

public in the private life of Germany's greatest playwright, a man who was also Goethe's friend and partner in the creation of the classical period of German literature.

Graf, who narrates of the story, states that Caroline might have found solace in the fact that *"keinerlei Nachwelt"* would find out exactly what really happened between the three of them and that is why she tried to destroy all evidence. It remains speculative. When Schiller wrote to his friend Christian Gottfried Körner in Dresden in the summer of 1788 commenting on his relationship to the two sisters it sounds more like friendship and not a *"Doppelliebe"*:

"Mein Herz ist ganz frei, dir zum Troste. Ich habe es redlich gehalten, was ich mir zum Gesetz machte und dir angelobte; ich habe meine Empfindungen durch Verteilung geschwächt und so ist denn das Verhältnis innerhalb der Grenzen einer herzlich vernünftigen Freundschaft."

Instead of a weakening of Schiller's emotions, divided as they allegedly were between two women, Graf's script intensifies the emotional bonds to a level where complications and jealousy are inevitable. It is even insinuated that Schiller is the father of Caroline's child while she is still married to von Beulwitz. What we do know is that Charlotte and Schiller actually got engaged in 1789 and married on Febr. 20, 1790. They had 4 children together, two sons (Karl + Ernst) and two daughters (Karoline + Emilie). Caroline later gets married to Wilhelm von Wolzogen, becomes a writer herself (*"Agnes von Lilien"* -1793) and died in 1847 in Jena.

So, when Wilhelm von Wolzogen, sitting together with the doctor who attended Schiller after one of his severe tuberculosis attacks in 1802 reflects on the nature of Schiller's relationship to the beloved sisters, his skillful summary lends an aura of authenticity that makes you forget that this movie is itself an adroit mixture of truth, tenuous speculation and outright fiction.

"Es ist ihre Dreisamkeit, die Schiller stets wieder gesucht hat, ihre Frauen-Gemeinschaft, in die sie ihn ganz und gar hineingelassen haben, damals im Sommer 1788, und aus der sie ihn dann statt ins Paradies in die Einzelhaft der Ehe geschickt haben."

Maybe we can safely assume that Schiller experienced extremes of emotion, both joyous and painful, in this summer of 1788, but it was probably not a priapic paradise for Schiller. What is self evident is that it was a special relationship with two wonderful women. The ensuing engagement and marriage to Charlotte was blessed with 4 children, implying a happy union. The seventeen years that he has left before his early death in 1805 were filled with his greatest achievements (*Wallenstein, Maria Stuart, Die Jungfrau von Orleans, Wilhelm Tell, die Balladen*) and his stable marriage to Charlotte is very likely one reason for that.

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Friday Film Fest Series



Die geliebten Schwestern

By Dominik Graf

March 18th, 2016

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

Non-Members \$15, Members \$12

The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

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Die geliebten Schwestern (2014)

Director: Dominik Graf
Producer: Grigoriy Dobrygin
Screenplay: Dominik Graf
Music: Sven Rossenbach
Florian van Volxem
Camera: Michael Wiesweg
Editor: Claudia Wolscht
Length: 138 Minutes
Released: 2014

Cast: Henriette Confurius (Charlotte von Lengefeld); Florian Stetter (Friedrich Schiller); Hannah Herzprung (Caroline von Beulwitz); Claudia Messner (Madame Lengefeld); Ronald Zehrfeld (Wilhelm von Wolzogen); Andreas Pietschmann (Friedrich von Beulwitz); Maja Maranow (Frau von Stein); Peter Schneider (Christian Gottfried Körner); Anne Schäfer (Charlotte von Kalb)

Commentary: Karl Moehlmann



passionate relationship with Henriette von Arnim. 1787 marked Schiller's first stay in Weimar where he resumed his amorous relationship with Charlotte von Kalb. In the absence of Goethe (who was in Italy from 1786 -1788) Schiller made the acquaintance of poet Christoph Martin Wieland and of philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder.

