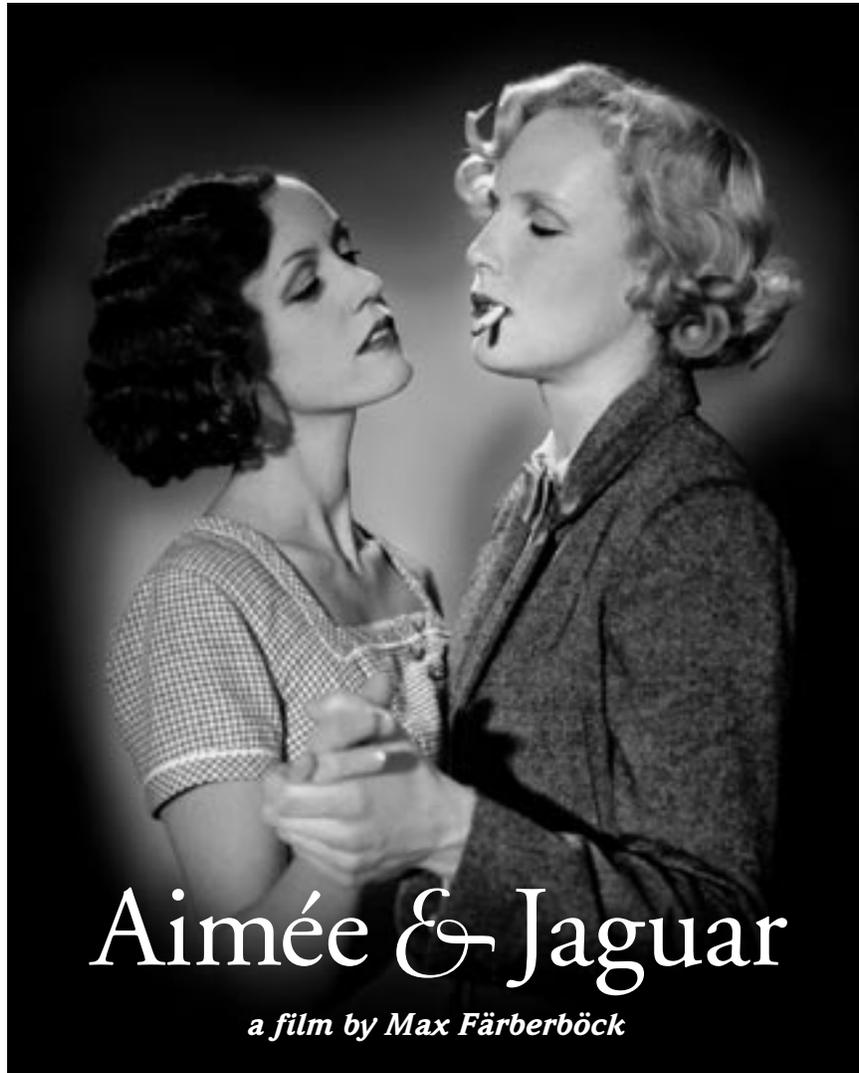


GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE
BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

**OFFICIAL GERMAN SELECTION
ACADEMY AWARDS**

**OPENING NIGHT FILM
49TH INTERNATIONAL BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL
WINNER OF TWO BEST ACTRESS
SILVER BEARS**



Zeitgeist
FILMS

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

Aimée & Jaguar

a film by Max Färberböck

starring

Maria Schrader
Juliane Köhler
Johanna Wokalek
Heike Makatsch
Elisabeth Degen
Detlev Buck
Peter Weck
Inge Keller

