



presents

BELOVED SISTERS

a film by Dominik Graf

In German with English Subtitles

**2014 Official Oscar® Entry – Germany
Best Foreign Language Film**

Awards

2014 Bavarian Film Awards – Winner: Best Cinematography

Official Selection

**2014 Berlin International Film Festival
2014 New York Film Festival
2014 Vancouver International Film Festival
2014 Chicago International Film Festival**

170 min., Germany/Austria, 2014.

Press materials:

<http://www.musicboxfilms.com/beloved-sisters-press>

Official site:

<http://www.musicboxfilms.com/beloved-sisters>

NY Publicity:

Sophie Gluck & Associates
Sophie Gluck
sophie@gluckpr.com
Aimee Morris
aimee@gluckpr.com
212-595-2432

LA Publicity:

Marina Bailey Film Publicity
Marina Bailey
marina@marinabailey.com
Sara Tehrani
pr@marinabailey.com
323-962-7511

Music Box Films Marketing/Publicity:

Brian Andreotti/Rebecca Gordon
312-508-5361/312-508-5362
bandreotti@musicboxfilms.com
rgordon@musicboxfilms.com

Distribution Contact:

Andrew Carlin
312-508-5360
acarlin@musicboxfilms.com

Awards Contact:

Fredell Pogodin & Associates
pr@fredellpogodin.com
323-931-7300

SYNOPSIS

BELOVED SISTERS depicts the unconventional romance between two devoted aristocratic sisters and a rebellious poet who took the European literary world by storm in the late eighteenth century. As the German Enlightenment flourishes in Weimar, vibrant Caroline von Beulwitz (Hannah Herszprung) finds herself in an unhappy marriage to provide for her mother and shy younger sister Charlotte von Lengefeld (Henriette Confurius). When both sisters fall for outspoken writer Friedrich Schiller (Florian Stetter), their desire ignites a journey of shared passion and creativity. Charlotte and Schiller marry so that the lovers may pursue their ménage-à-trois under the guise of convention, but as Caroline reveals herself to be a talented author in her own right, the trio's fragile equilibrium is threatened and the sisters' once unbreakable bond is irrevocably changed.

In this sweeping yet intimate romantic drama, which is also Germany's official Oscar® entry for Best Foreign Language Film, acclaimed director Dominik Graf illuminates the lives of two bold young women and one of classical literature's most celebrated figures with charm and contemporary energy.

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, with hardly any more money than the infamous but impoverished poet Schiller.

Time stands still for them, the world becomes an idyllic place of falling in love, making a few plans and imagining how things could go on. But 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, promises of a life less ordinary. Filming their correspondence, watching the characters write to each other, at times 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 his or her 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, following 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 film 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.

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 to 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-Westfalia 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-Westfalia for 11 days, and Innsbruck and Hall in Austria for six 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 the 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 script sounds very contemporary, 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 and 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.

–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. They wed in 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 that 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 retreated from Schiller and her sister, which many experts see as an attempt to give them space to lead a normal married life. It was not until Charlotte bore a son that her older sister stepped back into the picture. The renewed contact between Schiller and Caroline led to her novel "Agnes von Lilien", which Schiller helped her with.

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

Wolzogen became Chamberlain at the ducal court in Weimar, and so Caroline returned to Thuringia. She renewed her relationship with Schiller and her sister, this time focusing on her own literary output.

Caroline maintained close contact with the artistic circles around Duchess Anna Amalia and befriended Johann von Goethe. 17 years after Schiller's death, Caroline wrote his first biography, which was published in 1830/31. After her husband's death, she moved to Jena in 1825, where she died in 1827.

Charlotte - Beloved Wife

Charlotte von Lengefeld was born in 1766 and grew up in Rudolstadt with her sister Caroline, three years her elder. Charlotte was sent to Weimar to learn how to be a lady-in-waiting with her godmother Charlotte von Stein. She met Schiller in Weimar and invited him to Rudolstadt, where he met her sister Caroline. Her mother opposed her relationship with the penniless poet when Charlotte wanted to marry Schiller, perhaps to conceal their *ménage-à-trois*. When Schiller was offered a professorship at Jena in 1790, they married and moved to the university town.

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

When her sister stepped back into their lives, Charlotte let Caroline renew her relationship with her husband, and Schiller helped 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 went to visit her son Ernst in Bonn in the Fall of 1825, where she had her cataracts operated on. She died of a stroke in the summer of 1826.

BACKGROUND: FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller was born in Marbach, Württemberg on Nov. 10, 1759, where he spent most of his childhood. His family later moved to Lorch and Ludwigsburg in Württemberg. His parents sent him to Duke Karl Eugen's military school so the gifted boy could get a good education. But Schiller was not free to choose his own course of study. He started off studying law and later switched to medicine. Arts and humanities were banned at the military school, so Schiller read the classics, the great philosophers and playwrights, in secret.

Schiller's health had been fragile since he was a boy. When he graduated, he was disappointed not to receive a solid, financially stable job, instead he had 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 escaped to Mannheim, Leipzig, Gohlis and finally Weimar. Schiller wrote more plays and found a publisher. Still, he hardly made enough money to live off of. It was not until he received a professor's chair in Jena in 1789 that his financial hardships ended. Finally, he could start thinking about marrying and having children.

He finally married Charlotte von Lengefeld on Feb. 22, 1790. Friedrich and Charlotte had four children. He ultimately settled in Weimar, which had become an intellectual and artistic hotbed, where leading figures like Goethe, Wieland and Herder lived and worked. Schiller's hopes to find stable work at the Weimar Court were disappointed, but he still managed to provide financial security for his family. In 1802, Schiller was ennobled by the Duke of Weimar for his artistic achievements. His poor health continued to plague him, repeatedly tying him to his bed. He died May 9, 1805 of acute pneumonia.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Dominik Graf - Writer/Director

Dominik Graf studied directing at the Munich Film School HFF from 1974 to 1979. He also worked as an actor and screenwriter. His student film THE VALUED GUEST (1979) earned him the Bavarian Film Prize as Best New Director. In 1988, he won the German Film Prize in Gold as Best Director for his feature film THE CAT.

