

Métropole Films Distribution presents

FOUR MINUTES

(Vier Minuten)

A Film By Chris Kraus



German with English Subtitles • 35mm • Unrated • 112 min



Winner of Four
2007 Bavarian Film Awards
Including
Best Actress: Monica Bleibtreu



Winner
Golden Lola Award Best Film
(German Oscar)
Including
Best Actress: Monica Bleibtreu



Winner
Hamptons International
Film Festival
Audience Award: Best Feature



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FOUR MINUTES

Synopsis and Principal Cast / Crew

Synopsis

Jenny is young. Her life is over. She killed someone. And she would do it again.

When an 80-year-old piano teacher discovers the girl's secret, her brutality and her dreams, she decides to transform her pupil into the musical wunderkind she once was.

Principal Cast

Traude Krüger	Monica Bleibtreu
Jenny von Loeben	Hannah Herzsprung
Mütze	Sven Pippig
Kowalski	Richy Müller
Ayse	Jasmin Tabatabai
Warden Meyerbeer	Stefan Kurt
Gerhard von Loeben	Vadim Glowna
Nadine Hoffmann	Nadja Uhl
Journalist Wahrig	Peter Davor

Principal Crew

Written and Directed by	Chris Kraus
Producers	Meike Kordes and Alexandra Kordes
Co-Producer	Chris Kraus
Director of Photography	Judith Kaufmann bvk
Set Design	Silke Buhr
Costumes	Gioia Raspé
Make-Up	Susana Sánchez
Sound	Andreas Ruft
Music	Annette Focks
Editor	Uta Schmidt
Casting	Nina Haun

Co-Produced by SWR, BR, ARTE und Journal Film Klaus Volkenborn KG

Supported by MFG Baden-Württemberg
Bundesbeauftragter für Kultur und Medien
Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg
Filmförderungsanstalt FFA

A Production by Kordes & Kordes Film GmbH

Over 32 International Awards for FOUR MINUTES, including:

- 2007 Bavarian Film Awards: Best Actress: Monika Bleibtreu, Best Young Actress: Hannah Herzsprung, Best Screenplay: Chris Kraus, VGF Award: Meike Kordes, Alexandra Kordes
- 2007 German Oscar (Golden Lola Award), Best Film, Best Actress: Monika Bleibtreu
- 2006 Shanghai International Film Festival: Best Film

FOUR MINUTES Extended Synopsis

It's spring time and 80-year-old former pianist TRAUDE KRÜGER (Monica Bleibtreu) has been driving to the same women's prison at Luckau almost every morning since 1944. She teaches her female students – thieves, frauds and killers – how to play the piano.

Today, however, is a special day. Ms. Krüger has the new concert piano delivered. Along with good-natured prison officer MÜTZE (Sven Pippig) she had been saving up money for years to buy it. Unfortunately, the transport seems to be ill-fated. The removal men turn out to be criminals, and Mütze's adversary KOWALSKI (Richy Müller) has to come to Traude's rescue. Inevitably, the new instrument is damaged. On top of that, a couple of rebellious inmates break into a riot, eventually shattering the vain warden MEYERBEER's (Stefan Kurt) fish tank.

Since Ms. Krüger is held responsible for the unfortunate event, Meyerbeer threatens to revoke her teaching license, declaring the piano lessons a thing of the past. He demands that Traude get more than just a handful of students interested in her service. And he urges her to hurry. Otherwise, she will be forced to quit her work as a piano teacher at the prison for good, a job she's had for sixty years.

Seeking out new talents, Ms. Krüger meets lethargic, violent and volatile JENNY VON LOEBEN (Hannah Herzsprung). As a teenager, she has brutally killed a man, and is therefore considered highly dangerous. However, she used to be a wunderkind, performing at big concert halls at the age of ten. Once she hit puberty, she went downhill ending up a street kid in the gutter. She cut all her ties with her adoptive parents. As her psychologist MS. HOFFMANN (Nadja Uhl) suggests, Jenny is forlorn, reluctant and highly suicidal.