directed by

Max Färberböck

written by

Max Färberböck and Rona Munro

based on the book by

Erica Fischer

Producers

Günter Rohrbach and Hanno Huth

Germany, 1999, Color

Running time: 125 minutes

Format: 1:1.85

Sound: Dolby Digital Stereo

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

247 CENTRE ST • 2ND FL
NEW YORK • NY 10013

TEL (212) 274-1989 • FAX (212) 274-1644

mail@zeitgeistfilm.com

www.zeitgeistfilm.com

Aimée & Jaguar

Introduction

In 1943, while the Allies are bombing Berlin and the Gestapo is purging the capital of Jews, a dangerous love affair blossoms between two women. One of them, Lilly Wust (Juliane Köhler), married and the mother of four sons, enjoys the privileges of her stature as an exemplar of Nazi motherhood. For her, this affair will be the most decisive experience of her life. For the other woman, Felice Schragenheim (Maria Schrader), a Jewess and member of the underground, their love fuels her with the hope that she will survive.

A half-century later, Lilly Wust told her incredible story to writer Erica Fischer, and the book, AIMÉE & JAGUAR, first published in 1994 immediately became a bestseller and has since been translated into eleven languages. Max Färberböck's debut film, based on Fischer's book, is the true story of this extraordinary relationship. The film was nominated for a 1999 Golden Globe Award and was Germany's submission for this year's Best Foreign Language Film Oscar. Both actresses received Silver Bears at the 1999 Berlin International Film Festival for their portrayals of "Aimée" and "Jaguar".

Today Lilly Wust is 86 years old and lives in Berlin.

Cast

Felice Schragenheim (Jaguar)	Maria Schrader
Lilly Wust (Aimée)	Juliane Köhler
Ilse	Johanna Wokalek
Klärchen	Heike Makatsch
Lotte	Elisabeth Degen
Günther Wust	Detlev Buck
Lilly (today)	Inge Keller
Ilse (today)	Kyra Mladeck
Mrs. Jäger	Margit Bendokat
Werner Lause	Jochen Stern
Editor in chief Keller	Peter Weck
Stefan Schmidt	H. C. Blumenberg
Father Kappler	Klaus Manchen
Mother Kappler	Sarah Camp
Erika	Desirée Nick
Maria	Patrizia Moresco
Marlene	Karin Friesecke
Fritz Borchert	Dani Levy
Grandma Hulda	Lya Dulitzkaya
Mr. Ude	Klaus Koennecke
Mrs. Ude	Barbara Focke
Tanja	Dorkas Kiefer
Conductor	Werner Rehm
Ernst Biermösl	Rüdiger Hacker
Mr. Pohl	Peer Jäger
Mrs. Pohl	Anette Felber
Lieutenant	Bastian Trost
Blonde Woman	Rosel Zech
Brummer	Carl Heinz Choynski
Eckert	Ulrich Matthes

Credits

directed by Max Färberböck
written by Max Färberböck
and Rona Munro
based on the book by Erica Fischer
Producers Günter Rohrbach
Hanno Huth
Associate Producer Gerhard von Halem
Line Producer Stefaan Schieder
Production Manager Mathias Schwerbrock
Director of Photography Tony Imi Bsc
Sound Benjamin Schubert
Editor Barbara Hennings
Set Design Albrecht Konrad
Uli Hanisch
Costume Designer Barbara Baum
Make up and Hair Gerlinde Kunz
Gerhard Nemetz
Horst Allert
Casting Risa Kes Casting
Still photography Jürgen Olczyk
Composer Jan A. P. Kaczmarek
Visual Effects FuturEffects
Frank Schlegel
Morton McAdams
Mix Michael Kranz
Sound Design Hubert Bartholomae
Fritz Dosch

AIMÉE & JAGUAR was shot over a period of 56 days at the Everest Studios in Cologne-Godorf, and on location in North Rhine Westphalia, Berlin and Wrocław. Editing and visual post-production took place in Hamburg, sound mixing in Munich.

