 BC. It is Aristophanes' longest surviving work, and often regarded as his best. Its most attractive feature is its imitations of birdsong: the hoopoe's *epo popo popo popo*, and the recurring *kikkabau kikkabau* and *tio tio tiotinx*. Although other Aristophanic comedies, such as The Wasps, have animal choruses, only The Birds sustains the animal identities throughout; consequently, few scholars have been able to resist suggesting that Aristophanes' hobby was bird watching. The simple story tells how Peisetairos (Friend-Persuader) and his sidekick Euelpides (Optimist) abandon Athens, tired of its endless lawsuits. They arrive at the home of Tereus the hoopoe. After initial hostilities, the bird-chorus implements Peisetairos's suggestion that they build an aerial city, become a superpower, and wrest cosmic supremacy from the Olympian gods. Peisetairos sees off a succession of visitors, both Athenian and Olympian; finally he marries a divine personification of Sovereignty, thus replacing Zeus as supreme ruler of the universe.

Yet The Birds is notoriously difficult to interpret. The bird theme was attractive to a comic poet on account of the association in ancient Greece between birds and their names with Eros, courtship and the phallus, and some argue that it is a purely apolitical fantasy. Others have seen the plan to subjugate Olympus as an Aristophanic protest against the pie-in-the-sky imperialism of his compatriots, who had recently dispatched the Athenian fleet in an ambitious bid for control of Sicily. Others see The Birds as a critique of the Athenians' susceptibility to manipulative politicians who secretly harbored autocratic ambitions. On the other hand, the birds share features with the Athenian empire's subject states: they are cynically ruled by an Athenian outsider, and harassed by Athenian bureaucrats and informers.

Staged adaptations of The Birds go back to the 18th century, when Goethe starred in his own version at the Weimar Court, satirizing the gullibility of the reading public. In Britain, the famous burlesque writer James Planché used The Birds in 1846 at the Haymarket Theatre to attack parliamentary reform and the dangers of the railway train. In the summer of 1959, the world-famous Greek Art Theatre, directed by Karolos Koun, premiered their topical production of Aristophanes' The Birds. Branded anticlerical, anti-American and dangerously left leaning, the production was closed down by the government of Constantine Karamanlis and sparked a far-reaching controversy that was to reverberate throughout Europe and North America during the ensuing two decades of unrest in Greece. In the 1960s, several more-lighthearted productions revealed that the Athenians' disillusioned plan to “drop out” and “get back to nature” was an ancient counterpart of the Californian hippie movement. But in late 20th-century South Africa, The Birds (originally part of the curriculum introduced by the colonial master classes, both British and Dutch) was used to address the terrible problem of apartheid. In an Afrikaans adaptation by André P. Brink, staged by the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal's Youth Theatre in 1971, the birds created a new flag for the new kingdom out of yellow, green and black feathers, the colors of the African National Congress, at that time a banned organization. It is hardly surprising that, having been shown capable of serving such a variety of agendas, Aristophanic theater is alive and well in the 21st century, thoroughly refuting the gloomy Daily Chronicle reviewer of a performance of The Birds at Cambridge University as long ago as 1890, that “Greek plays are a fashion unlikely to last.”

Edith Hall is Professor in the Classics Department and Centre for Hellenic Studies at King's College London.
THE BIRDS
By Aristophanes

ST. ANN’S WAREHOUSE &
ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTRE–ATHENS
PRESENT

THE BIRDS
BY ARISTOPHANES

Directed by Nikos Karathanos
Adapted by Nikos Karathanos and Giannis Asteris

12 Performances Only
American Premiere

MAY 2 – 13, 2018

Brooklyn Bridge Park, 45 Water St., Dumbo, Brooklyn
stannswarehouse.org
718-254-8779 | 866-811-4111

Following its sold-out World Premiere at the Ancient Theater of Epidaurus and in Athens, Greece, this vibrant restaging of Aristophanes’ ancient classic brings two Athenians to the country of the birds. Fed up with their city and the gods who rule over it, the mortals ask the birds to build them a new utopia that “embraces our inherent need to dream and offers hope for decadence.”
—Artforum

Performed in Greek with English supertitles
Runtime: Approx. 120 minutes with no intermission

The Birds at St. Ann’s Warehouse is co-produced by the Onassis Cultural Centre–Athens. Supported by the Onassis Foundation

Part of “Birds: A Festival Inspired by Aristophanes” presented by Onassis Cultural Center New York onassisusa.org
What is it that you want?
A Note from the Director
By Nikos Karathanos

HOOPOE
Well then... where would you really like to live?
What is it that you want? —
What d’ya want, eh?

