



**BIG SCREEN  
COMPETITION**

INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM  
2023

**INSPIRED BY DINO BUZZATI'S NOVEL 'IL DESERTO DEI TARTARI'**

**JONAS  
SMULDERS**

**GERALDINE  
CHAPLIN**

**JAN  
BIJVOET**

**SAMVEL  
TADEVOSIAN**

# LUKA

**A FILM BY JESSICA WOODWORTH**

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JESSICA WOODWORTH. INSPIRED BY DINO BUZZATI'S 'IL DESERTO DEI TARTARI' WITH JONAS SMULDERS, JAN BIJVOET, SAMVEL TADEVOSSIAN, DJANGO SCHREVEN'S, SAM LOUWYCK AND GERALDINE CHAPLIN. CINEMATOGRAPHY VIRGINIE SURDEJ.  
PRODUCTION DESIGNER SABINA CHRISTOVA. SOUND STEFANO CAMPUS. COSTUMES EKA BICHIMASHVILI. MAKEUP & HAIR MARLY VAN DE WARDT. EDITOR DAVID VERDURME. COMPOSER TEHO TEARDO. SOUND DESIGN & MIX MARC LIZIER. LINE PRODUCERS MAARTEN D'HOLLANDER, FEDERICO SARACENI.  
A BELGIAN-ITALIAN-DUTCH-BULGARIAN COPRODUCTION. PRODUCED BY PETER BROSENS (BO FILMS). COPRODUCED BY MAARTEN D'HOLLANDER, TIM MARTENS (KHATER FILMS), DIANA ELBAUM (BELUGA TREE), FLAMINIO ZADRA, PILAR SAavedra PERROTTA (PALOSANTO FILMS), DENIS VASLIN, FLEUR KNOPPERTS (VOIVA FILMS), MIRA STALEVA, STEFAN KITANOV (ART FEST), ANZHELA FRANGYAN (DOKIMO). WITH THE SUPPORT OF FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND (VAF), GUARANTEE FUND FOR THE INDEPENDENT AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION SECTOR IN FLANDERS, FLANDERS IMAGE, MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA-DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA E AUDIOVISIVO (MCC), BELGIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAX SHELTER, FLANDERS TAX SHELTER, EURIMAGES, NETHERLANDS FILM FUND (OFF) & NETHERLANDS FILM PRODUCTION INCENTIVE, SICILIA FILM COMMISSION, BULGARIAN NATIONAL FILM CENTER (BNFC), CENTRE DU CINEMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FEDERATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES (CCF), CREATIVE EUROPE-MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, VOD & BETV, NATIONAL CINEMA CENTER OF ARMENIA (NCCA), MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA, PROXIMUS, RFF INTERNATIONAL, TORINO FILM LAB (TFL), FIRST CUT LAB BELGIUM, TRIODOS BANK, INTERNATIONAL SALES FILMS BOUTIQUE.



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## **BIG SCREEN COMPETITION**

INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM  
2023

INSPIRED BY THE CLASSIC NOVEL  
**THE TARTAR STEPPE/IL DESERTO DEI TARTARI** by **DINO BUZZATI**

# **LUKA**

**WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY  
JESSICA WOODWORTH**

PRODUCED BY **PETER BROSENS** (Bo Films)

2023 - Belgium/Italy/Netherlands/Bulgaria/Armenia - Sci-fi - 1.85 - 35 mm - 94 min

[www.luka.film](http://www.luka.film)

### **PRESS**

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# LUKA

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY **JESSICA WOODWORTH**  
INSPIRED BY **DINO BUZZATI'S 'IL DESERTO DEI TARTARI'**

