

CURIOUS

presents

BELOVED SISTERS

Directed by Dominik Graf

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Thüringen, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, in der Nähe von Nordrhein-Westfalen/ Münster, Tirol

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Theatrical version: 140 min

A Production of
Uschi Reich, Bavaria Filmverleih- und Produktions GmbH

In co-production with
**WEGA Film Produktionsgesellschaft m.b.H., WS Filmproduktion Dr. Wolfgang Stürzl, Kiddinx
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CAST

Caroline von Beulwitz
Friedrich Schiller
Charlotte von Lengefeld
Louise von Lengefeld
Wilhelm von Wolzogen
Mrs von Stein
Mrs von Kalb
Friedrich von Beulwitz
Knebel
Körner
Schwenke

HANNAH HERZSPRUNG
FLORIAN STETTER
HENRIETTE CONFURIUS
CLAUDIA MESSNER
RONALD ZEHRFELD
MAJA MARANOW
ANNE SCHÄFER
ANDREAS PIETSCHMANN
MICHAEL WITTENBORN
PETER SCHNEIDER
ELISABETH WASSERSCHIED

CREW

Written and directed by
Producer
Co-producer

DOMINIK GRAF
USCHI REICH
VEIT HEIDUSCHKA, MICHAEL KATZ,
WOLFGANG STÜRZL, KARL BLATZ, HELGE SASSE,
SOLVEIG FINA

Executive Producer
Commissioning Editors

BERND KRAUSE
BARBARA BUHL
BETTINA RICKLEFS
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ANDREAS SCHREITMÜLLER
HEINRICH MIS

Script Consultant
Director of Photography
Direct Sound
Production Design
Costume Design
Make-Up

MICHAEL HILD
MICHAEL WIESWEG
HJALTI BAGER-JONATHANSSON
CLAUS JÜRGEN PFEIFFER
BARBARA GRUPP
NANNIE GEBHARDT-SEELE, TATJANA KRAUSKOPF
HENRIETTE ZWÖLFER

Casting
Editor
Music by

AN DORTHE BRAKER
CLAUDIA WOLSCHT
SVEN ROSSENBACH
FLORIAN VAN VOLXEM

Line Producer

ISMAEL FEICHTL

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The aristocratic sisters Charlotte and Caroline both fall in love with the controversial young writer and hothead Friedrich Schiller. Defying the conventions of their time, the sisters decide to share their love with Schiller. What begins playfully, almost as a game among the three of them, soon turns serious as it leads to the end of a pact...

LONGER SYNOPSIS

Germany in the late 18th century. Two beautiful, aristocratic sisters meet a young man who is infatuated by both of them: by Caroline, bold, exuberant, unhappily married; and Charlotte, shy, rational, intense. The young man is none other than the writer, playwright, philosopher and hothead Friedrich Schiller, whose career has just begun. Both sisters long for love, but only one, Charlotte, is free. Neither noble nor wealthy, Schiller is no match for Charlotte, whose mother wants her to make a “good” marriage. Yet in the wake of the social and political upheavals rocking France on the eve of the Revolution, new forms of cohabitation emerge. One of them is the ménage à trois – which is what Caroline urges them to try. Schiller is to marry Charlotte, but they will never be far from Caroline. Tension mounts between the sisters, however, who have always loved each other dearly and shared all their secrets and desires. Though Schiller delicately tends to the needs and wishes of his two mistresses, the sisters’ own pact seems increasingly like an elusive dream...

In this aesthetic tour-de-force, one of Germany’s foremost “auteurs,” Dominik Graf (“Dreileben”, “A Map of the Heart”), examines a passionate love triangle that may have been one of Schiller’s most closely guarded secrets. The actors Hannah Herzsprung (“Four Minutes”), Henriette Confurius and Florian Stetter (“Sophie Scholl”) demonstrate the full range of their artistry, and, through their eloquence and expressiveness, raise this gorgeously shot film to the level of a timeless study of love.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE, DOMINIK GRAF

Producer Uschi Reich proposed the story of **BELOVED SISTERS** to me: A ménage à trois in the late 18th Century.

