



**Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival**
Crystal Globe Competition
Grand Prix – Crystal Globe



**Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival**
Crystal Globe Competition
Best Actress

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
Best International Feature Film (Bulgaria)

96TH ACADEMY AWARDS®
81ST GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS

BLAGA'S LESSONS



"A damning, despairing, riveting thriller"
"Komandarev builds a work around a single performance, and a tremendous one at that"
"Blaga's lurch into crime steers the film into breathless suspense territory"

VARIETY

"Skorcheva was deservedly named best actress for her central performance as Blaga."

SCREEN

"A Gripping Drama Powered by a Magnificent Lead Performance"

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"Packs a punch not seen since Lars von Trier or Michael Haneke in their provocative prime."

DEADLINE

BLAGGA'S LESSONS

BY STEPHAN KOMANDAREV

*The step by step journey of a woman swirling into the vicious cycle
of the dog-eat-dog reality outside her window.*



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EUROPEAN
FILM AWARDS

BULGARIA'S OFFICIAL OSCAR ENTRY 2024

SYNOPSIS

When a retired, recently widowed teacher falls prey to a phone scam, she's left robbed of her life savings. Desperate to pull through, she accepts an alluring yet suspicious offer for work that will turn her life upside down and force her to make a decision beyond her principles.

IMAGE © SVETOSLAV STOYANOV
BULGARIA, GERMANY



BULGARIA, GERMANY
2023 | 114' | SUSPENSE DRAMA



SEEN IN COMPETITION AT:

Karlovy Vary IFF – **World Premiere, Crystal Globe for Best Film, Best Actress Award & Ecumenical Jury Prize**, Sarajevo FF, Haifa FF, Busan FF, Rome FF - **Grand Jury Prize**, Thessaloniki FF, Tallinn FF, Stockholm FF, Gijon FF, Goa FF, Arras FF, Les Arcs, Goteborg FF, Cinehilm FF – **Fipresci Prize**, CinEast IFF – **Special Jury prize and Critic's Prize**

Palm Springs IFF, São Paulo FF, & National Bulgarian Awards Fest Golden Rose Bulgarian Feature FF, where it accumulated **7 Awards including Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Screenplay & the Audience Award**

Thus the film won 16 film awards up to now.



**ROME
FILM FEST 2023**
GRAND JURY PRIZE



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

With **two Oscar entries** already under his belt, and the **shortlisted "The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner,"** director Stephan Komandarev graduated in Film & TV directing from the New Bulgarian University (1999). His works include award winning feature and documentary films. He is a lecturer at the Film Department of the New Bulgarian University, Sofia (since 2008), a 2011 EAVE graduate and a Member of the European Film Academy, Bulgarian Film Directors' Association and Bulgarian Film Producers' Association.







DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The final installment to a cycle of films that explore the social conditions of post-Soviet Bulgaria, (following *Directions* and *Rounds*), **BLAGA'S LESSONS** approaches the issue from a vastly different viewpoint in its exploration of age and its singular focus on one woman's struggle to retain her dignity.

Through Blaga's eyes, played by the incomparable Eli Skorcheva, we gain a first-hand view of the scope of Bulgarian social collapse, and how it has affected pensioners. Pensioners in Bulgaria have been one of the hardest-hit groups in the country's transition to a market economy. Phone scams are a real phenomenon, but they are only the tip of the iceberg. Blaga's perilous journey through police bureaucracy, tabloid journalism, loan sharks, and the criminal underworld reveals the searing truth that dreams of a decent life for the elderly have long since been replaced by a struggle for primitive survival.

My intention with the film was for Blaga to serve as a representation of the everywoman. She could be your mother or father, relegated to a humiliating existence after working her whole life. Her loneliness and separation from her son are symptoms of this system as well—he is equally struggling financially as a gig-worker abroad.

The obscenity of stealing the savings from an elderly person who is barely making ends meet is a difficult thing to face, but it is necessary to look this reality in the eye. The faithful representation and understanding of reality is the first requirement for its change, and the only condition for fruitful action.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2023 | Blaga's Lessons | fiction

Bulgaria's official entry in the foreign-language film category of the Academy Awards 2024

Karlovy Vary IFF | Crystal Globe for Best Film, Best Actress Award & Ecumenical Jury Prize, Cinehilm FF | Fibresci Prize.

Bulgarian FF "Golden rose" | Best Picture Golden Rose, Best Actress, Best Screenplay, Audience Award, Best Cinematography, Special Award for Gerasim Georgiev, SBFDA Award.

