

## Bleeding Blue Bird: A Surreal Symbolist Film by Lev Prudkin

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Lev Prudkin's *Bleeding Blue Bird*, a surreal drama rooted in Symbolist theatre, will have its International Premiere at the 13th Chelsea Film Festival on 16 October in New York. The film stars Arthur Darvill (*Doctor Who*, *Broadchurch*) and Hannah Arterton (*Walking on Sunshine*).

A travelling theatre troupe stages Maurice Maeterlinck's Symbolist classic *The Blue Bird*. When the lead actor abandons his role, the director steps in and the fragile line between performance and life begins to unravel. "*This is a film about what happens when art escapes the stage and invades life,*" says Prudkin.

*Bleeding Blue Bird* draws directly on the legacy of Symbolist theatre. Maeterlinck's plays embodied allegory and dream, and Prudkin's work engages with that tradition rather than adapting it literally. The film references *The Life of the Bee*, linking philosophy with obsession, and uses symbolism as a structural principle that shapes imagery, atmosphere, and the unstable space between dream and experience.

The film also belongs to a lineage of metacinema, where the performance within the film merges with the cinematic frame itself. Audiences are caught in a hall of mirrors, experiencing both the play and its cinematic dissolution. This places *Bleeding Blue Bird* alongside works such as Bergman's *Persona* or Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York*, where fractured identity and artistic recursion drive the drama. Surrealist influences also run through the film, with abrupt transformations, unstable recognition, and sequences where dream logic overtakes narrative structure.

The soundtrack is central to the film's identity, bridging cinema and music culture. It features tracks from *Depeche Mode*, *Actress*, and *Else*, alongside an original score, creating a soundscape that is as fragile and transformative as the images.

Produced by Vladimir Prudkin with Mirage Adventures Studios and Sterling Pictures, and with Executive Producer Michael Riley, the film was shot at Kyiv's historic Theatre on Podil.

Lev Prudkin is the grandson of Mark Prudkin, a celebrated actor of the Moscow Art Theatre and a student of Konstantin Stanislavski. His childhood memories of time spent backstage, watching *The Blue Bird* from the director's box and experiencing theatre as a place of wonder and danger, form the foundation of the film. He first drafted the project while a student in Moscow in the 1990s and returned to it after the success of his award-winning feature *No-One*.

The Chelsea Film Festival, recognized by *The New York Times* for its global outlook and named one of the top ten film festivals in North America by *USA Today*, runs October 15-19 at Regal Theatres Union Square with additional online screenings through October 31.

For full screening schedule, please visit [chelseafilm.org](https://chelseafilm.org).

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