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White Bird (film)

White Bird (marketed with the subtitle ***A Wonder Story***) is a 2024 American coming-of-age period drama film directed by Marc Forster from a screenplay by Mark Bomback, based on the 2019 graphic novel of the same name by R. J. Palacio. Serving as both a prequel and sequel to *Wonder* (2017), the film stars Ariella Glaser, Orlando Schwerdt, Bryce Gheisar, Gillian Anderson, and Helen Mirren, with Gheisar reprising his role as Julian from *Wonder*.

White Bird was released in EU (Italy, Slovenia, Croatia) on 4 January 2024; it is scheduled to be released in the United States by Lionsgate on October 4, 2024.^[3]

Plot

After the events of *Wonder*, Julian has left Beecher Prep for good. He is visited by his grandmother Sara (whose professional name is Grandmère) from Paris, who, in response to Julian's reflection about his need to be socially passive in order to fit in at his new school, tells him about her childhood as a young Jewish girl in Nazi-occupied France during World War II.

In 1942, Sara evades being rounded up by the German troops and spends more than one year being hidden by her classmate Julien (one of whose legs is congenitally paralysed by poliomyelitis) in a barn of the house where he lives with his parents. She is instructed never to leave the barn to prevent being discovered by the neighbours suspected of being informants for the Germans. At night Julien teaches Sara what he has learned at school during the day. Affection between them grows into love.

In 1944 after liberation of Monte Cassino, Julien is stopped on his way to school at a German checkpoint by the Milice and thrown into the back of a lorry for transportation to a remote camp in the mountains. During an escape attempt by the other prisoners, he is shot dead. At the end of the war Sara is reunited with her father, her mother has been killed at KZ Auschwitz.

Cast

- Ariella Glaser as Sara Blum, a Jewish girl living in Nazi-occupied France
- Orlando Schwerdt as Julien Beaumier, Sara's polio-lamed classmate, in the barn of whose family Sara

White Bird	
 <div>Theatrical release poster with original release date</div>	
Directed by	<u>Marc Forster</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Mark Bomback</u>
Based on	<i><u>White Bird: A Wonder Story</u></i> by <u>R. J. Palacio</u>
Produced by	<u>Todd Lieberman</u> <div></div> <u>David Hoberman</u> <div></div> <u>R. J. Palacio</u>
Starring	<u>Ariella Glaser</u> <div></div> <u>Orlando Schwerdt</u> <div></div> <u>Bryce Gheisar</u> <div></div> <u>Gillian Anderson</u> <div></div> <u>Helen Mirren</u>
Cinematography	<u>Matthias Koenigswieser</u>
Edited by	<u>Matt Chessé</u>

hides from the Germans

- [Bryce Gheisar](#) as Julian Albans
- [Gillian Anderson](#) as Vivienne Beaumier, Julien's mother
- [Helen Mirren](#) as Grandmère, a renowned artist
- [Jo Stone-Fewings](#) as Jean Paul Beaumier, Julien's father
- [Patsy Ferran](#) as Mlle Petitjean, Sara and Julien's teacher
- [Stuart McQuarrie](#) as Pastor Luc, the headmaster of Sara and Julien's school
- [Olivia Ross](#) as Rose Blum, Sara's mother
- [Ishai Golan](#) as Max Blum, Sara's father

Production

Development

In October 2019, Lionsgate acquired the rights to [R.J. Palacio's](#) *White Bird: A Wonder Story*. Palacio said, "[t]he team at Lionsgate values artists and storytellers and has been crucial to expanding the fan community surrounding *Wonder*. They have been enormously supportive as I have been writing *White Bird* and I could not feel more secure that my new graphic novel is in the right creative hands at the right studio."^[4]

The film was produced by [Todd Lieberman](#) and [David Hoberman](#) from [Mandeville Films](#), with [Jeffrey Skoll](#) and [Robert Kissel](#) from [Participant](#) serving as executive producers. [Marc Forster](#) was announced as director, with [Mark Bomback](#) writing and acting as executive producer.^{[5][6]}

Casting

In February 2021, it was reported that [Helen Mirren](#), [Gillian Anderson](#), [Orlando Schwerdt](#) and [Ariella Glaser](#) joined the cast; [Bryce Gheisar](#) was confirmed to reprise his role as Julian from the 2017 film *Wonder*.^[7]

Filming

[Principal photography](#) commenced in February 2021 in the [Czech Republic](#).^[7]

Locations gallery

Music by	Thomas Newman
Production companies	Participant Kingdom Story Company Lionsgate Mandeville Films 2DUX² Productions
Distributed by	Lionsgate
Release dates	January 4, 2024 (Italy, Croatia) October 4, 2024 (United States)
Running time	120 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$2.3 million ^[2]



Jungmannovo Square (also known as *Jungmann Square* after the Czech poet and linguist Josef Jungmann) in Kutná Hora was the setting for filming the scenes of *White Bird: A Wonder Story* in March 2021.



Jungmann Square (Czech: *Jungmannovo náměstí*) in Kutná Hora in March 2021 doubling as Nazi-occupied France.

Release

White Bird: A Wonder Story was initially scheduled to be released on September 16, 2022,^[8] but was later delayed to October 14, 2022.^[9] In September 2022, Lionsgate removed the film from its release schedule.^[10] The film, presented as a "sneak preview", premiered at the 43rd San Francisco Jewish Film Festival on July 30, 2023, with a taped introduction by producer Lieberman.^[1]

In January 2023, it was announced *White Bird* was scheduled to debut in a limited release on August 18, 2023, followed by a wide release on August 25, 2023.^[11] However, in July 2023, as a result of the SAG-AFTRA strike, Lionsgate pushed the release to an unspecified date in the fourth quarter of 2023.^[12] In December 2023, Lionsgate redated the film for October 4, 2024.^[13]

White Bird was released in Italy, Croatia and Slovenia on January 4, 2024.^[3] On 18 January 2024, the film was released in Portugal, followed by theatrical release in Poland on 2 February 2024 (with box office takings from Polish cinemas making up more than half of the film's worldwide gross revenue as of May 2024).^[3]

As of 5 May 2024, more than 90% of the film's worldwide revenue originated from two countries: Italy (\$845,028) and Poland (\$1,257,423).^[3]

Reception

Writing for *Variety*, Dennis Harvey gave *White Bird* a positive review, saying that "Marc Forster's film elevates somewhat contrived material with tastefully lyrical craftsmanship" and further adding,^[14]

Though the occasional preachy, maudlin or trite note remains, Foster also manages to make "White Bird" less conspicuously conceived for tweens. He arrives at an unhurried yet sufficiently suspenseful pace that engrosses while side-stepping excess melodrama and sentimentality.

Hannah Brown was more reserved in her review for *The Jerusalem Post*, describing the cast as "compelling" and praising the storyline for its power "to carry the drama", but criticising the film for its "moments of heavy kitsch toward the end" and crediting Helen Mirren with saving *White Bird* single-handedly from being a much worse movie than it turned out to be in actuality. She concluded,^[15]

Despite its flaws, [the film] does not trivialize the Holocaust, and just barely manages to avoid being part of that mini-genre I have named "Feel-Good Holocaust Films." ... In "White Bird", at least, it is clear that innocent people, even very cute ones, suffered terribly at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators, and even paid with their lives. The two likable young leads and Mirren elevate this to a film that does have genuinely touching moments.

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External links

- [Official website](http://whitebird.movie) (<http://whitebird.movie>)
 - *White Bird* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11068094/>) at IMDb
 - *White Bird* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/white_bird) at Rotten Tomatoes
 - *White Bird* (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/white-bird>) at Metacritic
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