CONVINCER (Peisetairos)
I want...
I want to live in a place where my best buddy will come to my door, first thing in the morning,
and say to me: “Come by the house tomorrow, you and your wife and kids,” I want... I want him to come and say,
“You’ll be all scrubbed clean and happy ’cause I’ve invited people over, my son’s getting engaged, and I’ve invited people over, and I want you to be there by my side, don’t you dare not be there, or else...”

I want him to say to me,
“...or else, don’t come round to see me when I’m desperately sad.” —
D’you get it? That’s what I want!

HOOPOE
Oh, dear me, it’s trouble you’re asking for....”

(Aristophanes, The Birds. Translated into modern Greek by Giannis Asteris, commissioned for this performance, unpublished.)

NIKOS KARATHANOS is a director, actor and writer. Born in Athens, he graduated from the drama school of the National Theatre of Greece. As an actor he has played the lead role in many performances from the classical and contemporary repertory and has taken part in tours in Greece and all over the world. Among other plays, he has directed The Cherry Orchard by Chekhov, for the Onassis Cultural Centre, and Operetka by W. Gombrowicz, Decameron by Boccaccio, Golfo by Spyridon Peresiadis, Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand, and Julius Caesar by Shakespeare, for the National Theatre of Greece.

In 1910, my great-grandfather left Greece for Spokane, Washington, to work on the railways. He had, deep inside him, this enormous Promethean vital force to want to change his life and to build the world afresh, from the bottom up: “To make it new,” as Ezra Pound would later say.

Twenty-five-hundred years before that, two Aristophanic heroes, bloated, tired, exasperated with life, left Athens and the world of men, and took a “high turn” toward the world of birds. They founded a city in the clouds. People emigrated there, the gods themselves emigrated there, and it thus came to be their very own (the original!) “Cloudcuckooland,” where humans, gods, beasts and birds lived together—with their heads, literally, “in the clouds.”

My great-grandfather traveled 6,500 miles across land and sea. Aristophanes’ heroes traveled skyward, instead.

In all these years that have gone by, people have never ceased leaving, running, going places.

As a theatrical troupe, we are no different; we have treated this play not as plot but as action, as a weird and outrageous experience, as a silent movie desperately trying to become a “talkie.” It is the experience of people always “on the run.” It is the experience of people always migrating. We come to you from the same city as the heroes of Aristophanes; we, like them, are also tired and exasperated with life there. We, like them, are migrants, always in search of our very own, and perhaps collective, “cloudcuckooland.”

I mean, really: Why do we insist so much on living?

What is that force
That makes migrants of us
What is that law
That dominates us
And pushes us to live
Despite all the pain
All the fear
All the tears
And kicks the breath into us
And makes us live
A little bit more
Each time
A little bit more... and longer

In Greek, eleutheria means freedom; but the root of the word is probably the verb eleutho, which means “to arrive.” So “freedom” means to be able to go places, it means “to be free to roam.” We, like Aristophanes’ citizens and birds, are a migratory species.

So as a troupe we want to speak to you for all the people who roam, for all those who do not “fit in,” who can’t “lean and loafe at their ease,” singing themselves like your Walt Whitman.

We want to speak to you of the people who stand on one leg all the time, who feel foreign and alien in the very midst of their own city, who fear their difference. We want to speak for those who’ve been forced, through pain and ill treatment, to live on borders and who grow wings, every day that passes grow wings so that they can cross the borders and jump the wall, however “beautiful” that wall may be.

We speak to you of all those people, everyday people, who live and walk among us, not like people but like heroes in disguise.

Real democracy is an equality of the heart—the reconciliation with and acceptance of what we are:

Love bore us—
Life is an act of love—
So...

Let’s all start getting along.
The Birds in Historical Context

By Young Richard Kim

When Aristophanes produced The Birds in 414 BC, the Athenian Empire was in the midst of a prolonged internecine conflict, the Peloponnesian War, fought from 431 until 404 against Sparta and its allies. In 415 the Athenians undertook a massive invasion of Sicily, whose resources and strategic location were tantalizing prospects. The expedition, however, was a complete disaster. The Birds was performed before the final result was known in Athens.

