

## MY BLIND HEART – PRESSBOOK PLAIN TEXTS

### Contact

Cataract Vision  
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### Technical Information

#### MY BLIND HEART

Drama | Austria 2013 | Narrative Feature 92' | b/w  
Language: German w/ English subtitles  
Sound: 5.1 PCM & Stereo | Screen Ratio: 1:1.78  
Screening Formats: DCP, BluRay

### Short Synopsis

Kurt, who suffers from an incurable disease, rebels against his body and the limits that are set for him – whatever the cost.

After Kurt, who suffers from the rare Marfan syndrome and is almost blind, has killed his clinging mother, he goes on a journey where the boundaries between perpetrator and victim are blurred. Haunted by her calls, Kurt leaves the clients and nurses of a care home distressed. In the streets Kurt meets Conny, a 13-year-old runaway from a broken home. She readily participates in Kurt's protest against his body, not knowing what moves him or into which abyss his journey is leading. How much guilt can one individual endure?

### Long Synopsis

*My Blind Heart* – an idea develops inside a person. Inside it is comfortable and inside the idea can grow. Outside, the person is detached from the world, due to the disease the person was born with into this world.

Kurt, a 27-year-old marine biologist, is almost blind and his heart is weak. Kurt suffers from the Marfan Syndrome, a disorder of the connective tissue, which made him blind on his right eye and left him with only 10% vision on his left eye. Beta blockers and dislocation of the lenses, pulmonary infarction and examinations at the medical officer were fixed marks on his previous path of life. Like in a cocoon he has been living with his mother since he was born, inside four walls, where there are no secrets, no privacy, and no boundaries. Kurt is not a victim of his disease. Kurt dreams of the sea. He dreams of sharks and the hunt for weaker individuals. Like in Caravaggio's *David & Goliath* the boundaries between victim and perpetrator are blurred in his relationship with his mother. Kurt has to break free. The idea turns into action and the 10% with which he can see the world turn into a very dark light with which he seeks the sea inside himself. On his path to determine his own fate he finds himself in a care home where he is put with people who share a similar fate, and where he gambles for new luck. Here he meets Roberto, a young man suffering from the Down Syndrome, who seems to mirror his fate. This mirror is held up to him by the hands of strangers and he realizes that he cannot stay. Kurt does not go to the

dogs of society but frees himself anew. Only 13-year-old Conny, who saves Kurt from imminent death by an approaching car, seems to be capable of carrying Kurt off and out of the blind spot he seems to stumble into. The attachment to the surrogate family Conny has become for him and which could lead him through the darkness like an umbilical cord has to be cut – his desire for the sea inside of him is too strong. His wish not to study the sharks but to become one of them is greater than anything else. Where ever Kurt goes and who ever he meets, he is haunted by his mother's calls. As if he was yearning for his lover, Kurt longs for the several meters thick concrete walls of the 65 meter high Viennese Flak Towers, that make him feel as if he was infinite through them. As if these pyramids of Vienna turned his idea, which he keeps following with growing determination, into an utopia, Kurt gets lost in the dead corner he created himself and runs inner amok, disregarding his body and the limits that were set for him by society. Kurt goes hunting and starts gambling in the casino of life with longer odds. He challenges fate and involves Roberto in a game of life and death, where the question of victim and perpetrator is posed anew.

## Director's Statement

*My Blind Heart* is the character study of Kurt, who suffers from the Marfan Syndrome and tries to rebel against his body.

Christos Haas, who plays Kurt, suffers from the rare Marfan Syndrome in real life. His left eye is blind and his right eye has about 20% vision. The Marfan Syndrome is a defect of the connective tissue, the risk of a sudden rupture of the aorta is imminent.

Christos and I have known each other since high school and already then, at the age of 13, I wanted to make a film with him. Because of Christos' physical appearance people gave him nicknames such as "Dracula" and the film I pictured back then would probably have been a spooky film of some sort – with Christos as the new "Kinski-Nosferatu".

