

Orion and the Dark is a 2024 American animated fantasy adventure comedy film produced by DreamWorks Animation, animated by Mikros Animation, and distributed by Netflix. It was directed by Sean Charmatz (in his feature directorial debut) and written by Charlie Kaufman, based on the 2014 children's book of the same name by Emma Yarlett. The film stars the voices of Jacob Tremblay, Paul Walter Hauser, Colin Hanks, Mia Akemi Brown, Ike Barinholtz, Nat Faxon, Golda Rosheuvel, Natasia Demetriou, Aparna Nancherla, Carla Gugino, Matt Dellapina, and Angela Bassett. Robert Lydecker and Kevin Lax composed the film's musical score.

Orion and the Dark premiered at the TUDUM Theater in Los Angeles on January 27, 2024, and was released on Netflix on February 2. The film has received positive reviews from critics, with praise for its screenplay, animation, themes and performances.

Plot

In 1995 Philadelphia, Orion is a severely anxious 11-year-old with an extensive list of irrational fears. He journals his fears in his diary and is nervous about being rejected by his school crush, Sally, at an upcoming planetarium field trip. One night, after a sudden blackout, Orion is greeted by Dark, the embodiment of his worst fear, in his bedroom. Tired of Orion's constant complaints about him, Dark offers to take Orion on a trip to help him overcome his fears by showing him the benefits and wonders of nighttime. Along the way, it is revealed that an adult Orion is telling the story to his young daughter, Hypatia, to help with her fears.

During their travels, Dark introduces Orion to his fellow night entities Sleep, Insomnia, Quiet, Unexplained Noises and Sweet Dreams. Dark convinces them to let Orion witness their work, to which they reluctantly agree. As they travel, Dark shows Orion how Quiet removes surrounding sounds, Sleep induces people to slumber, Insomnia induces anxiety and wakes some people up, Unexplained Noises makes various noises outside homes, and Sweet Dreams generates wonderful dreams. Initially, Orion's anxious behavior interferes with the night entities' jobs, but as Orion warms up to and eventually befriends Dark, he helps the

Orion and the Dark



Release poster

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| Directed by | Sean Charmatz |
| Written by | <u>Charlie Kaufman</u> |
| Based on | <i>Orion and the Dark</i> by Emma Yarlett |
| Produced by | Peter McCown |
| Starring | <u>Jacob Tremblay</u> <u>Paul Walter Hauser</u> <u>Colin Hanks</u> <u>Mia Akemi Brown</u> <u>Ike Barinholtz</u> <u>Nat Faxon</u> <u>Golda Rosheuvel</u> <u>Natasia Demetriou</u> <u>Aparna Nancherla</u> <u>Carla Gugino</u> <u>Matt Dellapina</u> <u>Angela Bassett</u> |

night entities in their tasks. Additionally, Orion briefly encounters Light, Dark's nemesis who brings daylight in the mornings while Dark brings nighttime in the evenings.

Continuing their journey, Orion inadvertently remarks how Light seems preferable to Dark, as Light makes him feel safe and warm. Feeling dejected, the other entities abandon their nighttime duties in exchange for working during the day. Angry and saddened by their abandonment, Dark stops on a mountaintop. A guilty Orion pleads with Dark to move before Light passes through and disintegrates him but Dark stays still and vanishes as Light passes through him, abandoning Orion. Now alone, Orion sits on the mountaintop, which he realizes is the back of a flying turtle, ashamed of his actions.

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| Edited by | Kevin Sukho Lee |
| Music by | Robert Lydecker Kevin Lax |
| Production company | <u>DreamWorks</u> <u>Animation</u> |
| Distributed by | <u>Netflix</u> |
| Release date | February 2, 2024 (United States) |
| Running time | 93 minutes |
| Country | United States |
| Language | English |

With the story ended, in 2005 the now adult Orion and his daughter Hypatia walk through the city to the planetarium, Hypatia is shocked by his ending and suggests a different narrative. As she takes over the story, Orion, now alone at the beach, is met by Hypatia who promises to help him. She recites a poem she has written based on the story so far and the night entities return, having witnessed the chaos brought by endless daylight without nighttime to maintain the natural balance of the world. Remembering Dark to be the literal embodiment of Orion's worst fear, they realize Orion needs to sleep and dream about Dark to bring him back.

With Sweet Dreams' help, the two children enter Orion's subconscious and successfully summon Dark from the memory of the first time they met in Orion's bedroom, but the reunion is cut short when his closet door opens and reveals a black hole which tries to pull Dark in. Finally learning to accept his fears, Orion jumps in to save Dark, while Quiet softly wakes him up right in time for them to get out of the dream. Dark reappears, restoring the natural order of the world, and returns the children to Orion's house before bidding them farewell. After Dark's departure, Hypatia is now stuck 20 years in her past with no way to return home. However, the story is resolved as a young boy named Tycho arrives in a time machine to bring Hypatia back.