Aristophanes was never shy about lampooning his contemporaries by name and addressing the most pressing issues of his day. While it is common practice to brand him merely as a “conservative,” one might argue that Aristophanes exhibited in his plays perspectives reflecting the elite segment of Athenian society. Were they his own? Or was he giving voice to views favored by the wealthy patrons of the dramatic arts? The very nature of comedy renders its hermeneutic open-ended.

Thus The Birds also has been the subject of scholarly debate. There are no overt references to the Peloponnesian War and its historical dramatis personae, but at the same time, scholars have tried to read into the various characters real figures such as Alcibiades and events including the Sicilian Expedition. Thematically, one might also see in The Birds critiques of democracy, demagoguery, bureaucracy and corruption, among other things. Then again, perhaps we ought also to ask if the play needs to be understood at all as some form of political allegory. Another perspective simply suggests that The Birds was meant to be entertaining escapism, pure and simple.

Whatever the case may be, Aristophanes’ masterwork lends itself to creative, even radical, reinterpretation. Nikos Karathanos’ vision is both true to Aristophanes’ original and adapted to reflect on, critique and play with contemporary issues and concerns. The production co-presented by St. Ann’s Warehouse is the foundation upon which a festival of events at various venues will explore, complicate and celebrate The Birds.

Young Richard Kim
Academic Consultant, Birds: A Festival Inspired by Aristophanes
Director of Educational Programs/Assistant Executive Director,
Onassis Foundation USA

Visit onassisusa.org for a very special animation on Aristophanes and The Birds by Beetroot!
Democracy was under threat when Aristophanes presented his comedy \textit{The Birds} as part of the Dionysia festival in Athens in the 5th century BC. Oligarchy was jeopardizing Athenian democracy, while war and constant legal battles raised havoc among citizens. The festival itself offered a chance for the people of Athens to congregate and revel in equal parts, to address state affairs and be entertained—all together.

In English, one might call it a party: a word that means both a social gathering and the system of taking sides on public or political questions. The word comes from the Latin \textit{partire}, which has given us “part” and “participation.”

\textit{The Birds}, in the original version by Aristophanes, is a play about two individuals tired of the corruption of Athenian politics, seeking a better place for collective living. As they create a new settlement among the birds in Cloudcuckooland, they set out to establish an ideal community blessed with equality, temperance and fairness. But instead they found a new form of empire, full of struggle, restless desire and colonial pursuit.

In the contemporary adaptation of \textit{The Birds} by Nikos Karathanos, we see two men in exile hoping to find a city where, the main protagonist says, “my woman caresses me and the sunlight enters aslant…. No! Where people look you in the eye… or maybe, where one can hope for love, generosity, community. While the birds have their doubts when the Athenians arrive—men have hunted them down for centuries—they are slowly won over. “We are all the children of Eros,” one says, all born from a bird, all able to grow wings and believe in the impossible. In Karathanos’ play, the beauty of storytelling, song, poetry, dance and radical inclusion can help create a place where all creatures, including humans, birds and gods, can live and thrive together.

Within and beyond the plot and meaning of the plays—the original and its contemporary adaptation—the “birds” are a literary trope with deep resonance. Birds, Karathanos asserts, preceded even gods; birds, starting with Homer, are metaphorically associated with the poet’s song, a creative language of divine reach allowing an extraordinary sense of communion; in the English language, there are more collective nouns for different types of birds than for any other animal species. Birds are singular in their representation of the collective, an apt metaphor for community and flight—birds are known to flock together. Birds can also stand in for a certain democratic ideal.

Yet cages surround birds in their representation. They are also creatures visually and virtually associated with imprisonment. Mass incarceration—a complex and immensely relevant political question in the United States today—disproportionately deprives some groups of their freedom and exiles them from the democratic process.

Democracy is meant to subsume individual motives to the collective good. And democracy requires participation, as does theater. A belief in good faith, and a vision for all people to unite freely, happily, pulses through Karathanos’ reinterpretation of the original \textit{Birds}.

It is a play to reclaim life together in our fraught and divisive political context.

To live together with nature; to live together as neighbors and friends and allies; to live together and party and protest together is what I hope this festival to be about.

Here, in this program guide, are manifestations of this thematic exploration, with a wide array of partners representing some of the best cultural institutions across New York City.

Violaine Huisman is a writer, translator and curator.
How can I study from below, that which is above?
— Aristophanes, *Clouds*, translated by the London Athenian Society

Birds are used metaphorically in Aristophanes’ play to explore, among other notions, flight, freedom and victory; the playwright also references the prosody of bird song through onomatopoetic language. Aristophanes the ornithologist closely links birds to themes and concepts in his play.