Time passed, and we changed with it. When we finally did work together it turned into something completely different, something much more personal. For many scenes Christos went to different unpleasant places, always with the aim to present the character of Kurt and bring it to life with all its contradictions. One of our main goals was to make a film about a man with a handicap, who is allowed to be at least as much of a culprit as Travis Bickle or Alexander DeLarge are. The Marfan Syndrome, or the other handicaps that the actors Robert Schmiedt or Pranav Lal suffer from, were never a starting point for us to exercise corruption of the lacrimal glands of the audience. On the contrary, we have chosen a path where we became friends, like band members who play together, each with his name and his instrument or sometimes even the opportunity to play multiple instruments at the gig. I took the real disease of a person and built a fictional story around it.

*My Blind Heart* identifies a society which, by means of an extended arm – technology – develops in a direction that leads away from the body. It is the direction of permanent activity, always on the run from loneliness and with the goal of optimization. A tendency, where designer babies seem to become definite and with that a potential extinction of our main character's existence. Through Kurt's starting position in this society due to his body I try to ask the question of a return to the body, which for me is our last outcry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*My Blind Heart* is a film which is directed inward, which puts the perception of its main character and his inner world at the center. This decision has also affected the aesthetics of the film and provided a lot of space for the opportunity to work with abstraction. The way one makes a film, always describes the film one makes. In my film the borders between victors and the defeated, lovers and the beloved, David and Goliath, mother and son are torn apart. Who is the victim here, who the perpetrator?

## Producers' Statement

Producing *My Blind Heart* for us was not only a challenge but also a real need. Sober and courageous, emotional and close to the audience – *My Blind Heart* is different and it is new, but above all it is alive and full of hope.

The story of outsiders who find their own voice, their own language, and do not necessarily rebel against their own bodies but against the status they have in society, is a story that must be told. The focus here is on people, the description of their conflicts is generally valid and thus individually translatable. This outsider position can also be transferred onto our film. Produced single-handedly and within a period of over four years, we have crossed resistances and limitations. During the making of the film we founded the collective CATARACT VISION, as we always tried to remain faithful to the film, its content and what was necessary. We only wanted to stop making *My Blind Heart* when it was finished, and not after being pushed to the fifth, sixth or seventh limit, or when the money ran out. If you, like us, do not catch fish with a big bait but with your bare hands, it simply takes longer. The limitations have served creativity and, as is so often the case, offered an incredibly open space for it. Thus, we could always go further into the inner world. Initially, it was the plan of the director to blow up the Viennese Flak towers, ultimately, however, it was all about the destruction of the internal defense towers. We, too, want to inspire with *My Blind Heart*, which will certainly bring some controversy with it through its uncompromising authenticity.

## Cataract Vision

Who doesn't appreciate loyalty? We have always liked the image of the Capuchin monkeys, who prove their loyalty to each other by sticking their fingers into each other's eye sockets before they go to battle with other monkeys. Making a film is always a team effort and you always need others you can trust. CATARACT VISION is a family affair, Cassavetes-style. It is a collective founded by Peter Brunner, Franz Dude, Therese Seemann and Klara von Veegh. It is not your conventional production company, it isn't even on the map, legally speaking. *My Blind Heart* is CATARACT VISION's first step towards growth and expansion. The next step will be Peter Brunner's second feature *We Are Sisyphos*. CATARACT VISION is not about reinventing the wheel and all about authenticity, strong characters and the incorporation of resistance. We are interested in a strong cinematic language which perceives abstraction as an offer to approach inner conditions. CATARACT VISION is the driving force and the shield behind which we intend to make our films. It is not an exclusive four-people-club but will definitely welcome more people in the following years, who we trust to stick their fingers into our eyes.

## Biographies Cast

### Christos Haas – KURT

Christos Haas and Peter Brunner have been friends since high school. They started working on the character of 'Kurt' on New Year's Eve 2008. Christos Haas suffers from the Marfan Syndrome in real life. He is a painter and has appeared in artistic performances. This is his first lead role in a movie. Peter Brunner based the screenplay for his next feature film *We Are Sisyphos* on his experiences with Christos during the shooting of *My Blind Heart*. Christos Haas will be playing a part in *We Are Sisyphos* as well.