Two young noblewomen fall in love with the same man – a commoner – who falls for both women, for better or worse. The perfect scenario for a drama. But there's hardly any jealousy in this story. All three just want each other to be happy. They agree that one of the two sisters will marry the man, for the other sister is unhappily married already. So the younger sister marries him for the both of them, as it were. No bickering, no rivalry. The utopian threesome. But then life intervenes, time goes by like a river, everyday life takes over... and everything that seemed so simple suddenly gets more and more difficult.

In the summer of 1788, Friedrich Schiller and the von Lengefeld sisters Charlotte and Caroline find themselves in this love triangle in the town of Rudolstadt. The girls are from a family of Thuringian petty nobles - who hardly have any more money than the infamous but impoverished poet Schiller. Time stands still for them, the world becomes a idyllic place of falling-in-love, making a few plans and imagining how it could go on with them. Everything gets more complicated the moment summer ends.

What attracted me the most from the outset was making a movie about words, words of love, words of joyous longing, promise of a life less ordinary. Filming their correspondence, watching the characters write each other, sometime letting them read the letters out loud. Talking about their feelings, about their love triangle, planning, conspiring a little to get to see each other. Three very intelligent people, each complex in their very own way. From a modern perspective, I tried to shoot the movie as if writing a book – as if the film stock were writing paper.

Historical characters always seem more interesting to me today. Their world is far away, a mystery, follows other laws and maxims, they're not as close-minded as we are – no matter what kind of obstacles they had to overcome – they live with other extreme experiences, they know things we don't. This makes historical characters in films seem very beautiful to me.

Several parts of this story are mere conjecture and speculation, for important letters and key sources have been lost. Shooting this film was a great joy.

Dominik Graf, January 2014

PRODUCTION NOTES

From the Idea to the Screen

The idea for **BELOVED SISTERS** dates back to 2004, while filming the TV movie "Schiller" starring Matthias Schweighöfer. During her research, top German producer Uschi Reich came across the story of the Lengefeld Sisters: "This love triangle on the eve of the French Revolution immediately caught my imagination. It was a time of great upheaval. Various alternative lifestyles emerged, including the ménage-à-trois between Schiller, Caroline and Charlotte." Reich knew director Dominik Graf was interested in the topic, and was able to sign him on the project. "As usual for a film of this scale, the story went through numerous stages of development," the producer recalls. "You work with writers and try to find a way to tell the story, spend a lot of time discussing and starting over again until you find the writer with the right energy for the project."

Creating Convincing Historical Sets

It was a big production. The film was shot in Thuringia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, near Münster, North Rhine-Westphalia and in Tyrol. Since the story is set in Rudolstadt on Saale in Thuringia, that's where most of the principal photography took place over the course of 33 days. However, the crew found that much of the town had changed, and very few locations could be used from all angles. So, as is usual for historical films, it became a puzzle of historical motifs from a great many different locations. After Rudolstadt, the cast and crew went to North Rhine-Westphalia for 11 days, and Innsbruck and Hall in Austria for 6 days. Uschi Reich recalls the shoot: "I try to create a positive atmosphere for the directors, in which they can realize as much as possible of their vision. But balancing budget and vision is always a tightrope walk. I loved working with a great director like Dominik Graf. He knows exactly what he wants, he loves his actors and knows how to get them to give their best performance."

Making Characters Come to Life

The director and producer quickly knew who they wanted to cast in the leads: Hannah Herzsprung and Henriette Confurius as the two sisters, and Florian Stetter as Friedrich Schiller were the first choices from the beginning. The remaining roles were filled with the help of expert caster An Dorthe Braker: Claudia Messner as the Mother; excellent stage actress Anne Schäfer as Charlotte von Kalb, and Dominik Graf regular Ronald Zehrfeld as Wilhelm von Wolzogen. The aim was to create authentic characters, so very strong character actors were cast, such as Maja Maranow, Michael Wittenborn and Andreas Pietschmann.

Money Makes the World Go Round...