The film was funded by the
Filmboard Berlin Brandenburg, the Filmstiftung of North Rhine Westphalia,
the FilmFernsehFonds of Bavaria, the FilmFörderung of Hamburg and the
Film funding department of the German Ministry of the Interior



Synopsis

Berlin 1997. An estate agent and clients are looking around a slightly delapidated flat. An old lady is sitting next to her belongings, waiting to go into an old people's home. Over half a century ago, in the middle of the second world war, this flat was a meeting point for young people and a hideout for outsiders. Lilly Wust (Juliane Köhler) leads a conventional life, not suspecting that she will soon be the central figure in extraordinary events. In 1943 she is in her late twenties, has four children, and is a good housewife, although she frequently has lovers. Her husband Günther (Detlev Buck), a soldier on active duty, also has affairs. The couple lives a bourgeois life, but not repressed, as far as sex is concerned.

At a concert, Lilly meets a young woman in passing who will turn her life upside down. At first she knows nothing about Felice Schragenheim (Maria Schrader), neither that she is friends with Lilly's maid, Ilse, nor that she is Jewish and living in the underground.

There is no particular reason why the brief encounter between the two women should have consequences, since both women are preoccupied with their own survival. Every night there are bombing raids over Berlin, Lilly has to care for her children, and Felice is constantly in danger of being arrested by the Gestapo. Fate brings the two women together a second time, and Lilly feels that she is the object of Felice's desires. She is attracted and fascinated, but also confused. Felice is completely different from all the women Lilly has met so far in her life. She is more self-confident, energetic and intelligent. Felice's women friends also have these qualities, which bewilder Lilly.

One day Felice embraces Lilly and kisses her on the mouth in a way Lilly has never experienced before. She is shocked, slaps Felice, and turns away from her; and yet she feels that something has begun from which she will not be able to escape. A passionate love affair begins amidst the bombing raids and the threat of persecution. The two women write letters and poems to one another almost every day. They call one another Aimée (Lilly) and Jaguar (Felice). But Lilly does not really know much about this woman Felice, who disappears for days on end without satisfactory explanation. Eventually, Lilly is overcome by jealousy and Felice is forced to admit that she is Jewish. Felice, who is working for a Nazi newspaper under a false name and delivering information to a resistance group, knows how dangerous this admission could be, since Lilly's husband is clearly a Nazi and there is a bust of Hitler in Lilly's flat.

But Lilly surpasses herself; she lets Felice move into her flat and divorces her husband. The two women make a pact of love and marriage. They try to block out the dreadful reality of war and persecution, but it catches up with them. One hot day in August 1944, after an outing to the banks of the Havel where they swam, played around and photographed one another, the Gestapo is waiting in Lilly's flat...

Background: Berlin 1943-44

The “Battle of Berlin”

After a light bombardment in mid-January 1943, a second series of attacks began on the night of the 1st-2nd March, mostly consisting of incendiary bombs and mines weighing 1800 kg, composed almost entirely of dynamite, and causing considerable damage to parts of Wilmersdorf and the centre of the city. In late March during further attacks on the south of Berlin, the central depot of the air intelligence headquarters was burned down. In March 1943 a total of 700 Berliners died, and the first zoo animals were killed. Aerial views of the city show that, in contrast to the cities of the Ruhr area at that time, damage and fires were not as extensive and yet the damage was still so great, that it was estimated that it would take six to eight months to clear the rubble. The decisive turning point in the aerial warfare arrived for Berlin after the bombardment of Hamburg in summer 1943. The Hanseatic city of Hamburg was reduced to 25 sq km of rubble. More than 30,000 civilians were killed. The Anglo-American bombers had destroyed the first German city, and in England the call to mete out the same fate to Berlin became more emphatic. In September 1943 preparations began for the main offensive against Berlin. At the end of August and the beginning of September, 1.5 sq km of the city were destroyed. The main targets were the inner city, Marienfelde, Lichterfelde and Siemensstadt. The actual “Battle of Berlin” began in the night of the 18-19 November 1943, with extensive raids by 440 bombers, of which 402 hit their targets. The main targets were government headquarters, the administrative centres in the inner city, the most populated residential areas, and those industrial centres deemed important to the war effort by economics experts. At the end of November and the beginning of December 1943, further heavy air raids followed, during which more than 8,000 people were killed, 68,226 buildings completely destroyed, 5,837 heavily damaged, and 6,533 suffering medium damage. 250,000 Berliners were now homeless. The most heavily affected areas were the city centre, the area surrounding Alexanderplatz, and also the West of the city, in particular Charlottenburg. The Charlottenburg Castle, the town hall and the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis Church burnt down. The Hansa quarter in the Tiergarten was almost completely destroyed.