2019 | "Rounds" | fiction

Sarajevo IFF 2019 | Best Actress | Cineuropa Award

Gijon IFF 2019 | Best Actress

Tetovo IFF 2019 | Best Script Award, "Golden Roze"

National festival of Bulgarian cinema 2019 | Special Prize of the Jury, Best Actress, Audience Award,

goEast" IFF Wiesbaden 2020 | Best film "Golden Lily" award | International Film Critic's Award *FIPRESCI*,

Arras Film Festival 2020 | Special Jury Mention.

2018 | “Occupation 1968” | documentary

Karlovy Vary IFF | Go East Festival of Central and Eastern European Film | Sofia IFF | Titanic IFF
| IFF Innsbruck | LET'S CEE Film Festival – Vienna | Art film festival – Kosice.

2017 | “Posoki” (“Directions”) | fiction

Un Certain Regard, Cannes IFF

Sarajevo IFF | **Special mention of the Jury**

Toronto FF

Bulgarian FF “Golden rose” | **“Golden Rose”** | **Special prize of the Jury** | **Best actress** | **Award of accredited journalists**

CinEast Luxembourg | **Film critics prize**

Haifa IFF | **Special mention of the Jury**

Busan IFF

Istanbul Crime and Punishment FF | **Special Award of the Jury**

Tirana IFF | **Best cinematography award**

Warsaw IFF

Tallinn IFF

2014 - “The Judgment” | fiction

Bulgaria’s official entry in the foreign-language film category of the Academy Awards 2016

Heartland | **Grand Prize - Best Narrative**

SEE a Paris FF | **Best Film** | **Best Director** | **Best Actor**

Bulgarian Film Academy, 2015 | **Best cinematography** | **Best screenplay** | **Best supporting female role**

Sofia IFF | **Best Bulgarian Feature Film**

Bulgarian FF “Golden rose” | **Golden rose” award for Best Bulgarian Film**

Bulgarian Film Festival “Golden rose”, 2014 – **(Best actor)**

2008 | “The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner” | fiction

2009 Academy Awards | Best Foreign Language Film | SHORTLISTED

Sofia IFF | **Audience Award | Kodak Award for Best Bulgarian Feature Film**

Annual Cinema Prize of the European Parliament | **Nomination for the Lux Cinema Prize**

Moscow IFF

Karlovy Vary FF

Zurich Film Festival | **Audience Award**

Rotterdam IFFR “Coolpolitics” | **Opening Gala**

2003 | “Alphabet of hope” | documentary

IDFA

Golden Rython Bulgarian Documentary Film Festival | **Golden Rython for Best Bulgarian**

Documentary Film

GoEast Festival of Central and Eastern European Film | **Best Documentary Film Award of the**

Hertie Foundation

Documenta Madrid

Munich IDFF

Leipzig IDFF

Festival International – Cinéma Méditerranéen

2000 | “Dog’s home” | fiction

Berlin IFF - International Forum of New Cinema

“Golden Rose” Film Festival | **Best Debut Award**

Montreal World Film Festival

Sarajevo IFF

Warsaw IFF

Tallinn IFF

MAIN CREDITS

Title: BLAGA'S LESSONS

Original title: УРОЦИТЕ НА БЛАГА/УРОТСИТЕ НА БЛАГА

Directed by: Stephan KOMANDAREV

Written by: Simeon VENTSISSLAVOV, Stephan KOMANDAREV

Cast:

Eli Skorcheva - Blaga

Ivaylo Hristov - Boyan

Gerasim Georgiev - Gero - Lyudmil

Ivan Barnev - Inspector Iliev

Stefan Denolyubov - Georgi

Stoyan Doychev - Misho

Rozalia Abgarian - Nare

Assen Blatechki - Inspector Pashov

Produced by: Argo Film (BG)

Co-produced by: Bulgarian National Television, 42film (DE)

Producers: Stephan Komandarev, Katya Trichkova

Co-producers: Eike Goreczka, Christoph Kukula

Countries of production: Bulgaria, Germany

Cinematography by: Vesselin Hristov

Editing by: Nina Altaparmakova

Production design by: Ivelina Mlneva

Costumes by: Nadya Dobrikova

Make-up by: Bistra Kechedjieva - Kuncheva

Music by: Kalina Vasileva

Assistant director: Borimir Ilkov - Bono

Sound by: Johannes Doberenz

Sound mix by: Olaf Mehl

Production manager: Bogdan Ejbekov

Production assistant: Kristina Samsarova

VFX by: Patrick Gunther

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