Financing the film proved to be a particular challenge for the producer. "It's very hard to get a film funded in Germany right now that isn't a conventional three-act rom-com, that's something new and different," Reich explains. The knowledge of the time and Schiller's work she had from her work on TV movie "Schiller" proved helpful in practice – she was familiar with the locations of the story, for example. Nonetheless, there was often a gap between the ideal and the reality, the vision and the budget. The original budget of €6.3 million Euros had to be adjusted upwards.

Quality and Relevance

Schiller and his time – does anyone care nowadays? Says Reich: "A society in upheaval is always an interesting topic. And if the protagonists have a unique vision of the future, that can inspire us today as well. And it gets especially interesting when private life, politics and art collide like in our story." The scripts sounds very contempo, its modern language lets historical periods and people become a modern, exciting movie. "Ang Lee did it in *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* (1995), films like *JANE EYRE* (2011) and *THE KING'S SPEECH* (2010) were our model," says the producer. Even if the film was a challenge to make, the result speaks for itself. Uschi Reich lauds Dominik Graf's strength as a director: "Working with Dominik is great because he has so much experience and creativity, and is still able to get excited about a project. I think that's the most important quality in a director."

The Length of the Film

"The way the characters move through historical locations, to the stations of their lives, is slower, more time-consuming than the movement of modern people. That affected the pace of the film, giving

a lot of the scenes a different rhythm than originally planned. I enjoyed that different rhythm during the shoot, because I felt it gave the often complex feelings of the main characters time to develop. The film was originally planned for 140 minutes, but the director's cut came out at 170 minutes, the TV two-parter was even 190 minutes. It's very interesting as a director to be able to tell a story in three different tempi. We finally came up with a 140 minute version for the distributor as agreed, which is not so much a compromise than simply a different pacing." –Dominik Graf

BACKGROUND: THE VON LENGEFELD SISTERS

Caroline - Beloved Sister-in-Law

Caroline von Lengefeld was born in 1763 at the court of Rudolstadt to lower nobility; her father was Thuringian Huntsmaster. Her sister Charlotte was born three years later. When their father died at a young age, the family faced financial difficulties. So Caroline was married off at the age of 16 to Baron von Beulwitz, who was to become Imperial Privy Councillor. She was wedded 1784, providing financial security for her mother and sister. They lived in the von Beulwitz household in Rudolstadt, where Caroline and her sister spent the summer of 1788 with Friedrich Schiller. Based on this close contact, Schiller scholars assume their relationship was more than just platonic. The surviving letters between the sisters and Schiller indicate they were involved in a love triangle.

Many scholars see Schiller's marriage to Charlotte von Lengefeld as a cover for a ménage-à-trois. After the wedding, Caroline retreats from Schiller and her sister, which many experts see as an attempt to give them space to lead a normal married life. It's not until Charlotte bears a son that her older sister steps back into the picture. The renewed contact between Schiller and Caroline leads to her novel "Agnes von Lilien", which Schiller helps her with.

Caroline has relationships with several men, including Bishop Carl Theodor von Dalberg. She divorces von Beulwitz 1794 to marry Wilhelm von Wolzogen.

Wolzogen becomes Chamberlain at the ducal court in Weimar, and so Caroline returns to Thuringia. She renews her relationship to Schiller and her sister, this time focused on Caroline's literary output.

Caroline maintains close contact with the artistic circles around Duchess Anna Amalia and befriends Johann von Goethe. 17 years after Schiller's death, Caroline writes his first biography, which is published 1830/31. After her husband's death, she moves to Jena in 1825, where she dies in 1827.

Charlotte - Beloved Wife

Charlotte von Lengefeld is born in 1766 and grows up in Rudolstadt with her sister Caroline, three years her elder. Charlotte is sent to Weimar to learn how to be a Lady-in-Waiting with her godmother Charlotte von Stein. She meets Schiller in Weimar and invites him to Rudolstadt, where he meets her sister Caroline. Her mother opposes her relationship with the penniless poet when Charlotte wants to marry Schiller, perhaps to conceal their ménage-à-trois. When Schiller is offered a professorship at Jena in 1790, they marry and move to the university town.