WITH **JONAS SMULDERS . GERALDINE CHAPLIN . JAN BIJVOET**  
**SAMVEL TADVOSSIAN . DJANGO SCHREVEVS . SAM LOUWYCK**

CINEMATOGRAPHY **VIRGINIE SURDEJ (BE)**  
PRODUCTION DESIGN **SABINA CHRISTOVA (BG)**  
SOUND **STEFANO CAMPUS (IT)**  
COSTUMES **EKA BICHINASHVILI (BG)**  
MAKEUP & HAIR **MARLY VAN DE WARDT (NL)**  
EDITOR **DAVID VERDURME (BE)**  
COMPOSER **TEHO TEARDO (IT)**  
SOUND DESIGN & MIX **MARC LIZIER (NL)**  
LINE PRODUCERS **MAARTEN D'HOLLANDER (BE) . FEDERICO SARACENI (IT)**

A **BELGIAN-ITALIAN-DUTCH-BULGARIAN** COPRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH **ARMENIA**

PRODUCED BY **PETER BROSENS (BO FILMS, BE)**  
COPRODUCED BY **MAARTEN D'HOLLANDER . TIM MARTENS (KRATER FILMS, BE) DIANA ELBAUM (BELUGA TREE, BE) FLAMINIO ZADRA . PILAR SAAVEDRA PERROTTA (PALOSANTO FILMS, IT) DENIS VASLIN . FLEUR KNOPPETS (VOLYA FILMS, NL) STEFAN KITANOV . MIRA STALEVA (ART FEST, BG) ANZHELA FRANGYAN (DOKINO, AM)**

WITH THE SUPPORT OF **FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND (VAF) . GUARANTEE FUND FOR THE INDEPENDENT AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION SECTOR IN FLANDERS . FLANDERS IMAGE MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA-DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA E AUDIOVISIVO (MIC) BELGIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAX SHELTER . FLANDERS TAX SHELTER . EURIMAGES NETHERLANDS FILM FUND (NFF) & NETHERLANDS FILM PRODUCTION INCENTIVE . SICILIA FILM COMMISSION . BULGARIAN NATIONAL FILM CENTER (BNFC) . CENTRE DU CINÉMA ET DE L'AUDIOVISUEL DE LA FÉDÉRATION WALLONIE-BRUXELLES (CCA) . CREATIVE EUROPE-MEDIAPROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION . VOO & BETV . NATIONAL CINEMA CENTER OF ARMENIA (NCCA) . MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA . PROXIMUS . RFF INTERNATIONAL . TORINO FILM LAB (TFL) . FIRST CUT LAB BELGIUM . TRIODOS BANK INTERNATIONAL SALES FILMS BOUTIQUE**



## ABOUT

Written and directed by Venice Lion winner Jessica Woodworth (BE/US), LUKA is a gripping black-and-white audiovisual tour de force set in stunning Sicilian locations and starring Berlinale 'Shooting Star' Jonas Smulders, as well as Geraldine Chaplin and Jan Bijvoet, and featuring music from Teho Teardo, which tells the compelling story of Luka, a young soldier craving battle, who embeds himself in an isolated fort where men have been waiting in vain for ages for a mythical enemy to strike. Inspired by Dino Buzzati's novel 'Il deserto dei Tartari' ('The Tartar Steppe')

## LOGLINE

Luka, a young soldier craving battle, embeds himself in an isolated fort where men have been waiting in vain for ages for a mythical enemy to strike.



## SYNOPSIS

Luka, a young and ambitious soldier, embeds himself in the legendary Fort Kairos where heroic warriors defend the remains of civilization. His hopes to serve as an elite sniper are crushed when he is assigned to maintenance and must submit to the code of Kairos: obedience-endurance-sacrifice. As he rises through the ranks, Luka finds joy and strength in friendships with Konstantin, an enigmatic radar engineer, and Geronimo, a light-hearted private.