When the uncontrollable Jenny beats the living daylights out of prison officer Mütze at her trial piano lesson, she is put into solitary confinement. Still, Traude wins warden Meyerbeer's approval for an experiment. Against the protest of Kowalski and other officers, Traude is allowed to train Jenny at the piano so that she can participate in a contest for young talents, called "Musical Youth". Traude argues that the success of an inmate would strengthen the prison's public reputation, give warden Meyerbeer's image a boost and provide her with the coveted culmination of her teaching career. Jenny agrees to participate in the competition since it is her only chance to get out of solitary confinement.

When Traude and Jenny start their piano lessons, they keep them a secret from Mütze who's still recovering after Jenny's attack. Moreover, they have to prevent the uncooperative Kowalski from disturbing their sessions. To appease the prison officers, the piano is moved from the library to the prison's gymnasium, thus forcing Traude to teach Jenny during the inmates' basketball matches.

To make matters worse, Jenny's adversary AYSE (Jasmin Tabatabai) goes to great lengths to break Jenny's spirit. Little by little, the two vastly different women, Traude and Jenny, form a bond over the struggle with their opponents and the prison's bureaucracy. Although Jenny despises Mozart and Schubert, and Ms. Krüger tries to eliminate Jenny's leaning towards "negro music" – which Jenny furtively indulges in – the two women slowly approach one another. It's an odd coupling: Traude, the old lady of Prussian rigidity, and loose cannon Jenny, who is eager to lay waste to everything around her.

Early summer. Jenny wins the first round of the piano contest at the regional level. Although she tries to use the occasion for a break-out attempt, Traude manages to calm down Kowalski, their accompanying officer. Kowalski seems to finally recognize the girl's talent. In tears, Jenny tells Traude about her past: she lost her baby while she was in prison. Jenny's frankness ultimately creates a strong bond, far exceeding their mutually exploitative relationship.

It's mid-August. Everything seems to go smoothly as Jenny wins the contest's second round. Newspapers across Germany run stories about Jenny's extraordinary talent and her teacher's efforts. A JOURNALIST (Peter Davor) tells Traude about Jenny's past which she hasn't paid attention to so far. In a case of unparalleled brutality, the young girl decapitated her boyfriend's father. Completely horrified, Traude cancels the piano lessons.

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Extended Synopsis, continued

In the midst of the upheaval, Jenny's father JOACHIM VON LOEBEN (Vadim Glowna), a rich public prosecutor, shows up. It turns out that he financed the press campaign in favour of his daughter. He also had Traude observed ever since she started teaching Jenny. He confesses that he abused Jenny when she was a child, urging Traude to continue her lessons with his daughter.

Mr. von Loeben brings along archival documents regarding Traude during the Nazi era. Gestapo protocols reveal that she had already worked as a piano teacher at the penitentiary in 1944. But more importantly, she betrayed a communist who she wasn't just acquainted with, but whom she dearly loved. That feeling of guilt and of a life un-lived was to chain her to the prison for decades to come, the place of her lost love.

Traude has a nervous breakdown after which she returns to the prison to resume her lessons without telling Jenny about the conversation with her father.

Meanwhile, Traude's confidant Mütze is back on duty. Heavily scarred from Jenny's attack and frustrated to see Traude spend all her time and energy on his arch enemy, of all people, he transfers Jenny to Ayse's cell. In an autumn night, he has Ayse assault the young pianist Jenny to burn her hands with gasoline. But Jenny defends herself, beating Ayse senseless.

Unable to figure out how the incident came about, and assuming that Jenny is the perpetrator, warden Meyerbeer decides to make an example of the case. He refuses to let Jenny participate in the piano contest's finals. Protesting Meyerbeer's verdict, Traude quits her job at the penitentiary.

It's winter. Traude's last day at work. When the removal men pull up to haul away the piano, Traude uses the transport to smuggle Jenny out of prison. She blackmails Mütze into helping her by mentioning her knowledge of the true circumstances of Jenny's attack on Ayse.

When they arrive at Traude's apartment, Jenny finds shoes, a dress and make-up to put on for the contest. The grand finale at the Deutsche Oper Berlin will take place in two hours. Traude breaks the law, risking everything to give Jenny the chance to participate in the contest.