In January, February and March 1944, the intensive bombardment continued. Residential areas all over the city sank into ash and rubble, as did the Daimler Benz factory in Marienfelde and parts of the Siemens factories in Siemensstadt. The Fortress and Liberator bombers, known as ‘flying fortresses’ then concentrated on bombing the industrial targets and transport facilities. At the end of March, however, the bombing offensive was temporarily suspended due to the imminent Normandy invasions which required the redeployment of Allied forces. The dreadful consequences: During the battle of Berlin, 16 large scale offensives took place. They cost the Royal Air Force 537 of its best bomber aircraft and almost 4000 personnel, 5.4% of the bombers sent out and 6.2% of those which reached their targets. On the German side, the attacks took 6166 civilian lives, and 18,431 people were seriously injured. 1.5 million people were made homeless and 9.5 sq km of the city were destroyed.

Background: Berlin 1943-44

“The Vow”

From AIMÉE & JAGUAR by Erica Fischer

January 30th, 1943, the tenth anniversary of Hitler’s seizure of power, Hermann Göring’s speech to Berliners was delayed for two hours because British scout planes were flying over the city in broad daylight for the first time. Four days after Göring declared his certainty of victory, the remaining German troops trapped in Stalingrad capitulated. Accompanied by funereal music, the defeat was announced on the radio. On February 18th Reichspropaganda minister Goebbels spurred the German people to make a greater effort. In a “Declaration of fanatical Will” at the Berlin Sportpalast he announced the “Salvation of Germany and the whole of civilisation” through “total war”. In memory of the victims of the Russian campaign, a three minute traffic stoppage was declared. At the Zoo station, people stood stock still without looking at one another. Although most of them knew that the war was now definitely lost, no one dared to say so.

The propaganda concentrated anew on the “enemy within”. Goebbels vowed to make Berlin “free of Jews” for Hitler’s 54th birthday on 20 April. The Gestapo broke into houses, forced locks, sawed through steel bars, broke doors down with axes, and climbed through neighbouring windows. Many Jews went into hiding. Dreadful rumours about the fate of the “evacuees” were circulating.

On 20 February the Reich’s counter intelligence head-quarters issued orders for the “technical implementation” of the deportations to Auschwitz. Luggage should comprise: enough supplies for five days’ march, 1 suitcase or rucksack, 1 pair of tough work boots, 2 pairs of socks, 2 shirts, 2 pairs of underpants, 1 working suit, 2 woollen blankets, 2 sets of bed linen, 1 bowl, 1 beaker, 1 spoon, 1 jumper.



Background: Berlin 1943-44

“Dance on the Volcano”

From: Ursula von Kardorff Berliner Aufzeichnungen, 1942 bis 1945

27th November 1943

Travelling around burning Berlin is extremely exhausting. Yesterday there was another heavy raid. I walked along the whole of Kaiserdamm because the Underground had been hit. People came towards me like ghosts, wearing scarves and dark glasses because of the smoke which hangs over the city like a mushroom. Swaying figures, a parade of defeated people.

4th December 1943

The Adlon-Halle looks like the setting for a trashy novel. There are Nazi big shots in uniforms plastered with clinking medals, soldiers of every rank on leave who want to take the illusion of comfort back to the Front with them, foreign and German diplomats, actors, Dahlem ladies in trousers resting from tidying up their damaged villas, businessmen carrying pigskin briefcases who have the aura of “armament” about them, and, finally, adventuresses of all kinds, who take care of the men’s needs. For since the evacuation of the families and the closure of the schools, Berlin has become a city of men.