### Jana McKinnon – CONNY

Jana McKinnon is the daughter of an Austrian mother and an Australian father, both street artists and fire dancers. Jana was 12 years old when she started shooting *My Blind Heart*. Despite her young age she has already appeared in several short films as well as in *Revanche* by Götz

Spielmann. In *My Blind Heart* she plays her first lead role. Jana will also be playing a part in Peter Brunner's next feature film *We Are Sisyphos*.

**Susanne Lothar – KURT'S MOTHER (1960–2012)**

Susanne Lothar was a German film, TV and theater actress. Apart from numerous other films, she appeared in Michael Haneke's *Funny Games*, *The Piano Teacher* and *The White Ribbon*. *My Blind Heart* is Susanne Lothar's last film.

**Robert Schmiedt – ROBERTO**

Already as a child Robert Schmiedt played a part in a documentary film by the late Niki List. During the rehearsals for *My Blind Heart* Peter Brunner and Robert became friends and his commitment and passion convinced Peter to extend his part.

**Georg Friedrich – PAUL**

Georg Friedrich is one of the best known Austrian actors, notorious for his portrayals of social outsiders. Since 1983 he has starred in countless films (*Import/Export*, *The Piano Teacher*, ...) and appeared on stage.

**Christopher Schärf – DAVID**

Christopher is a young talented actor from Austria. He has appeared in countless movies like Jessica Hausner's *Hotel*, Antonin Svoboda's *Immer Nie Am Meer*, etc. He studied at the William Esper Studio in New York.

**Biographies Team**

**Peter Brunner – WRITER/DIRECTOR**

Peter Brunner, born in 1983, the son of a psychoanalyst and a painting therapist, is a filmmaker, musician and actor from Vienna, Austria. He studied under director Michael Haneke at the Vienna Film Academy. His work includes many short films and music videos and he directed the Ferdinand Bruckner adaptation *Sickness of the Youth* in 2007 together with fellow students at the Vienna Film Academy, in which he also played the leading role "Freder". Peter lives in Vienna and works on his solo music project *Cardiochaos*. *My Blind Heart* is Peter's feature film debut. His second feature, *We Are Sisyphos*, is currently in pre-production.

**Franz Dude – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

The collaboration between Franz Dude and Peter Brunner started already during their student days at the Vienna Film Academy. Apart from being a cinematographer, Dude is a painter, a sculpturer and a musician with his experimental music project *Original-Low-Fi*. Following his first feature *My Blind Heart*, he will be the DOP of the upcoming feature *We Are Sisyphos*.

**Theres Seemann – PRODUCER**

Theres Seemann studied film production at the Vienna Film Academy. She produced numerous short films, short documentaries and music videos, before she started working on her first feature *My Blind Heart*. She is currently teaching film in Styria. Seemann will be working on *We Are Sisyphos*, too.

**Klara von Veegh – PRODUCER**

Klara von Veegh studied film in Denmark and Austria. She directed several music videos and short films. *My Blind Heart* being her first feature, she will continue working with Peter Brunner as producer and his creative assistant on his next feature film *We Are Sisyphos*. She is also a painter and owner of the music label *Little Night Music*.

## Credits

### Cast

Christos Haas – Kurt  
Jana McKinnon – Conny  
Susanne Lothar – Kurt's Mother  
Robert Schmiedt – Roberto  
Georg Friedrich – Paul  
Christopher Schärf – David  
and  
Peter Matić – The Doctor's Voice

### Crew

**Written & Directed by** | Peter Brunner  
**Dramaturgical Advice** | Klara von Veegh  
**Producers / Production Managers** | Therese Seemann, Klara von Veegh  
**Director of Photography** | Franz Dude  
**Edited by** | Peter Brunner

**Production Sound Mixer** | Philip Zauner  
**1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director** | Melani Murkovic  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Directors** | Flora Rumpler, Johannes Feigl  
**Casting** | Flora Rumpler, Johannes Feigl, Melani Murkovic