Summer of 1788

Schiller met Charlotte von Lengefeld for the first time in Weimar in 1788 where she was spending time from the fall of 1787 until the spring of 1788 at the house of her godmother Charlotte von Stein. The purpose of her visit was to learn the proper manners of the court society and ready herself for a marriage that would also benefit her financially stressed family. Her sister Caroline had achieved a similar goal through her marriage to Herrn von Beulwitz, whose estate in Rudolstadt supported their widowed mother.

Despite the financial benefits, Caroline does not love her husband. So, when a Scottish suitor leaves Charlotte and Schiller appears, Caroline is eager to meet him as well. Both sisters fall in love with young Schiller and invite him to spend the summer near their residence in Rudolstadt, a small town located south of Weimar at the Saale river. His daily visits to the Lengefelds, his love for both sisters and their unconventional *Glück zu dritt* or *Dreisamkeit* is the subject of this movie.

Ein einziges Billett

One has to concede that the proof for this unusual arrangement (one that seems far-fetched in the context of the conservative conventions at the end of the 18th century) is rather meager. The narrative portrays the sisters as having taken a vow never to leave each other alone in the roaring sound of the waterfall of Schaffhausen 5 years earlier in 1783, when Caroline was seventeen and her sister was twenty. Charlotte was engaged then to Friedrich von Beulwitz, the man she married out of *materieller Not* after the death of their father a year later. Granted, the fact that it was a loveless marriage as even her mother concedes and that she was never happy in this relationship would leave her emotionally susceptible. And then there is a single note (*Billet*) that Schiller had sent to Caroline in the summer of 1788. It is the only written evidence that survived (half charred) when Caroline destroyed all written evidence shortly before her death.

The note reads:

“Heute Nacht oder vielmehr heute Morgen war ich nicht Herr meines Tuns und am Abend bin ich zwar eingeladen auf einen lange geplanten, spät beginnenden Diner bei Rengmann, dem Arzt, der mich hier behandelte, aber ich werde mich dennoch nachher zu Ihnen wegzustehlen versuchen.”

To Dominik Graf, the director of the movie, “*das nicht Herr meines Tuns*” can mean only one thing and so we are given to believe that Schiller wrote this note after he had spent the night together with Caroline. But Caroline never mentions these intimate details when she writes a biography late in her life. Graf speculates that Caroline feared the indiscretion in anticipation of the enormous interest of the

Friedrich von Schiller Marbach 1759 – Weimar 1805

On Sept. 22, 1782, Schiller flees his home state of Württemberg with his friend Andreas Streicher. Karl Eugen, the duke of Württemberg, had jailed Schiller for 2 weeks in July because of his illicit trip to Mannheim earlier that year. Schiller had gone there to attend the successful première of his play “Die Räuber”. Schiller, a medical doctor (*Regimentsmedikus*) in Stuttgart at that time, was ordered by Karl Eugen to stop the *Komödienschreiben*.

The duke might have misjudged the revolutionary nature of Schiller's famous first play (*In Tyrannos*) but he couldn't tolerate the insubordination of any of his subjects, especially not one who had attended the elite military school named after him, “*Die Hohe Karlsschule*” in Stuttgart. Schiller's escape marks the beginning of a fascinating journey that entailed many hardships but ultimately culminated in a friendship with Goethe. That friendship marked the beginning of the classical literary period in Weimar, with Schiller ranking as Germany's greatest playwright.

Schiller's journey takes him first to Mannheim, then Frankfurt and Oggersheim/Ludwigshafen and finally to the small village of Bauerbach near Suhl in Thuringia where his sponsor Henriette von Wolzogen maintained a residence. After finishing *Kabale und Liebe* in 1783 and starting work on *Don Carlos*, Schiller returned to Mannheim where he signed a contract with theatre manager Dahlberg. But his stay in Mannheim was not a happy one despite the initial stage success of *Kabale und Liebe*. The revolutionary tone of his poetry evoked animosity.

Schiller's debts began to mount and his creditors became more impatient. From April 1785 until 1787, Schiller resided as the guest of Christian Gottfried Körner in Leipzig und Dresden. After moving into Körner's “Weinberghaus” along the Elbe river in Loschwitz/Dresden, Schiller wrote the timeless Ode to Joy and developed a