In the small bar they serve beer, and at the tables covered with white tablecloths, wine is served. The guests who want to go into the hall must run the gauntlet of greedy glances. Some walk with their heads down, others walk swiftly and energetically or with deliberate arrogance. People court the favour of the hotel managers because they decide who gets a table. So here there is a group of people who live unaffected by misery, as though they were only guests on the threatened earth. A strange, tense atmosphere.

26th January 1944

I am completely exhausted after our party which lasted until morning. We danced as though we were possessed, as though someone was standing behind us with a whip, as though it was the last time. We called our party the “Downfall of the Western World”. At least twenty times they played the tune “Bei mir biste scheen” (You’re Beautiful to me). We invited Mr. Remde from the St Pauli bar next door, and he brought red wine.

Other guests included Schwab, whose father died three months ago in prison, Jutta, whose brothers and sisters burnt to death, Dr. Meier, whose father starved to death in a camp. Everyone wanted to forget their burdens and sorrows for a few brief hours. Happiness creates warmth in these times. We all live for the moment, with more intensity than ever before.

3rd February 1944

I feel a growing sense of wild vitality combined with defiance, the opposite of resignation. Is this what the British hope to inspire amongst the civilian population with their raids? We are not worn down by them. Everyone is preoccupied with him or themselves. Is my flat still intact? Where can I get roofing tiles or window felt? Where is the best air raid shelter? The catastrophes, which strike both Nazis and anti-Nazis, weld the people together. After every raid there are special rations of cigarettes, real coffee and meat. "Give them bread and they will follow you," says the Chief Inquisitor in Dostoevsky. If the British think they are destroying our morale, they are wrong.

22nd February 1944

The "Battle of Berlin", as it is so nicely called, began three months ago from today. We're still holding out quite well. It is an improbable, strangely positive and terrible time. Whilst my friend "Bärchen" and I lead an apparent life of luxury, going from time to time to the remaining hotels with friends, thousands of homeless people crouch on the bare stone floors in the shelters, with their suitcases as pillows, not knowing where to go. That is reality. But we are floating in a vacuum. On the other hand, I know that this can end any day now, so why shouldn't I enjoy it?

10th June 1944

There is a strange mood in Berlin, a combination of apathy and a craving for pleasure. Our caretaker woman who does my cleaning lifted her bandaged index finger threateningly and said, "Now our little Adolf is finished. Let's hope it'll be quickly over." No one saves money anymore. Bärchen's char woman, fat Wally, wants to buy herself something with a special ration token at the most expensive clothes shop in Berlin, where a suit costs 400 marks: "I can afford it now," she said. I've noticed ordinary soldiers giving away half a month's salary in tips. A waiter at a bar on the Gendarmenmarkt has bought himself a small country estate from the tips he got every time he brought out a bottle of Moselle wine. Money flows like water through people's hands.

21st June 1944

The answer to the V1 was the heaviest daytime air raid we have ever had. When I emerged from the air raid shelter with Uta, back to the upper world, it was so dark that we could only see two meters ahead of us. Blue-black walls of smoke towered around bright red flames, exactly like the fires of purgatory in medieval paintings. Olive green dust and whitish lime rubble were lying ankle on top of the streets. At the same time the whole scene had a wild beauty about it. We went up to the roof. The Reich's Chancellery and the Propaganda Ministry were untouched, as though the devil himself was holding a protecting hand over them.

**From: Ursula von Kardorff *Berliner Aufzeichnungen, 1942 bis 1945,*
published by dtv, Munich 1994.**

The Actors

MARIA SCHRADER

Felice Schragenheim [“Jaguar”]



Maria Schrader plays the part of clever, courageous Felice Schragenheim (Jaguar) who lives secretly in Berlin under a false name (Felice Schrader), belongs to a resistance organisation and teaches a housewife called Lilly Wust all about love.