Her first son Karl Ludwig Friedrich is born 1793. Charlotte and Schiller have three more children, Ernst Friedrich Wilhelm (born 1796), Karoline Luise Friederike (born 1799) and Emilie Henriette Luise (born 1804).

When her sister steps back into their lives, Charlotte lets Caroline renew her relationship with her husband, and Schiller helps Caroline with her literary career. Scholars praise her influence as a caring, sensitive partner, not just on her husband's work, but also on that of Johann von Goethe and Karl Ludwig von Knebel.

Charlotte goes to visit her son Ernst in Bonn in the Fall of 1825, where she has her cataracts operated on. She dies of a stroke in Summer of 1826.

BACKGROUND: FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller is born in Marbach, Württemberg on Nov. 10, 1759, where he spends most of his childhood. The family later moves to Lorch and Ludwigsburg in Württemberg. His parents send him to Duke Karl Eugen's military school so the gifted boy can get a good education. But Schiller is not free to choose his own course of study. He starts off studying law, later switches to medicine. Arts and humanities are banned at the military school, so Schiller reads the classics, the great philosophers and playwrights, in secret.

Schiller's health has been fragile since he was a boy. When he graduates, he's disappointed not to receive a solid, financially stable job, instead has to settle for the modest pay of Regimental Doctor. His bleak prospects, numerous restrictions on his liberty, and his urge to follow his true calling as a playwright, finally lead Schiller to run away. After his breakthrough with the play "The Robbers", Schiller has to leave military school. He escapes to Mannheim, Leipzig, Gohlis, and finally Weimar. Schiller writes more plays and finds a publisher. Still, he hardly makes enough money to live off. It's not until he receives a professor's chair in Jena 1789 that his financial hardships end. Finally, he can start thinking about marrying and having children.

Out of his relationship with the Lengefeld Sisters, he finally marries Charlotte von Lengefeld on Feb. 22, 1790. Friedrich and Charlotte have four children. He ultimately settles in Weimar, which has become an intellectual and artistic hotbed, where leading figures like Goethe, Wieland and Herder live and work. Schiller' hopes to find stable work at the Weimar Court are disappointed, but he still manages to provide financial security for his family. In 1802, Schiller is ennobled by the Duke of Weimar for his artistic achievements. His poor health continues to plague him, repeatedly tying him to his bed. He dies May 9, 1805 of acute pneumonia..

For more info see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schiller

CAST (selected filmographies)

Hannah Herzsprung - (Caroline von Beulwitz)

"What fascinates me about this story of forbidden love is how near it brings us to Schiller, to who he really was. It makes Schiller come alive, lets us feel the passion in his works."

Hannah Herzsprung

2006 FOUR MINUTES / VIER MINUTEN – Chris Kraus

„Best Newcoming Actress“ Bavarian Film Awards

2007 DAS WAHRE LEBEN – Alain Gsponer

„Best German Actress“ German Film Awards

„Best Actress“ Grimme Awards

2008 THE BAADER MEINHOF KOMPLEX - Uli Edel

2008 THE READER / DER VORLESER - Stephen Daldry

2009 LILA, LILA – Stephan Daldry

2009 VISION – AUS DEM LEBEN DER HILDEGARD VON BINGEN – Margarethe von Trotta

2010 HABERMANN – Jura Herz

2010 Mini Series „THE WEISSENSEE SAGA“ – Friedemann Fromm

2011 HELL – Tim Fehlbaum

2011 FLUCHT AUS TIBET – Maria Blumencron

2011 Mini Series „H+“ – John Cabrera and Cosimo De Tommaso

2013 SCHUTZENGELE – Til Schweiger

2013 LUDWIG II - Marie Noelle and Peter Sehr

2013 DER GESCHMACK VON APFELKERNEN - Vivian Naefe

Florian Stetter - Friedrich Schiller

"I always thought I was incapable of love. This summer called this lack of love into doubt for the first time. And I'm very happy about it..."

