

THE GERMAN SOCIETY'S

Friday Film Fest Series



Jenseits der Stille

Credits:

Director: Caroline Link

Script: Caroline Link and Beth Serlin

Producer: Jakob Claussen, Thomas Wöbke, Luggi Waldleitner

Musik: Niki Reiser

Camera: Gernot Roll

Sound: Andreas Wölki

Cast: Sylvie Testud_(Laura),_Tatjana Trieb_(Laura as Child),

Howie Seago (Martin, Laura's father) Laurel Severin (Martin als

Kind), Emmanuelle Laborit (Kai, Laura's mother), Sibylle

Canonica(Clarissa) Matthias Habich (Gregor (Clarissa's husband)), Alexandra

Bolz , (Marie), Hansa Cypionka(Tom) Doris Schade (Lilli),

Horst Sachtleben (Robert) Hubert Mulzer

(Herr Gärtner) Birge Schade (Fräulein Mertens),

Stephan Kampwirth (Bankbeamter), Lea Mekhméche(Johanna)

Precis – Allen Krumm

Finite, flawed, mortal and sometimes literally handicapped, our lives consist of an endless struggle against such ultimate limitations. We suffer further from proximate limitations, by the particulars of our daily lives, by the needful nexus of family and friends, by what we keep, by what we let go of, by our longings and losses and finally sometimes even by our love. Occasionally, like Icarus, for a brief spell we have the illusion we have transcended those limitations, but in the end the human condition seems always to condemn us to kick against the pricks. Unless, as we will see in Caroline Link's *Beyond Silence*, we are willing to make a leap of faith into ourselves. This is a story about such limitations and about those who leap beyond their limits and those who don't.

Laura is a young girl with deep insight into the reality of limitations. Her parents are deaf, resident aliens in the spoken world the rest of us take for granted. Laura is a permanent guest worker in her parents deaf world and she must cross and re-cross the boundary between her world and their world. She must continually move between these worlds because her voice is their voice and her ears their ears. In a very real sense, Laura is prematurely old, since sometimes she is the parent and they are the children.

Laura loves her parents dearly, and is especially close to her father. But it is Laura's mother **Kai** who has already made her own leap of faith, having determined to live life fully despite her deafness. She loves her life, whatever its limits, and neither needs nor wants sympathy or privilege because of her handicap. She has transcended the bitter inner struggles we sometimes glimpse in her husband **Martin**.

Laura is introduced to a third world, the world of music by her Aunt **Clarissa**, a woman even more limited by her beauty, talent and frustrated ambition than her brother Martin (Laura's father) is by his deafness. It is a world which is impossible for Laura to share with her parents and one which sparks an awareness in Laura that she may be able to transcend the limits of her life with

her parents. The leap of faith Laura wants to make is one into the limitless world of music.

Laura's growing talent with the clarinet wins her the chance to compete for a prestigious school opening, and she stays for an entire summer with her Aunt Clarissa in Berlin in order to focus on her preparation for the competition. In Berlin, she meets **Tom**, a teacher for the deaf, who like her is not deaf and inhabits both worlds. Unlike Aunt Clarissa, who only has the illusion that she has leaped, Tom seems to have already completed his own liberating leap and is at peace with his place in the world.

Living on the far side of the leap she made, perhaps defying her limits, Laura's mother Kai dies in an accident, riding a bicycle that she perhaps should never have been riding, and Laura returns to live with her father and little sister for a time. Unfortunately to Laura it is the same circumscribed, emotionally crippling world in which she grew up. She finds she cannot submit anymore to her father's world and her place in it, so she returns to Berlin.

When Laura performs her entrance audition, her father shows up to watch, signing to her that there is a difference between hearing and understanding: "Es gibt einen Unterschied zwischen 'Hören' und 'Verstehen'," sagt er ihr in der Sprache seiner Hände". He understands her music now or at least her need for it, he seems to say, even though he had previously seen it as a force which was stealing her from him. He has made the leap that neither he nor his sister Clarissa could ever make before (whether as children or adults), and now he wants Laura to know she should proceed with hers. Perhaps he should have signed 'the Unlimited shall live by faith.'