Maria Schrader trained at the Max-Reinhardt-Seminar in Vienna. She began her career at the theatre but quickly became one of the most distinctive actresses in new German cinema. In 1992 she was awarded the Max Ophüls Prize for best newcomer for *I WAS ON MARS* (directed by Dani Levy). In 1995 she received the German Film Prize for three films: *NOBODY LOVES ME* (directed by Doris Dörrie), *BURNING LIFE* (directed by Peter Welz) and *EINER MEINER ÄLTESTEN FREUNDE* (directed by Rainer Kaufmann). In 1996 she starred in *STILLE NACHT* (directed by Dani Levy) and also co-wrote the script.

She also starred in *DER UNFISCH* (directed by Robert Dornhelm) in 1996. In 1998, after *AIMÉE & JAGUAR*, she co-wrote, co-directed and co-starred in *MESCHUGGE - THE GIRAFFE* along with Dani Levy. In 1998 she also played a part in *AM I BEAUTIFUL?* (directed by Doris Dörrie).

JULIANE KÖHLER

Lilly Wust [“Aimée”]



Juliane Köhler plays Lilly Wust (Aimée), mother of four boys, awarded the Nazi ‘mother cross’ for bearing four children, and married to a soldier called Günther. Her love for Felice changes her life forever.

Juliane Köhler studied acting in New York. After her first theatre role in Hannover, she moved to the Residenz Theatre in Munich. She became a star of the stage for her role in *DIE SOLDATEN* (Lenz), when she played Marie, and in *THE PRISONERS OF ALTONA* (Sartre), when she played Johanna, as well as starring in *HEDDA GABLER* (Ibsen), *FRÄULEIN ELSE* (Schnitzler), *DAS KUNSTSEIDENE MÄDCHEN* (Greiffenhagen/Keun). In 1995 she received several prizes, including the Bavarian cultural ministry’s regional sponsorship for young actors. Juliane Köhler’s screen credits include *SCHATTENBOXER* (directed by Lars Becker), *INZEST - EIN FALL FÜR SINA TEUFEL* (directed by Klaus Emmerich), *KOMA* (directed by Uwe Janson). After working on *AIMÉE & JAGUAR* Juliane Köhler played a main role in *PÜNKTCHE UND ANTON*, based on the novel by Erich Kästner and directed by Caroline Link, as well as the main female role in the TV production *DICKE FREUNDE* directed by Thomas Berger.



ELISABETH DEGEN *Lotte*

Lotte is one of Felice's female Jewish friends. She is captured by coincidence.

Elisabeth Degen studied acting in Berlin. She then worked at the following theatres: Landesbühne Hannover, Staatstheater Darmstadt and Schauspielhaus Hamburg. For television she has appeared in « Eine Klasse für sich» (directed by Frank Strecker) and "Tödliche Liebe" - "Deadly Love" (directed by Wolf Gremm). Her film credits include DIE KOLONIE (directed by Orlando Lübbert) and MASCHENKA (directed by John Goldsmith).by Klaus Emmerich), KOMA (directed by Uwe Janson). After working on AIMÉE & JAGUAR Juliane Köhler played a main role in PÜNKTCHE UND ANTON, based on the novel by Erich Kästner and directed by Caroline Link, as well as the main female role in the TV production DICKE FREUNDE directed by Thomas Berger.

HEIKE MAKATSCH *Klärchen*

Klärchen is a member of the group of Felice's Jewish friends, who despite the war and the threat of persecution, leaves her hiding place and enjoys the hustle and bustle in Berlin, determined to survive. She is very elegant and realistic, sleeps wherever she can, washes her underwear in hotel toilets, and is as courageous and cheeky as Felice, not letting any opportunity for pleasure escape her. She is hurt when she hears of Felice's affair with a Nazi sympathizer, and does everything to get Felice out of the country at the last minute.