Through concerts, family programs and scientific and philosophical bird walks, the programs presented at the American Museum of Natural History highlight the importance of the creatures that inspired The Birds.

**EARTHFEST**
Get in the American Museum of Natural History’s “Bird Zone”!

Sun, April 22
Free with Museum Admission.
For more information please visit amnh.org.

A magnificent, daylong celebration for all ages, reveling in the splendor of birds with concerts, philosophical bird walks, arts and crafts and children’s literature.

**GOOD EGGS: DROP-IN FAMILY PROGRAMS**

10 AM to 5:45 PM
Warburg Hall of New York State Environment | Hall of North American Forests
Join us for an exciting day of family-friendly games, stories and crafts inspired by birds. Nest in our special reading nook with your child, and enjoy our special drop-in programs such as origami, crafts and find-the-bird scavenger hunts.
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>EARTHFEST</td>
<td>9 AM−8 PM</td>
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<td>Taka Kigawa concert of Messiaen’s Catalogue of Birds–Books 1 &amp; 7, followed by Simon Critchley and Paul Sweet’s discussion onstage</td>
<td>6:30 PM</td>
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<td>Wed, Apr 25</td>
<td>Aristophanes &amp; Political Satire Panel Discussion</td>
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<td>with Jennifer Y. Chi, Françoise Mouly, Bruce Norris, Denis O’Hare and more</td>
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<td><strong>MAY</strong></td>
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<td>LIVE from the NYPL with Rachel Kushner and Paul Schrader: Prison Complex</td>
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<td><strong>Wed, May 2</strong></td>
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<td>Nature of Justice: On “The Birds” Art Installation Opens</td>
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<td><strong>Fri, May 4</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sat, May 5</strong></td>
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<td>Bird Walk at Brooklyn Bridge Park with Paul Sweet of the AMNH</td>
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<td>Bird Walk (Ages 6–12 and their adults)</td>
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<td>Bird Walk (Ages 13 and older)</td>
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<td>Bird Walk (Ages 13 and older)</td>
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<td><strong>Sun, May 6</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mon, May 7</strong></td>
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<td>Nature of Justice: A Visual Arts Response to The Birds Visual Artists’ Talk</td>
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<td>Voices On: Post-Show Artist Talk</td>
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<td>Meet the Fledglings</td>
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<td>RAIN DATE: Bird Walks at Brooklyn Bridge Park</td>
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<td>Nature of Justice: On “The Birds” Art Installation Closes</td>
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<td><strong>Fri, May 18− Sun, May 20</strong></td>
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<td>Film Screening: The Birds by Alfred Hitchcock</td>
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<td>Film Screening: Ghost Dog by Jim Jarmusch</td>
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<td>Q&amp;A Session after screening (for ticket holders)</td>
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<td>Film Screening: The King and the Mockingbird</td>
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<td>by Paul Grimault</td>
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<td>Film Screening: Brewster McCloud</td>
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<td>by Robert Altman</td>
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<td>Opening Lecture by David Levine on Some of the People, All of the Time</td>
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Big Birds: Adult Programs

OLIVIER MESSIAEN’S “CATALOGUE OF BIRDS”
Hall of North American Forests, 9 AM—5:15 PM
Listen to live excerpts of composer Oliver Messiaen’s iconic piece, in which the songs of 77 distinct birds unfold in a series of 13 movements, totaling nearly three hours of solo piano music. The Hall of North American Forests will host a series of mini piano concerts throughout the day of April 22, for an aural journey that highlights the connections between birdsong and music. Pianists include Jade Conlee, Mikael Darmanie, Elizabeth Dorman, David Friend, Taka Kigawa, Adam Tendler, Xintong Zang.

LET’S WALK: “THE BIRDS” EDITION
Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall, 1 PM and 5 PM | Reservations Encouraged
Simon Critchley will take our signature peripatetic philosophical series to the American Museum of Natural History, where he will be joined by Paul Sweet, Collections Manager, Division of Vertebrate Zoology—Ornithology, for an ornithological walk.