But when Jenny learns that her father had visited Traude, she accuses her of being paid by him. Since she deems her father responsible for her miserable life, the two women's egos clash. When Jenny takes off in a fit of rage, and Traude tries to stop her, Jenny knocks her out and escapes.

A couple of minutes later, Jenny comes back to tend to the unconscious old woman. When Traude comes to, she confesses the betrayal she had committed half a century ago. She backstabbed the "only person I have ever loved." Traude convinces Jenny to participate in the contest after all. Hailing a cab, they drive off to Berlin.

Much to their surprise, Joachim von Loeben shows up at the concert hall. Father and daughter have one last frank exchange of words. And then, Jenny is all alone on stage. Five-hundred people are waiting for her performance, when, suddenly, the police arrive after her break-out has been discovered. Accompanying the police squad is warden Meyerbeer, furious about the incident. Traude successfully pleads with Meyerbeer to grant Jenny just a few minutes before arresting her.

Jenny doesn't have much time: four minutes only. But she uses her time wisely, doing something that no one, not even Traude, would have expected.

FOUR MINUTES

About the Film

About the Project

In feverish images, Chris Kraus's second feature film *FOUR MINUTES* tells the story of an impossible relationship.

For over sixty years, aged pianist Traude Krüger has been teaching piano at the women's prison. But she's never met someone like Jenny, a killer beating everything around her to a pulp just to amuse herself. But Jenny used to be a great musical talent. And she still is under her impenetrable facade. She could manage to win a prestigious piano contest she is allowed to participate in despite her prison sentence. However, a contest is no challenge to someone who wants life to stand still.

Director Chris Kraus is considered one of the most captivating young filmmakers in Germany. His debut *SHATTERED GLASS* was the year 2002's revelation, winning two Bavarian Film Awards, the German Screenplay Award, the German Award for Best Photography, the Golden Camera Award for lead actor Jürgen Vogel and the New Talent Award for best directorial effort.

Chris Kraus also wrote several screenplays for German celebrity directors like Detlev Buck ("*LiebesLuder – Bundle of Joy*") and worked for Academy Award winners Pepe Danquart ("*C(r)ook*") and Volker Schlöndorff ("*The Tin Drum II*"). His screenplays have garnered numerous awards.

FOUR MINUTES won the Grand Prize of the State of Baden-Württemberg in 2004 for best screenplay even before the film went into production.

About the Team

Boasting a stellar cast with famed actors such as Monica Bleibtreu, Richy Müller, Vadim Glowna and Nadja Uhl, the film features as yet unknown Hannah Herzsprung as Jenny in a dazzling debut performance.

Among the outstanding team members of *FOUR MINUTES* is director of photography Judith Kaufmann, who has won multiple awards (including the German Award for Best Photography, the Bavarian Film Prize and the 2006 Marburg Camera Prize for Life Achievement).

Also contributing to the distinctive look of *FOUR MINUTES* is internationally acclaimed make-up Artist Susana Sánchez (Goya Award winner 2001). Last but not least, composer Annette Focks' nuanced, moving score helps define the characters' inner journeys.

Produced by the up-and-coming Berlin-based production company Kordes & Kordes Film (*VLADIMIR MALAKHOV*, 2004, directed by Carsten Fiebeler; *CAN YOU SEE ME?*, 2005, directed by Katinka Feistl) and in the tradition of European auteur cinema, *FOUR MINUTES* – just like its predecessor *SHATTERED GLASS* – tells its story in a highly concentrated, passionate and unconventional way, focusing entirely on the powerful characters.

FOUR MINUTES

Director's Statement

I spent eight years of my childhood in a boarding school where I met the person who opened up the world of art to me: the director of the "Schülerheim Krueger," an elderly lady, strict, very Prussian and amazingly down to earth - especially in such matters as the slaughtering of pigs, for example.

Every six months the village butcher arrived accompanied by an invariably sullen sow, which was then brought down to the cellar of the building and processed into sausages at an incredible speed. For lunch that day we ate fresh sausage soup, Metzelsupp' as we call it in Hesse, and afterwards a Mozart Sonata was performed for us all.