After three semesters at university, a dressmaking course she didn't finish, and an apprenticeship at a city magazine, Heike Makatsch became one of the first female hosts on the newly-founded music TV channel VIVA in 1993. She then joined the TV channel RTL 2 and hosted "Bravo TV". In 1997 she had her own personality show on RTL 2, "Heike Makatsch - The Show".

With Detlev Buck directing, she gave her début as an actress in 1995 in MÄNNERPENSION and immediately won the Bavarian film prize for best young actress. For her main role in OBSESSION (directed by Peter Sehr) she was nominated for the German Film Prize in 1998 and received the "Prix d'interprétation féminine" at the 'Festival du film d'amour' in Paimpol. In 1998 she played a role in BIN ICH SCHÖN? (directed by Doris Dörrie) and LIEBE DEINE NÄCHSTE (directed by Detlev Buck) as well as in the TV productions "Männer und andere Katastrophen"-"Men and other Catastrophes" (directed by Uli Baumann) and "Das Gelbe vom Ei"-"The Best" (directed by Lars Becker).

JOHANNA WOKALEK *Ilse*

Ilse, Lilly's maid, is an eager young girl in her "Pflichtjahr", a year of compulsory community service imposed by the Nazis. She has hidden Felice in her father's flat. When she sees how strong and indestructible the dangerous love affair between Felice and Lilly has become, she tries without success to tear Felice away.

Johanna Wokalek studied at the Max-Reinhardt-Seminar in Vienna. Her acting debut came in Summer 1996 in the spectacular Vienna festival production "Alma, A Show Biz ans Ende" by Joshua School. Paulus Manker directed and Johanna Wokalek played the title role. Since October 1996 she has been one of the students of the Ensemble at the Burg Theatre. In January 1997 she took over the role of Polly in Brecht's "Threepenny Opera". AIMÉE & JAGUAR is her first film.

DETLEV W. BUCK

Günther Wust

Günther Wust is Lilly's husband, a proud soldier and father who is easily seduced. Broken by the war, he loves and needs his family. But he cannot understand the love affair between Felice and Lilly.

Detlev W. Buck graduated from the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. Afterwards he and Claus Boje formed Boje Buck Productions. Between 1992 and 1995 they produced KARNIGGELS, WIR KÖNNEN AUCH ANDERS and MÄNNERPENSION, with Buck as director and co-author. Next to his directing work Detlev W. Buck is an actor of strengthful charisma, who doesn't only star in leading and minor roles in his own films, but also acts in the films of his director colleagues. His next work will be for Leander Haußmann and Bernd Eichinger, in SONNENALLEE and WENN MAN VOM TEUFEL SPRICHT. He also appeared in Wolfgang Becker's KINDERSPIELE, in Maris Pfeiffer's KÜSS MICH and in Reinhard Münster's ALLES AUF ANFANG. As well as his directorial work for film, he has also directed commercials and stage productions. Last year he directed Strindberg's "Die Kameraden"—"The Friends" for the Bochum Theatre. In 1997-98 he directed the film LIEBE DEINE NÄCHSTE.



INGE KELLER

Lilly Wust, aged 85

Inge Keller is one of the great actresses of German theatre. Her career began in West Berlin. From 1948-1951 she appeared at the Hebbel Theatre and the Schlosspark Theatre. She then moved to the famous Deutsches Theatre (in East Berlin), and still belongs to their ensemble today. Along with her work for the theatre, Inge Keller has also appeared in numerous film and television productions.



PETER WECK

Editor-in-chief, Keller

Peter Weck is Keller, the editor-in-chief and convinced Nazi, who employs Felice when she applies under a false name for a job at his "National Newspaper." Does he suspect Felice's secret or not?

Peter Weck's artistic career is long and varied. Starting as a choir boy, he then studied acting at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna, and later appeared at the Klagenfurt Theatre, the Theatre am Kurfürstendamm in Berlin, the Kammerspiele Theatre in Munich, the Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, and the Burg Theatre in Vienna. In 1983 he became artistic director of the Theatre an der Wien, and then of the Raimund Theatre and the Varieté Theatre in Ronacher. In 1992 Weck retired from his position at these theatres.