“CATALOGUE OF BIRDS” CONCERT
Hall of North American Forests, 6:30 PM | Reservations Encouraged
Renowned solo pianist Taka Kigawa performs books 1 and 7 of Olivier Messiaen’s “Catalogue of Birds,” a reimagination of the songs of 77 French bird species in 13 movements. A lover of nature, Messiaen gathered birdsongs in his travels and incorporated them in this massive oeuvre, so that birds flit in and out of the textures of his music.
As the American Museum of Natural History closes at 5:45 PM, attendees should use the after-hours entrance at the Central Park West security desk (under the main entrance).

TO PHILOSOPHIZE IS TO LEARN HOW TO FLY: PHILOSOPHICAL BIRDS TALK WITH SIMON CRITCHLEY AND PAUL SWEET
Hall of North American Forests, 7:30 PM
This talk immediately follows the concert. To attend, register for the “Catalogue of Birds” Concert.
Paul Sweet, Collections Manager, Division of Vertebrate Zoology—Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History, which holds the largest bird collection in the world, and philosopher Simon Critchley will engage in colorful conversation, inspired by the many winged creatures in some of the museum’s most popular galleries.
As the American Museum of Natural History closes at 5:45 PM, attendees should use the after-hours entrance at the Central Park West security desk (under the main entrance).
LIVE FROM THE NYPL
WITH RACHEL KUSHNER
AND PAUL SCHRADER:
PRISON COMPLEX

Tues, May 1, 7 PM
The New York Public Library
476 Fifth Ave, New York, Entrance on 42nd Street
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
For tickets please visit http://on.nypl.org/prisoncomplex

Democracy implies the participation of the people in a fair political process, a theme highly relevant in Aristophanes’ The Birds. Questions such as what wrongdoing is punished, whose corruption is liable to expulsion, who rules and why, were central to the play, and feel prescient in the context of mass incarceration in the contemporary United States.

These deep political and philosophical queries in Aristophanes will be highlighted in a conversation with bestselling author Rachel Kushner on her most recent novel, The Mars Room, which is set in a women’s correctional facility deep within California’s central valley. Romy Hall is at the start of two consecutive life sentences and severed from the San Francisco of her youth and her young son, Jackson. Inside is a new reality: thousands of women hustling for the bare essentials needed to survive; the bluffing and pageantry and casual acts of violence by guards and prisoners alike; and the deadpan absurdities of institutional living, which Kushner evokes with great humor and precision. Kushner will speak with screenwriter and director Paul Schrader.

LIVE from the NYPL with Rachel Kushner and Paul Schrader is presented in partnership with The New York Public Library.

THE BIRDS IN PRISON

Rikers Island Correctional Facility
Mon, May 7
Not open to the public

In Aristophanes’ The Birds, when the goddess Iris infiltrates Cloudcuckooland, she is confronted by Peisetairos and accused of breaking the law: “In fact, you’re breaking the law right now. Do you realize that if you get what’s coming to you, you’d deserve more than all other Irises to be captured and put to death?” (The Birds 1221–23, trans. Jeffrey Henderson). As the new “rulers” of the sky, Peisetairos and the birds have upended the established hierarchy, demanding obedience of the soon-to-be subjugated gods and threatening them with capture and punishment. The apparent injustice feels prescient in the context of mass incarceration in the contemporary United States.

Through a highly productive relationship with the New York City Department of Correction, Stella Adler Studio of Acting’s Outreach Division has served over 600 people and multiple detained populations since 2014. Through this partnership with the Onassis Cultural Center New York, the cast of The Birds will visit inmates to perform songs from the play and discuss its themes. To inspire their own work, participants will have read selections of The Birds, which explores what happens when people are estranged from the democratic process.

There is no beast, no rush of fire, like woman so untamed. She calmly goes her way where even panthers would be shamed.

—Aristophanes, Lysistrata, translated by Sarah Ruden
**Bird Is The Word: Talks**

**NATURE OF JUSTICE: A VISUAL ARTS RESPONSE TO THE BIRDS**

Mon, May 7, 7 PM
FREE. Reservations required. For reservations visit onassisusa.org.

Curated by Mari Spirito
Andreas Angelidakis, Artist, Athens
Reem Fadda, Independent Curator, Ramallah
Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum
Moderated by Afroditi Panagiotakou, Director of Culture, Onassis Foundation

In this meeting of the minds from Greece, the Middle East, and the United States, Angelidakis, Fadda and Pasternak come together to discuss their work in relationship to themes explored in Nature of Justice, the visual art exhibition accompanying The Birds. They will touch upon issues such as corruption and the failure of democracy, which weighed as heavily on Athenian citizens in the 5th century BC as they do on all of us today. Is it natural for people to be corrupt and brutal? Is justice for all an achievable ideal? Given the comedic and corporeal aspects of the play, a lively conversation will unfold, followed by a Q&A with the audience.

