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BLAGA'S LESSONS

by Stephan Komandarev



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Crystal Globe Competition

Bulgaria, Germany
2023 | 114' | Suspense Drama



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SYNOPSIS

When a retired, recently widowed teacher falls prey to a phone scam, she's left robbed of her life savings and without any money for her late husband's grave. Her life turns upside down when she realises that there's no way of gaining her money back, up until she receives an alluring, yet suspicious offer for work.

The tables turn as she takes matters into her own hands and cash begins rolling in, this time claiming her most prized attribute: Her values, as she slowly and surely transforms into the scammer herself.

In this eerie suspense drama, Stephan Komandarev (*"Directions" Un Certain Regard 2017*) chronicles step by step the journey of a woman swirling into the vicious cycle of the dog-eat-dog reality outside her window.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1966 in Sofia. Stephan graduated in **Film & TV directing** at 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). He is a 2011 EAVE graduate and a Member of the European Film Academy, Bulgarian Film Directors' Association and Bulgarian Film Producers' Association.



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Though **BLAGA'S LESSONS** is the last installment in our trilogy (following *Directions* and *Rounds*), it is **vastly different**. The story of our main character Blaga holds a mirror up to a number of painful aspects of Bulgarian society such as: | **The Bulgarian pensioners abandoned to a humiliating existence** – our mothers and fathers. After working their entire lives, today their life is genocide, agony and misery. Meagre pensions, no access to basic 21st century “privileges” such as normal food, adequate medication and medical care, heating at home... Pensioners are also the main target and the usual victims of the obscene Bulgarian phenomenon known as “phone

scams”. The dreams of a decent life have long since been replaced by a struggle for primitive everyday survival.

| **The loneliness** of the Bulgarian pensioners – most of them are separated from their children and grand-children. Their descendants are far away, searching for a living in the capital or in far-off countries.

| **The complete moral crisis** our society is caught in. The obscenity of stealing the saving of an elderly person who is barely making ends meet. Making “easy money” with complete disregard for any laws, value systems or morals. The soullessness, corruption and consumerism as the sole “value”. **The faithful representation and understanding of reality is the first requirement for its change, the only condition for fruitful action.**

DIRECTOR’S FILMOGRAPHY

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 feature FF | **“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

2016 | "FROM THE GRATEFUL DECENDANTS" | documentary

Theatrical premiere on 14 December 2016, TV broadcast: Bulgarian National Television on 26 December 2016.

2016 | "DOGS" | fiction
director Bogdan Mirica,
as **co-producer**

Cannes Film Festival 2016 | FIPRESCI award - "Un Certain Regard"

Transilvania IFF 2016 | **Transilvania trophy**

2015 – "Sailor Stories"

Sofia FF

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)**

2010 | Rouse blood wedding" | documentary

2009 | "The Town of badante women" | documentary

Dokufest | Internazionale a Ferrara Festival | Bratislava IFF

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**

MAIN CREDITS

Title: BLAGA'S LESSONS

Original title: УРОЦИТЕ НА БЛАГА/UROTCITE NA BLAGA

Directed by: Stephan KOMANDAREV

Written by: Simeon VENTSISLAVOV, Stephan KOMANDAREV

Cast:

Eli SKORCHEVA

Gerasim GEORGIEV - Gero

Rozalia ABGARIAN

Ivan BARNEV

Stefan DENOLYUBOV

Ivaylo HRISTOV

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 MIneva

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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