Florian Stetter

2001 L'AMOUR – Philip Gröning

„Best Newcoming Actor“ Max-Ophüls-Award

2002 DIE FREUNDE DER FREUNDE – Dominik Graf

„Best Actor“ Grimme Awards

2004 NAPOLA – Dennis Gansel

2005 SOPHIE SCHOLL – Marc Rothemund

2009 NANGA PARBAT – Joseph Vilsmaier

2013 DER GESCHMACK VON APFELKERNEN – Vivian Naefe

2014 STATIONS OF THE CROSS – Dietrich Brüggemann (In Competition, Berlinale 2014)

Henriette Confurius - Charlotte von Lengefeld

"It was so wonderful to slip into this period, this story, the costumes and the feelings of the protagonists, surrounded by wonderful colleagues and remarkable human beings."

Henriette Confurius

2007 DIE WÖLFE - Friedemann Fromm

„Best Actress“ Grimme Awards

2010 DER GANZ GROSSE TRAUM – Sebastian Grobler

2011 AMEISEN GEHEN ANDERE WEGE – Catharina Deus

2014 EIN BLINDER HELD - DIE LIEBE DES OTTO WEIDT – Kai Christiansen

Dominik Graf - Writer/Director

Dominik Graf studied directing at Munich Film School HFF from 1974 to 1979. His graduating film "The Valued Guest" earned him the Bavarian Film Prize 1980 as Best New Director. He also worked as actor and screenwriter. In 1988, Dominik Graf won the German Film Prize in Gold as Best Director for his feature film THE CAT starring Götz George and Gudrun Landgrebe.

Graf is one of the most renowned and prolific German TV and film directors. In the 1990s he mainly worked for TV, receiving numerous awards, including the Bavarian TV Grand Prize, ten Adolf Grimme Prizes, three FFF TV Movie Awards and the Telestar. Specializing in crime dramas, several of his TV movies became legendary – including "Scene of the Crime" episode "Mrs. Boo Laughs " (1995) and "The Scorpion" (1998).

Dominik Graf's entry at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival caused a heated debate. Audiences and critics either loved or hated the drama DER FELSEN / THE ROCK, shot on digital video, sparking a reaction like few other modern German films have. THE ROCK went on to win the Bavarian Film Prize Producer's Award that same year.

Graf earned his fourth TV Prize from the German Acting Academy for "Hotte in Paradise" and the German TV Prize as Best Director for "Cold Spring" 2002. His episode of "Police: Call 110" titled "The Scarlet Angel" (2003) won Dominik Graf his fifth Adolf Grimme Prize (in Gold) and another German TV Prize as Best Crime Series.

His theatrical feature THE RED COCKADOO (2005) premiered at the Berlin Film Fest, earned several international prizes, including Best Film at Marrakesh, and Best Director at Madrid film fests.

His next installment of "Police: Call 110" entitled "He Should Be Dead", thriller "A City at Ransom" at "Süden & the Air Guitar Player" won several Adolf Grimme Prizes, including Best Director for all three.

Dominik Graf's portrayal of the Russian mob operating in Berlin, miniseries "Face to Face with Crime" set new standards for German TV, premiered at Berlin in 2010 to enthusiastic responses from the audience and critics, and won the German TV Prize 2010 as Best Miniseries.

In July 2010, Dominik Graf received the Schwabing Art Prize. His feature film DREILEBEN and doc "Avalanches of Memory" both premiered at the Berlin Film Fest 2010 and 2011. DREILEBEN won him his tenth Adolf Grimme Prize 2012. Graf's TV movie "The Invisible Girl" premiered at Hof Film Fest 2011 and scored high ratings on ZDF 12. Over 9 million viewers saw his hotly-debated "Scene of the Crime" episode "From the Depths of Time" on ARD in Fall of 2013. Dominik Graf's latest project is "The Dead Rich" for BR.

Uschi Reich – Producer (selected filmography)

Uschi Reich is one of Germany's most prolific producers. Among her productions are award-winning adaptations of internationally bestselling children's book as well as dramas like "A Year Ago in Winter", that premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2008 and was released in many territories worldwide.