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*I shall not please, but I shall say what is true.*
A Note from Mari Spirito, 
Associate Curator of Visual Arts

“Nature of Justice: On The Birds” is a contemporary art exhibition commissioned by the Onassis Cultural Center New York and accompanying Nikos Karathanos’ production of The Birds at St. Ann’s Warehouse. Machine Dazzle, Louise Lawler, Sofia Stevi and Theo Triantafyllidis present works that share the themes of the play, such as the failure of democracy, corruption and the nature of beauty. Installed in the garden and lobby of the theater, these artists bring their own, clear, singular voices, from Greece and the United States, offering alternative dimensions to the performance of The Birds, and broadening the public and cultural dialogue initiated by the production.

Louise Lawler’s Birdcalls (1972–81) is an audio work of squawking and crying out the names of the prominent white male artists of the 1970s in New York City, such as Vito Acconci, Francesco Clemente and Julian Schnabel, in the manner of bird-calls. Birdcalls draws attention to the gender imbalance that was, and still is, rampant and unjust. This work not only brings to mind images of birds—the protagonists of Aristophanes’ The Birds—it also conjures the inequities of their, and our, ongoing struggles. Similarly, a projected live-simulation video by Theo Triantafyllidis, Prometheus (2017) expands on the absurdity of human behavior. Triantafyllidis’ digital representation of the never-ending cycle of greed and self-serving conduct is played out by a pigeon in aggressive pursuit of a pretzel. Triantafyllidis is an emerging Greek artist who is intimately acquainted with The Birds as well as contemporary conditions in Athens and elsewhere. This work is based on the computer’s archiving algorithm and gives a “physical presence to digital information.” The artist’s live simulations are endlessly variable through a continually changing, augmented space.

Sofia Stevi’s newly commissioned painting Anti-gravity fellas (2018) hangs in the lobby, resembling a protest banner with indecipherable calligraphic text, as well as abstracted figures. On this large–scale, four-by-four-meter painting, Stevi, a Greek artist, presents her own take on Aristophanes’ The Birds, and combines it with her recent experiences at home in recent years. Her work explores the dissonance between the inherent needs for governance and independence in human nature. Is it natural for people to be corrupt and brutal? What can be considered as “harmonious” in nature? The second suspended artwork in the theater’s lobby is Migration, a sculpture by Machine Dazzle, whose work here is inspired by the reverie of Aristophanes’ The Birds, as well as the framework of this festival, which revolves around the definition of “party,” a word that describes a social gathering but is also representative of a divisive system of political nature.

In Nikos Karathanos’ contemporary adaptation of The Birds, humans play birds, which in turn are stand–ins for humans behaving like animals. The works in Nature of Justice: On “The Birds” offer abstract interpretations, which may be the most accurate representation of the nature of humanity.

Mari Spirito is Founding Director and Curator of Protocinema, realizing site–aware exhibitions in the world, since 2011.
May 18 – 20

Aristophanes’ 2,500-year-old comic political fantasy *The Birds* has been freshly imagined and staged by Nikos Karathanos, whose production arrives in New York following a raved-about run at the Ancient Theater of Epidaurus and at the Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens—the city whose ancient social life it so piquantly satirizes. In connection with this event, Metrograph presents a small program of films that will turn the cinema into a veritable birdhouse.

For screening times and tickets please visit metrograph.com.

**THE BIRDS**

It’s business as usual in the coastal town of Bodega Bay, when one day our fine feathered friends up and go on the offense. One of Hitchcock’s supreme master-builder achievements plays on our fear of nature’s capricious cruelty, with San Francisco transplants Tippi Hedren and Rod Taylor thrown together to try to survive the avian onslaught. Boasts some of Hitch’s most perfect set pieces, mixing location shoots and extraordinary back-lot artifice.

**GHOST DOG: THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI**

Forest Whitaker’s Ghost Dog isn’t your average Mafia hitman. He’s a devoted bibliophile, follows the samurai code as laid out in Yamamoto Tsunetomo’s *Hagakure*, and relaxes by tending to his pigeon coop. Borrowing from Jean-Pierre Melville and spaghetti westerns, this offbeat piece of pulp art is finally pure Jarmusch, with a stirring score by RZA and a rich supporting role for Isaach De Bankolé as our hero’s Francophone “best friend”—whom he can’t understand at all.