I don't remember which one, but it was always the same. Frau Krueger sat absent-mindedly at her rather battered instrument, stroking the keys. In her view, humans should not only thank the Lord but should also be grateful to their prey, and that these contradictory forces could only be celebrated with music.

There was something prehistoric about this. We boys felt like a group of young Neanderthals present at a ceremony where in the pale glow of the fire, our old shaman woman was painting the dead antelopes, slain with clubs, on the walls of our cave. As a result, I have never experienced classical music, or art in general as being anything bourgeois or middle class, even when it really was bourgeois or middle class music or art.

I have always been fascinated by the wildness, the power and also that inexplicable element that is at the core of all artistic endeavours. And sometimes it has also intervened in my life. In FOUR MINUTES I wanted to show how such an intervention could happen. That's all I can say about it.

Monica Bleibtreu—Traude

Only 62 years old, for her role in FOUR MINUTES Monica Bleibtreu underwent an elaborate make-up procedure to metamorphose into the elderly Prussian piano teacher Traude. Monica Bleibtreu was trained as an actress at the renowned Max-Reinhardt-Seminar in her native Vienna, one of Europe's prime destinations for aspiring thespians. She went on to perform at nearly all of the most prominent theatres across the German-speaking countries. She became known to a much wider audience in the 1970s when she appeared in numerous TV-movies. In 2005, Ms. Bleibtreu received an award for most successful German TV-actress in honour of her touching portrayal of a farmer who falls prey to cancer in Rainer Kaufmann's multiple award-winning TV-movie "Maria's Last Journey." In the category Best Lead Actress of the Year, she won both the Bavarian and German Television Award as well as the Grimme-Award. For her role as Katia Mann alongside Armin Mueller-Stahl in the Emmy Award-winning, internationally acclaimed TV-Event "The Mann Family – The Novel of a Century," she was honoured with the Golden Grimme-Award. Monica Bleibtreu was introduced to an international audience in a strong supporting role next to her son, superstar Moritz Bleibtreu, in Germany's most celebrated feature film of recent years, Tom Tykwer's world-famous RUN LOLA RUN.

Hannah Herzsprung –Jenny

Between February 2004 and January 2005, more than 1,200 girls and young women from across Germany came to audition for the part of the aggressive, traumatized and inwardly torn Jenny. The director and producers were not only seeking a sensitive, highly talented actress, but a girl who had to be convincing both a brutal loner and a genius piano player. After a year-long quest for the right girl, the team picked Hannah Herzsprung, who knew how to beat severe competition from Germany's young acting vanguard. She then had to undergo half a year of intensive piano coaching, three months of box training, and – most importantly – she had to do her own stunts. Through her artistic powerhouse performance, TV-actor Bernd Herzsprung's nearly unknown daughter (the audience had glimpsed samples of her talent in TV series like "18 – Alone Among Girls," produced by German private network ProSieben, or in TV-movies such as "Emilia – The Second Chance") delivers her captivating debut on the big screen with FOUR MINUTES.

Sven Pippig—Mütze

After being trained as a stage actor at the State Academy of Hannover, Sven Pippig (born in Hof in 1961) joined the ensemble of Württemberg's State Theatre in Esslingen. At that time, he met actress Nina Hoss, with whom he starred in Christian Petzold's award-winning 2001 TV-movie "Toter Mann – Dead Man". His moving portrayal of the melancholic murderer "Blum" turned out to be his breakthrough performance. For his acting achievement, Pippig received the Grimme-Award for Best Lead Actor of the Year. Since then, he's shown his extraordinary talent in a variety of TV and feature films, such as "Wolfsburg" (directed by Christian Petzold) and "Absolute Giganten – Absolute Giants" (directed by Sebastian Schipper). He also appeared in several independent films by Swiss director Marc Ottiker, who had discovered Pippig in his spectacular big screen debut "Nahe am Wasser – Close to the Water" in 1994. With his residence still in his native Franconia, Pippig also teaches acting classes at Berlin's "University of the Arts" (UdK).