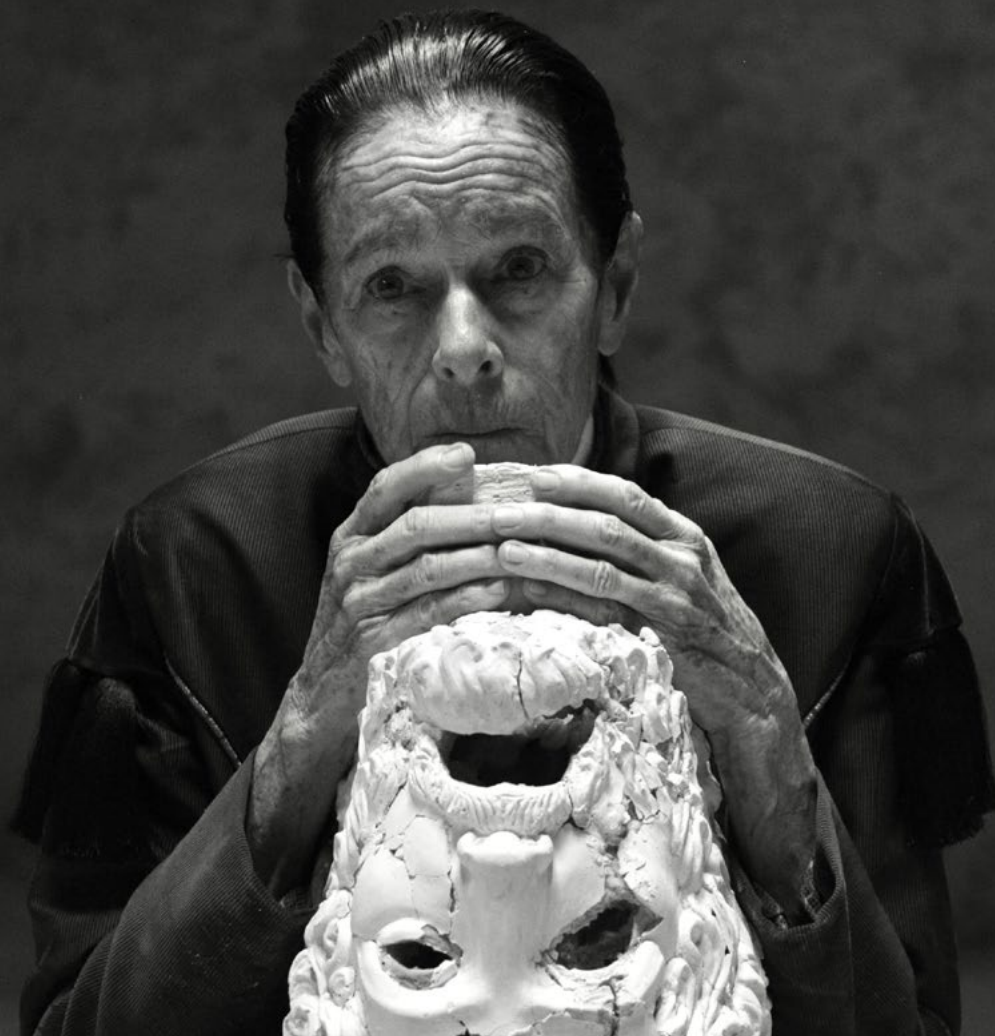




## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

LUKA was inspired by the book *Il deserto dei Tartari* ('The Tartar Steppe'), by Dino Buzzati, a haunting masterpiece that has as many interpretations as readers. LUKA, the film, transposes the premise of the story to a wind-swept, parched earth of the future that reflects our deepening climate emergencies. The evocations of profound solitude, the engaging hero, the sheer absurdity of waiting endlessly for an enemy to appear and the magnitude of the landscapes offered the core ingredients. The protagonists inhabit a run-down military-industrial complex, Fort Kairos, that serves no obvious purpose. Stretching northwards are mountains of ash that harbour their deepest fears and hopes. They are all held hostage by illusions and to the march of time that renders their existence increasingly absurd. Luka's hunger for war slowly subsides as he falls under the mysterious spell of Fort Kairos and into the comfort of newfound friendships with two fellow soldiers, Konstantin and Geronimo. Their bond brings warmth and light into their otherwise bleak world until things take a tragic turn. The entire story is built towards Luka's understated yet fiercely courageous final act of defiance that causes Fort Kairos to fall. A colossal unfinished dam in Sicily and the awe-inspiring slopes of Mount Etna provided the ideal stage for LUKA.