The story ends again, and it is revealed that an adult Hypatia is telling the story to her son, Tycho. Finishing the story, Hypatia goes outside to say goodnight to her father and mother, the now much older Orion and Sally, as the scene cuts back to the start with a young Orion and Sally gazing at the stars on the Planetarium field trip.

Voice cast

- Jacob Tremblay as Orion
 - Colin Hanks as Adult Orion
- Paul Walter Hauser as Dark
- Angela Bassett as Sweet Dreams
- Ike Barinholtz as Light
- Natasia Demetriou as Sleep
- Golda Rosheuvel as Unexplained Noises/Debbie
- Nat Faxon as Insomnia

- [Aparna Nancherla](#) as Quiet
- [Carla Gugino](#) as Orion's Mom
- [Matt Dellapina](#) as Dom Mendelson, Orion's Dad
- [Mia Akemi Brown](#) as Hypatia
 - [Shannon Chan-Kent](#) as Adult Hypatia
- [Shino Nakamichi](#) as Sally
 - [Ren Hanami](#) as Adult Sally
- [Jack Fisher](#) as Richi Panichi
- [Nick Kishiyama](#) as Tycho
- [Werner Herzog](#) as the Narrator

Production

It was announced on June 12, 2023 that [Netflix](#) and [DreamWorks Animation](#) had collaborated on the film, which was written by [Charlie Kaufman](#), and debuted several segments at the annual [Annecy International Animation Film Festival](#) that same day. [Jacob Tremblay](#), [Paul Walter Hauser](#) and [Werner Herzog](#) were announced as part of the voice cast.^[1] Additionally, [Lloyd Taylor](#), who worked on *[Spies in Disguise](#)* and *[Nimona](#)*, provided the additional screenplay material for the film with [Brandon Sawyer](#), making it the second film Taylor worked for DreamWorks after *[Trolls Band Together](#)*.^[2]

In January 2024, additional voice cast was announced, including [Ike Barinholtz](#), [Angela Bassett](#), [Colin Hanks](#) and [Carla Gugino](#).^[3]

Animation

[Mikros Animation](#), who previously worked with DreamWorks Animation on *[Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie](#)*, provided the film's animation in their [Paris](#) and [Bangalore](#) facilities.^[4]

Music

[Kevin Lax](#) and [Robert Lydecker](#) composed the score.^[5]

Release

Orion and the Dark had its world premiere took place on January 27, 2024 as the opening night matinee of the TUDUM Theater presentation in Los Angeles.

The film was released on [Netflix](#) on February 2, 2024.^[6]

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 91% of 76 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "An uncommonly ambitious animated film, *Orion and the Dark* benefits from a Charlie Kaufman screenplay that isn't afraid to tangle with existential ideas."^[7] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 72 out of 100, based on 23 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[8]

References

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2. <https://www.thewrap.com/best-new-movies-on-netflix-february-2024/>
3. Vlessing, Etan (January 11, 2024). "Ike Barinholtz Brings the Light in Latest 'Orion and the Dark' Trailer" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/orion-and-the-dark-trailer-ike-barinholtz-light-1235785585/>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240111173844/https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/orion-and-the-dark-trailer-ike-barinholtz-light-1235785585/>) from the original on January 11, 2024. Retrieved January 11, 2024.
4. Delaney, Cole (June 13, 2023). "Dreamworks Reveals New Charlie Kaufman-Written Film 'Orion And The Dark,' Coming To Netflix In 2024 – Exclusive Video" (<https://www.cartoonbrew.com/feature-film/orion-and-the-dark-dreamworks-netflix-charlie-kaufman-229594.html>). *Cartoon Brew*. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20230613221438/https://www.cartoonbrew.com/feature-film/orion-and-the-dark-dreamworks-netflix-charlie-kaufman-229594.html>) from the original on June 13, 2023. Retrieved June 14, 2023.
5. "Kevin Lax & Robert Lydecker Scoring DreamWorks Animation's Netflix Film 'Orion and the Dark' " (<https://filmmusicreporter.com/2023/11/10/kevin-lax-robert-lydecker-scoring-dreamworks-animations-netflix-film-orion-and-the-dark/>). Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20231111015612/https://filmmusicreporter.com/2023/11/10/kevin-lax-robert-lydecker-scoring-dreamworks-animations-netflix-film-orion-and-the-dark/>) from the original on November 11, 2023. Retrieved November 11, 2023.
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7. "*Orion and the Dark*" (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/orion_and_the_dark). *Rotten Tomatoes*. Fandango Media. Retrieved February 12, 2024.
8. "*Orion and the Dark*" (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/orion-and-the-dark>). *Metacritic*. Fandom, Inc. Retrieved February 9, 2024.

External links

- Official website (<https://www.dreamworks.com/movies/orion-and-the-dark>)
- *Orion and the Dark* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81476885>) on Netflix
- *Orion and the Dark* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt28066777/>) at IMDb

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