Graf is one of the most renowned and prolific German TV and film directors. In the 1990s he mainly worked in television, 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.

Dominik Graf's entry to the 2002 Berlin Film Festival caused a heated debate. Audiences and critics either loved or hated 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 for Best Producer that same year.

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

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

In July 2010, Dominik Graf received the Schwabing Art Prize. His feature film DREILEBEN (2011) and documentary AVALANCHES OF MEMORY (2012) both premiered at the Berlin Film Festival. DREILEBEN won for him his tenth Adolf Grimme Prize. His TV movie "The Invisible Girl" (2011) premiered at the Hof Film Festival 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 the 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 books as well as dramas like *A YEAR AGO IN WINTER*, which 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 PÜNKTCHEN UND ANTON - Caroline Link
- 2000 SCHULE - Marco Petry
- 2001 EMIL UND DIE DETEKTIVE - Franziska Buch
- 2002 DAS FLIEGENDE KLASSENZIMMER – Tomy Wiegand
2003 Bavarian Film Awards- Winner: Best Producer
- 2002 BIBI BLOCKSBERG - Hermine Huntgeburth
2003 Bavarian Film Awards- Winner: Best Producer
- 2004 BIBI BLOCKSBERG UND DAS GEHEIMNIS DER BLAUEN EULEN – Franziska Buch
- 2004 OFF BEAT / KAMMERFLIMMERN – Hendrik Hölzemann
- 2005 THE WILD CHICKS – Vivian Naefe
- 2008 A YEAR AGO IN WINTER / IM WINTER EIN JAHR – Caroline Link
2009 German Film Awards- Winner: Silver Lola for Best Film
- 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

CAST (selected filmographies)

Hannah Herzsprung - (Caroline von Beulwitz)

- 2006 FOUR MINUTES / VIER MINUTEN – Chris Kraus
2007 Bavarian Film Awards- Winner: Best Female Newcomer
- 2007 LIFE ACTUALLY / DAS WAHRE LEBEN – Alain Gsponer
2007 German Film Awards- Winner: Best Supporting Actress
- 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 – Jurai 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 SCHUTZENGEL – Til Schweiger
- 2013 LUDWIG II - Marie Noelle and Peter Sehr
- 2013 DER GESCHMACK VON APFELKERNEN - Vivian Naefe

Florian Stetter - Friedrich Schiller

- 2001 L'AMOUR – Philip Gröning
2001 Max Ophüls Festival- Winner: Best Male Newcomer
- 2002 DIE FREUNDE DER FREUNDE – Dominik Graf
2003 Adolfe Grimme Awards- Winner: Best Actor
- 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 (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
2009 Adolfe Grimme Awards- Winner: Best Actress
- 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

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 laid 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, 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 a 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 ..."

CAST

Caroline von Beulwitz	HANNAH HERZSPRUNG
Friedrich Schiller	FLORIAN STETTER
Charlotte von Lengefeld	HENRIETTE CONFURIUS
Louise von Lengefeld	CLAUDIA MESSNER
Wilhelm von Wolzogen	RONALD ZEHRFELD
Mrs von Stein	MAJA MARANOW
Mrs von Kalb	ANNE SCHÄFER
Friedrich von Beulwitz	ANDREAS PIETSCHMANN
Knebel	MICHAEL WITTENBORN
Körner	PETER SCHNEIDER
Schwenke	ELISABETH WASSERSCHIED

CREW

Written and directed by	DOMINIK GRAF
Producer	USCHI REICH
Co-producers	VEIT HEIDUSCHKA, MICHAEL KATZ, WOLFGANG STÜRZL, KARL BLATZ, HELGE SASSE, SOLVEIG FINA
Executive Producer	BERND KRAUSE
Commissioning Editors	BARBARA BUHL, BETTINA RICKLEFS, KATJA KIRCHEN, ANDREAS SCHREITMÜLLER, HEINRICH MIS
Script Consultant	MICHAEL HILD
Director of Photography	MICHAEL WIESWEG
Sound Director	HJALTI BAGER-JONATHANSSON
Production Designer	CLAUS JÜRGEN PFEIFFER
Costume Designer	BARBARA GRUPP
Make-Up Artists	NANNIE GEBHARDT-SEELE, TATJANA KRAUSKOPF, HENRIETTE ZWÖLFER
Casting Director	AN DORTHE BRAKER
Editor	CLAUDIA WOLSCHT
Music by	SVEN ROSSENBACH, FLORIAN VAN VOLXEM
Line Producer	ISMAEL FEICHTL

About Music Box Films

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films is a leading distributor of international, American independent and documentary content in North America, along with the best in international TV series and mini-series.

Releases in 2014 included Roger Michell's LE WEEK-END, written by Hanif Kureishi and starring Jim Broadbent; the Emmy Award winning French-language series "The Returned"; Pawel Pawlikowski's IDA, the official Polish submission to the Academy Awards®; the Sundance Audience Award-winning documentary THE GREEN PRINCE; and the award-winning documentary WATCHERS OF THE SKY.

Upcoming releases include Dominik Graf's BELOVED SISTERS, Germany's official submission to the Academy Awards®, and Shlomi and Ronit Elkabetz's GETT: THE TRIAL OF VIVIANE AMSALEM, Israel's official submission to the Academy Awards®.

Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.