**Production Design** | Simone Ehegartner, Nina Salak  
**Set Decorators** | Simone Ehegartner, Nina Salak, Christina Romirer  
**Set Dressers / Assistants** | Lisa Horvath, Franka Gieseemann, Isabella Waszina  
**Stencil Artist** | Olivier Hölzl aka Livil  
**Costume Designer** | Hanna Adlaoui  
**Costume Assistants** | Marlene Gartner, Simone Wallner, Laura Tille  
**Hair & Make Up** | Stephanie Dunst, Anjuli Patel, Elfi Hasenhütl, Valeria Kiraly, Agnes Veegh, Kerstin Bruckmayer, Alex Dimi, Anna Dornhofer

**1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Camera** | Caroline Bobek, Martin Nefe, Michael Schindegger, Georg Geutebrück, Thomas Loacker, Georg Weiss, Othmar Hofer, Rosalie Hübl, Anselm Hartmann, Matthias Halibrand  
**Steadicam Operator** | Franz Dude

**Script Supervisor / Clapper** | Lisa Rischke, Melani Murkovic  
**Chief Lighting Technicians** | Klemens Hufnagl, Benjamin Klein, Martin Nefe  
**Grips / Lighting Technicians** | Martin Nefe, Patrick Wally, Georg Sokol, Simone Casagrande, Chaque Philip Habenicht, Sebastian Böck, Jakob Kohl, Lukas Köchler, Felipe Kolm, Christoph Wingelmayr, Georg Weiss, Steven Heyse, Florian Schneider, Mathias Mitzscherling, Aram Baroian, Philipp Topolsky-Windsor, Clara Lehnfeld, Stefan Dworak, Julian Stampfer, Felix Striegel, Felix Weisz, Jakob Grill, Artur Stofel, Max Hödl, Niko Eder, Barbara Zerlauth

**Dolly Grips** | Lukas Gnaiger, Patrick Wally, Florian Schneider, Mathias Mitzscherling, Martin Nefe, Niko Eder

**Boom Operators** | Johannes Preis, Florian Schreiner, Christoph Jahn, Andre Koroschak, Philipp Topolsky-Windsor, Bernhard Probst, Henning Backhaus

**Location Managers** | Alex Schindler, Eva Hartl, Maria Hunger, Paul Schober  
**Production Assistans / Runners** | Tatjana Fuhrig, Elisabeth Gruber, Sonja Probst, Isabel Holter, Beeke Waldeck, Andrea Wöger, Anna Denk, Andrea Klien, Moritz Hauthaler, Magdalena Pokieser

**Sound Editor** | Philip Zauner  
**Sound Designer** | Laura Endres  
**Sound Re-Recording Mixer** | Bernhard Maisch  
**Color Grading & DCP** | Matthias Halibrand  
**Assistant Editors** | Bettine Ties, Tobias Aschermann, Sebastian Longariva, Elisa Maier, Sebastian Schreiner

**Still Photographers** | Patrick Wally, Max Hödl, Felipe Kolm  
**Catering** | Jenna Frey, Isabel Holter, Julia Djanic, Sophia Neumeister  
Diver – Tristan Ernst  
**Drivers** | Manuel Seigfried, Mathias Mitzscherling

**Sound Facility** | Tremens Film-Tonstudio  
**Grip & Electric Equipment** | Filmakademie Wien, LGL Lichtverleih, Dopplinger, Dangl  
**Sound Equipment** | Filmakademie Wien, Ton Eichinger  
**Production Insurance** | AON Jauch & Hübener  
**Picture Vehicles** | Mandaltscheff  
**Production Vehicles** | Megadrive, Buchbinder, ÖH Bus, Sixt

### **Music**

LIEB' LIEBCHEN LEG'S HÄNDCHEN OP. 24, Nr. 4  
Robert Schumann  
Voice & Piano: Ute Neumerkel  
(from the film „Schumann's End“ by Ute Neumerkel)

GOATEESPOOF  
Written by Peter Brunner  
Performed by Cardiochaos  
Courtesy of Little Night Music

### **Funding & Support**

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Austrian Film Commission

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