Richy Müller—Kowalski

Richy Müller has had the most exceptional acting career. Born in Mannheim in 1955, the former toolmaker from a working-class background fought his way to the top among the German acting elite. Müller's debut in the sensational social drama "Die große Flatter – The Great Escape" (directed by Marianne Lüdcke) became his breakthrough performance, playing a homeless 16-year-old at the age of 24. Remaining faithful to the theatre throughout the 1980s, Müller entered the world of feature films in the early 1990s, appearing in movies of the so-called "Munich School" (directors include Rainer Kaufmann and Doris Dörrie). Ever since then, he's been one of the few top stars in German cinema. Müller celebrated his greatest critical success as a terrorist in Christian Petzold's drama "Die innere Sicherheit – The State I Am In" about the Red Army Fraction. Müller has starred in more than 60 national and international productions. His impressive physical presence has made him the first choice of director Rob Cohen in the US-production of Vin Diesel's action movie XXX. Müller has also appeared in the Canadian film "I'll Be Seeing You" (directed by Will Dixon).

Jasmin Tabatabai—Ayse

Born in Teheran in 1967, Jasmin Tabatabai grew up in Iran and Germany. A trained musician, she had her break-through in feature film with Katja von Garnier's commercially successful road movie BANDITS. Playing the boss of a women's jail band, she became an idol for a whole new generation of young women. Tabatabai also composed the film's hugely successful score that sold over 700,000 units, winning the "Golden Vinyl Record Award". The BANDITS score is said to be the biggest-selling European soundtrack ever. In the late 1990s, Tabatabai became an icon of German film, playing lead characters in Helmut Dietl's LATE NIGHT SHOW or Xavier Koller's Oscar-nominated Tucholsky-adaptation GRIPSHOLM. Her award-winning performance as a Persian lesbian posing as a heterosexual man in UNVEILED, distributed in the US by Wolfe Releasing, has made her a favourite at the 2006 German Film Awards, on a par with German actress du jour Nadja Uhl.

Vadim Glowna—Gerhard

Born in Eutin in 1941, Vadim Glowna is hailed as one of Germany's internationally most successful actors. From a very early age, Glowna was influenced by his kinship with the great literary Cechov family. He went on to receive professional acting training, after which thespian legend Gustav Gründgens discovered the young man for his ensemble at Hamburger Schauspielhaus. Glowna soon played leads in award-winning international feature productions, and segued smoothly into directing in the 1970s. In addition to his acting career, Glowna, a universally trained, well-read intellectual, produces films, writes novels, plays and poems, and works as a professor for screen acting at the Düsseldorf Academy of Arts. In a record number of 130 films, Glowna worked with directing legends such as Claude Chabrol, Sam Peckinpah, Maximilian Schell, Alain Corneau, Edgar Reitz, Oskar Roehler und George Tabori. In 2001, he received the German Film Critics' Award for his achievement in Oskar Roehler's "Die Unberührbare – No Place To Go." In 2004, he was honoured with the Premio Bacco of the Italian Film Critics, and in 1981 he won the German Film Award. In the same year, Glowna was the only German to ever win the Camera d'Or at Cannes with his worldwide success DESPERADO CITY.

Chris Kraus, Writer and Director

Chris Kraus was born in Göttingen in 1963. After stints as a journalist and illustrator, he studied at the German Film and Television Academy from 1991 to 1998, where he now works as a lecturer. For ten years, Chris Kraus has enjoyed an outstanding reputation as one of Germany's most acclaimed screen writers. Nominated twice for the German Screenplay Award, he won the Screenplay Award of the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg for *FOUR MINUTES* as well as the 2002 German Award for the Advancement of Film for Best Screenplay for his debut feature *SHATTERED GLASS*. Kraus also received several awards for his directing achievement, such as the 2003 Bavarian Film Award. The writer-director spent more than eight years developing *FOUR MINUTES*, a lot more time than the movie's title would suggest. "I have always believed that motivation is just another word for talent. But what if it's different? What if someone has talent, but lacks motivation? When a story revolves around an artist, that's a crazy premise: creating a character that could achieve anything, but aspires to nothing. Most artists, including myself, are haunted by the imagination that it could be the other way round."