**LUKA**



**LUKA**





**LUKA**





Photo courtesy of Hassan Abdelghani

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

**Jessica Woodworth** is a Belgian-American film director, screenwriter and producer based in Belgium. Her previous fiction feature films are *Khadak*, *Altiplano*, *The Fifth Season*, *King of the Belgians* and *The Barefoot Emperor*, made with Peter Brosens. These films screened in over 350 festivals and won over 70 awards. Jessica grew up between Belgium, Switzerland and the US and has since studied and worked in Italy, France, China, Mongolia and Morocco. She has a degree in literature from Princeton University and a masters in documentary film from Stanford University. She gives workshops for actors and directors, has been on juries worldwide and is a frequent mentor for film students.

## Filmography

- **LUKA** (feature, IFFR 2023)
- **La Flotte** (short, 2023)
- **The Barefoot Emperor** (feature, TIFF 2019)
- **King of the Belgians** (feature, Venice Orizzonti Competition 2016)
- **The Fifth Season** (feature, Venice Official Competition 2012)
- **Altiplano** (feature, Cannes Semaine de la Critique 2009)
- **Khadak** (feature, winner Venice Lion of the Future 2006)
- **The Virgin Diaries** (documentary, IDFA 2002)

## PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

**Peter Brosens** has been a Belgian independent producer, director and screenwriter for almost 30 years. His films have accumulated 400 festival selections and won 75 awards, including top awards for both fiction and non-fiction. Between 1993 and 1999 he produced and co-directed his internationally acclaimed 'Mongolia Trilogy' (*City of the Steppes*, *State of Dogs* & *Poets of Mongolia*). His fiction feature films are *Khadak*, *Altiplano*, *La cinquième saison*, *King of the Belgians* and *The Barefoot Emperor*, made with Jessica Woodworth. Peter's training credits include BS Sciences, Postgraduate Social & Cultural Anthropology, MA Visual Anthropology, EAVE 1995, Masterschool Drehbuch International Script Development Programme, Strategics Film Financing, Strategics Film Marketing & EPI Art of Negotiating. Peter has been invited as a consultant/expert by various organizations, incl. Erich Pommer Institute (EPI), Arts Council of Mongolia, IDFA Forum, EDN and several Belgian film schools. He was a member of several international juries, incl. Odessa (President), Sao Paulo, Zagreb and IDFA. In 2017 he received the prestigious 'Polar Star Award' from the President of Mongolia.

### Filmography

- **LUKA** (producer, feature, IFFR 2023)
- **The Barefoot Emperor** (feature, TIFF 2019)
- **King of the Belgians** (feature, Venice Orizzonti Competition 2016)
- **The Fifth Season** (feature, Venice Official Competition 2012)
- **Altiplano** (feature, Cannes Semaine de la Critique 2009)
- **Khadak** (feature, winner Venice Lion of the Future 2006)
- **The Virgin Diaries** (producer, documentary, IDFA 2002)
- **Poets of Mongolia** (documentary, 1999)
- **State of Dogs** (feature documentary, Grand Prix, Visions du Réel, Nyon 1998)
- **The Death of James Lee Byars** (documentary, 1995)
- **City of the Steppes** (documentary, Prix Joris Ivens, Cinéma du Réel, Paris 1993)



**LUKA**



**Benelux Distributor**

**DE FILMFREAK**

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**Jessica Woodworth & Peter Brosens**

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**FILMS** *Boutique*