**BREWSTER MCCLOUD**

Reimagining the myth of Icarus, Altman risked imitating it—that is, letting his outsize imagination brush too close to the sun. The resulting comic fantasy, *Brewster McCloud*, the study of a boy (Bud Cort) living in the Houston Astrodome who aspires to fly away on a pair of self-constructed bird wings, has been embraced as an authentic ’70s one-off in recent years. With Shelley Duvall, Michael Murphy and *M*A*S*H*’s Sally Kellerman as a kind of Fairy Godmother.

**THE KING AND THE MOCKINGBIRD (RATED PG)**

This egg took a while to hatch: imagined as France’s first animated feature at the end of the 1940s by Grimault and writer Jacques Prévert, *The King and the Mockingbird* finally came into the world in 1980. Based on the Hans Christian Andersen tale of a cross-eyed king enamored of a painting of a shepherdess who only has eyes for a neighboring painting, the finished film is a brimming banquet of inventive animation admired and adored by the great Hayao Miyazaki, among many others.

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**MEET THE FLEDGLINGS**

Sat, May 12, 2 PM, Ages 5+
Reservations Encouraged
For more information, visit nyhistory.org

Onassis Cultural Center New York is partnering with the New-York Historical Society’s DiMenna Children’s History Museum for the 6th annual Meet the Fledglings program, co-produced with the Wild Bird Fund in honor of the special exhibition *Feathers: Fashion and the Fight for Wildlife* opening in April 2018. The Wild Bird Fund will visit the Museum to teach us all about our neighbors with nests and allow participants to feed the baby birds in their care. Participants will be encouraged to explore the exhibition in the Luman Reed Galleries on the Museum’s second floor.

Attendance at the program is recommended for ages 5 and up, and requires Museum Admission plus $5 per child. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Words give wings to the mind and make a man soar to heaven.**

Usurpation, extrapolation, exaggeration, flattery—duplicitous tactics deployed in order to gain power—are central to Aristophanes’ The Birds: men pretend to pass as birds, and birds pretend to pass as gods. Peisetairos, the protagonist, rises to power not only by making a travesty of consensus, but also by making others pass for what they are not.

Deception and manipulation are also at the core of David Levine’s new project, Some of the People, All of the Time, which explores what it means for a democracy to manufacture consent or discord. Some of the People, All of the Time, draws on the human instinct to join together—to gather, to watch, to share, to participate, to socialize, even to protest. But what if a member of such a gathering is not there for hope or with sincerity, but is there as someone’s agent, surrogate or cat’s-paw? With alarming frequency, digital and physical fake crowds are being used to influence and discredit the will of the people. For thousands of years a basic political end game has been to avoid tyranny—allegorized beautifully in Aristophanes’ The Birds—yet we continue to bear witness to repeated attacks on democracy.

Addressing issues of human identity, agency and labor through the figure of the actor, David Levine’s project deploys our suspicion of the actor—a professional who is paid to feel—to examine the political and emotional underpinnings of our present moment. The centerpiece of Some of the People, All of the Time, is a new dramatic text materialized by a rotating cast. Facing a series of “fake persons” drawn from the real world, visitors will wrestle firsthand not only with the crisis of believing what you see, but saying what you mean.

David Levine’s works encompass performance, theater, video and photography. His performance and exhibition works have been presented by Creative Time, MoMA, REDCAT, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Mass MoCA, PS1, PS122, the Watermill Center and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and has been featured in Artforum, Frieze, Theater, TDR, PAJ, The New Yorker and The New York Times.

Please visit brooklynmuseum.org for additional public programs to be confirmed.
Partners

American Museum & Natural History

The American Museum of Natural History is one of the world’s preeminent scientific and cultural institutions. Since its founding in 1869, the Museum has advanced its global mission to discover, interpret and disseminate information about human cultures, the natural world and the universe through a wide-ranging program of scientific research, education and exhibition. The Museum is renowned for its exhibitions and scientific collections, which serve as a field guide to the entire planet and present a panorama of the world’s cultures.

Beetroot

Colors, shapes and sounds fuel our imagination to build brands, have fun and inspire people. Based in Thessaloniki, Greece, Beetroot consists of a team of experts with a wide and diverse set of skills in the creative field. We provide exciting design solutions for a wide international clientele. Our mission is to discover and develop the way a brand, product or service needs to be visually communicated.

Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum presents important art in eye-opening ways, and has long been at the forefront of engagement with underserved and younger audiences, from its widely popular Target First Saturdays program and creative reinstallations of its permanent collection to its pioneering online presence and inventive use of technology in reimagining the visitor experience. A driving force behind the massive growth and energy of the Borough of Brooklyn and of its diverse cultural community, the Brooklyn Museum annually welcomes more than half a million visitors who represent one of New York’s most diverse museum-going audiences.

With roots dating back to 1823, the Brooklyn Museum is one of the oldest and largest museums in the United States, with a collection representing nearly every culture, ranging from some of the most important ancient Egyptian works in the nation; to the arts of the Pacific Islands, Asia, Africa, and the Islamic world; to American and European art; to international contemporary works. The Brooklyn Museum is home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, the only facility of its kind in the country. For more information, visit www.brooklynmuseum.org.

New York Public Library

Engage with the brightest at The New York Public Library’s premier cultural series! LIVE from the NYPL offers conversations with notable writers, artists and leaders, hosted by Paul Holdengräber.

Metrograph

Metrograph projects archive-quality 35mm film and state-of-the-art digital video. From exclusive premieres to rare archival-print screenings, book signings and special dinners and events, Metrograph offers experiences for a wide spectrum of audiences, attracting diverse communities all drawn to the excitement of cinema and the magic of having a place to celebrate it.

New-York Historical Society

Founded in 1804 as New York’s first museum, the New-York Historical Society is dedicated to increasing worldwide understanding of American history through exhibitions, public programs, online outreach and research that reveal the dynamism of history and its influence on the world of today. Our collections provide the foundation for exploration of the nation’s richly layered past and support New-York Historical’s mission to provide a forum for debate and examination of issues surrounding the making and meaning of history.

St. Ann’s Warehouse

St. Ann’s Warehouse plays a vital role in the global cultural landscape as an artistic home for international companies of distinction, American avant-garde masters and talented emerging artists ready to work on a grand scale.

Stella Adler Studio of Acting

Established in 1949, the Stella Adler Studio of Acting was founded upon Stella’s belief in the supreme seriousness of art, both its cultural significance and its power to affect social change. Today the Stella Adler Studio extends the tradition rooted in Stella’s ideals. The Studio uses the power of theater to contribute to positive social transformation, employs craft and art in service to communities, and trains highly skilled actors who understand their role as the voice of the people.
About Us

ONASSIS FOUNDATION USA
An affiliate of the parent Foundation, the Onassis Foundation USA is dedicated to Greek culture from antiquity to the present. By cooperating with educational and cultural institutions in Greece and throughout the Americas, the Onassis Foundation USA promotes cultural relations. The mission is realized through two major initiatives, one cultural, for the general public through its Onassis Cultural Center New York, and the other, academic, for scholars and students in partnership with institutions of higher learning.

ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTER NEW YORK
Founded in 2000, the Onassis Cultural Center New York explores Greek culture, from antiquity to today, through a rich and diverse program of exhibitions, events and online engagement, offering experiences that inspire and support interactions between audiences and artists and thinkers in all cultural fields, from the visual arts, dance, film, literature, music and theater to the humanities.

ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTRE-ATHENS
The Onassis Cultural Centre-Athens is a creative hub for artists, audiences and ideas, and hosts events and actions across the whole spectrum of the arts, from theater, dance, music, cinema and the visual arts to digital and hybrid art and the written word. It showcases contemporary cultural expression, supports Greek artists, cultivates international collaborations, explores the boundaries between science, art and society, and promotes lifelong learning for people of all ages. The Centre is a home for innovation in contemporary culture, engaging both Greek and global communities. www.sgt.gr.

ONASSIS FOUNDATION USA
212.486.4448 | onassisusa.org

ONASSIS CULTURAL CENTER NEW YORK
Olympic Tower, 645 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10022

All information is accurate at the time of publication and subject to change.

Unless otherwise noted, the opinions expressed by the participants of Onassis Cultural Center New York’s events and/or on the onassisusa.org website do not represent the views of the Onassis Foundation USA and its affiliates.

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The Spring 2018 Program of the Onassis Cultural Center New York is dedicated to Fausto Fernandez, who worked as a porter in the Olympic Tower for thirty years before retiring this spring to join his family in the Dominican Republic. Fausto faithfully served the Onassis Foundation USA as though it were his second home, and is the closest thing to a Greek hero we know in real life. We love you, Fausto!