1995 DAS MÄDCHEN ROSEMARIE – Bernd Eichinger

1998 FRAU RETTICH, DIE CZERNI UND ICH – Markus Imboden

1998 PÜNKTCHE UND ANTON - Caroline Link

2000 SCHULE - Marco Petry

2001 EMIL UND DIE DETEKTIVE - Franziska Buch

2002 DAS FLIEGENDE KLASSENZIMMER – Tomy Wiegand

„Best Producer“ Bavarian Film Award

2002 Bibi Blocksberg - Hermine Huntgeburth

„Best Producer“ Bavarian Film Award

2004 BIBI BLOCKSBERG UND DAS GEHEIMNIS DER BLAUEN EULEN – Franziska Buch

2004 OFFBEAT / KAMMERFLIMMERN – Hendrik Hölzemann

2005 WILD CHICKS – Vivian Naefe

2008 A YEAR AGO IN WINTER / IM WINTER EIN JAHR – Caroline Link

„Silver Lola“ German Film Awards

2008 BUDDENBROOKS – Heinrich Breloer

2009 SUMMERTIME BLUES – Marie Reich

2011 ALS DER WEIHNACHTSMANN VOM HIMMEL FIEL – Oliver Dieckmann

2012 DER GESCHMACK VON APFELKERNEN – Vivian Naefe

SCREENPLAY EXCERPT: LETTERS

CHARLOTTE (OFF)

"Dearest, desperately missed Caroline, today I must relate the incident of the Lady von Werthausen's false burial. Old Lord von Werthausen's very young wife has been in perfect health at a reception the night before, when her husband received word of her sudden passing the next day at noon in his law office... The old man hurried home and, sure enough, found his wife already in her coffin, ostensibly to prevent contagion. He cried over her, had her lain in state in an open coffin, and buried three days later. But his sister noticed the sudden absence of a certain Marquis von Bernbach, who had gotten along very well with Lady von Werthausen in recent weeks - along with half the young lady's wardrobe. And so, when the evidence for a secret elopement of the two lovers mounted, the Lady's grave was opened and a life-like dummy discovered in the coffin... This episode is adjudged to be quite remarkable and of international flair here in hushed tones. People say it reveals unexpected avenues of creativity in escaping an undesired marriage in certain straits, tu comprends..."

CAROLINE (OFF)

"... and I thank you, dear Lollo, for your idea of a wife's feigning her death and staging her funeral to escape an unwanted marriage. Things have not come to such extremes between Von Beulwitz and myself. He at least grants me the liberty of visiting you soon. I'm already looking forward to seeing the Englishman in the red coat ... PS: forgive me, I know he's a Scot..."

CAROLINE (OFF):

"Dear Mister Friedrich Schiller, you don't know me, but I found your little missive to my sister Charlotte von Lengefeld and read it without permission. It seems you both got along well very quickly. I'm a little concerned about my little sister, vous savez. Would you be so kind as to watch out for her? Please do not tell her I wrote. And if you like, you could visit us here in Rudolstadt on Saale. I'm sure our mother, who lives here with me and my husband, would be very interested in meeting a poet so famous at such a young age, whose play "The Robbers" is even thought bit scandalous. Rudolstadt is a day's journey south, a peaceful little duchy. Why don't you come disturb the peace a little?"

SCHILLER (OFF)

"... please forgive me, Wilhelm, I know I promised you a classical tragedy and a half-dozen long, fat, beautiful poems if you find me a wife with a dowry of at least twelve thousand thalers quickly. But now I am happy and confused. These Lengefeld Sisters don't have any money, either. But the summer, the river... would you forgive me if I return from Thuringia without a masterpiece, but with two flames burning in my heart?"

SCHILLER (OFF)

"... I was not in command of my actions last night, or rather this morning. This evening I am invited to a long-scheduled, late-running dinner with Dr. Rengmann, the physician who treated me here, but afterward I will try to steal away to see you ..."