Annette Focks, Score

Composer Annette Focks strongly contributed to the overall impact of *FOUR MINUTES*. Composing the final concert of the film was an especially tough task, as it had to match the works of classic German composers like Schumann, Mozart and Bach. Focks, however, ran with the challenge, creating a sensational piece of piano music. After graduating summa cum laude from the score composition class at the Academy of Film and Television in Munich, Annette Focks received a grant from the European Biennial for Music in 1997 and 1998. She then participated in a workshop held by Hollywood sound designer Randy Thom ("The Incredibles," "War of the Worlds," "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire"). In 2002, Focks scored big by enrolling in an orchestration programme under the direction of legendary Hollywood orchestrator Steven Scott Smalley ("Batman," "Mission Impossible" and "The Insider") at Universal Studios Los Angeles. She wrote the music for South African Academy Award candidate *MALUNDE* in 2002, and composed numerous soundtracks for German television productions. In 2005, she won the German Film Award for Rainer Kaufmann's *MARIA'S LAST JOURNEY* and Isabel Kleefeld's *THE CANTERVILLE GHOST*. In the same year, she composed the score for Vivian Naefe's hit children's movie *WILD CHICKS* before joining director Chris Kraus's creative team on *FOUR MINUTES*.

Judith Kaufmann, Director of Photography

In March 2006, Judith Kaufmann received the Marburg Camera Prize for her lifetime achievement, one of the most prestigious international awards for outstanding camera work. Born in Austria in 1962, Kaufmann at last belongs to the circle of Europe's great directors of photography. Three-time German Camera Prize nominee, she won the coveted trophy in 2003 for her brilliant effort behind the lens of Chris Kraus's *SHATTERED GLASS*. She has also been honoured with the 2003 Bavarian Film Award (for "Elefantenerz – Elephant's Heart", directed by Züli Aladag) and the 2005 Hessian Film Award (for "Fremde Haut – In Orbit", directed by Angelina Maccarone). She shot big-scale German productions such as smash hit "Jetzt oder nie, Zeit ist Geld – Now Or Never" or "Erbsen auf halb sechs – Peas at 5:30," both of which were directed by Lars Büchel. However, she also supports smaller arthouse fare like Vanessa Jopp's award-winning debut "Vergiss Amerika – Forget America" or Chris Kraus's projects.

FOUR MINUTES Company Information

Autobahn, Distributor

FOUR MINUTES is the premiere US release of Autobahn, an international and domestic theatrical distribution and production division of the German company Senator Film Produktion GmbH and Senator Film Verleih GmbH. Autobahn's domestic division is part of Senator's U.S. production and theatrical distribution operations, based in Los Angeles and launched in 2007 by its President Marco Weber.

Previously released titles of Autobahn in Germany are HARD CANDY, BRICK, SHORTBUS, the teenage-drama 2:37 and FUER DEN UNBEKANNTEN HUND, currently in theatres. Upcoming international and U.S. releases include the German movie SHORT CUT TO HOLLYWOOD, the American teen-horror film ALL THE BOYS LOVE MANDY LANE, the drama RIGHT AT YOUR DOOR, the award-winning GRIMM LOVE, and the Italian thriller THE UNKNOWN, which won the People's Choice Award at the European Film Award.

The Autobahn production label was founded in July 2007, and produces films that attract a young audience - releasing daring, excessive and unusual films; emphasizing not only the horror and thriller genre, but also controversial comedies and shattering romances that break taboos and stride borders due to their very own style. Autobahn supports young talents by giving them the possibility to make their feature debuts, and also works with established directors, giving them a unique platform to realize "different" films, predominantly with a low budget.

Kordes & Kordes Film, Producers

Strongly favoring arthouse films, Kordes & Kordes Film GmbH has also been in charge of several TV projects for Germany's public networks such as ZDF, Bayerischer Rundfunk, SWR and Arte. Kordes & Kordes is producing Chris Kraus' POLL -- his highly anticipated follow-up to FOUR MINUTES, which has received funding from several of Germany's state and local funding institutions, and will begin production in 2009. The company is also positioning itself as a co-production partner for international feature films, and is currently working with producer Dean Silvers on two feature film projects: the film adaptation of Isabel Allende's bestselling novel EVA LUNA, and the feature film project LIFE AFTER LIFE, currently in the financing stage.