Behind the camera

MAX FÄRBERBÖCK

Director and screenwriter

After studying at film school in Munich, Max Färberböck first worked for Constantin Film, and then as assistant and dramaturge for Peter Zadek at the Schauspielhaus Theatre in Hamburg. He directed plays at theatres in Hamburg, Heidelberg and Cologne, was the director and co-author of several episodes in the “Fahnder” TV-series, until he began to write and direct made-for-television movies.

His films are SCHLAFENDE HUNDE, EINER ZAHLT IMMER, BELLA BLOCK–DIE KOMMISSARIN AND BELLA BLOCK–LIEBESTOD. He has won the German Telestar prize three times, the Television prize of the German Academy of Dramatic Arts twice, the Bavarian Television Prize and the Adolf-Grimme-Prize in gold. AIMÉE & JAGUAR is his first feature film.

RONA MUNRO *Co-author*

The British writer Rona Munro has written theatre plays, radio plays and television plays. She was co-author on Ken Loach’s LADYBIRD, LADYBIRD. Her work has been honoured with many prizes. AIMÉE & JAGUAR is her first work for German cinema.

TONY IMI *Director of Photography*

The British Director of Photography Tony Imi has already worked with a German director; in 1985 he was cameraman on Wolfgang Petersen’s ENEMY MINE, which was shot at the studios of Bavaria Film in Munich. His film credits include THE SLIPPER AND THE ROSE (directed by Bryan Forbes), NOT QUITE JERUSALEM (directed by Lewis Gilbert), BUSTER (directed by David Green), PRETTY HATTIE’S BABY (directed by Ivan Passer), SHOPPING (directed by Paul Anderson) and DOWNTIME (directed by Bharat Naluri).

JAN A. P. KACZMAREK *Composer*

Polish composer Jan A.P. Kaczmarek has been living in Los Angeles for the last nine years. He has written music for over 30 features and documentary films, including TOTAL ECLIPSE (1995), WASHINGTON SQUARE (1997) and THE THIRD MIRACLE (1999) all three directed by Agnieszka Holland, BLISS (directed by Lance Young, 1997), LOST SOULS (directed by Janusz Kaminski, 2000). He is currently working on EDGES OF THE LORD (directed by Yurek Bogayevicz, 2001). AIMÉE & JAGUAR is his first work for a German feature film.

“Max Färberböck had heard my music on BLISS. He phoned me in Los Angeles. I was immediately interested in the story. As a Pole, I have a strong affinity to this period in history, even though I have been living in LA for nine years. And everything which Max Färberböck said about it seemed inspired. So I came to Berlin and saw a rough cut of the film. The emotional strength of the film convinced me immediately. It was not a superficial film. I value Färberböck’s unconventional approach to the material, his very personal perspective, his insistence on quality.

“I always look to see whether the music can play an important role in a film. Not every film offers this possibility. Music should have its own character, it should be as strong as the other voices in the film. The most important element for me in AIMÉE & JAGUAR was not the war, nor the political background, but the highly explosive love affair between the two women. To find the right voice for it was not easy. Färberböck had high expectations, I felt very much under pressure. Now that the music is finished, I can speak about it calmly. The work was demanding but it marked the beginning of a friendship.”

GÜNTER ROHRBACH *Production*

Günter Rohrbach worked for the Westdeutschen Rundfunk (television) from 1961-1978 and was head of television drama and entertainment. From 1979 onwards he was managing director of Bavaria Film for 15 years. Hundreds of television dramas and 30 feature films were produced under his leadership, including DAS BOOT/THE BOAT, DIE UNENDLICHE GESCHICHTE/THE NEVERENDING STORY, DIE KATZE/THE CAT, ÖDIPUSI/OEDIPUSI, GO TRABI GO, SCHTONK and DIE SIEGER/THE WINNERS.

Since 1994 Günter Rohrbach has worked as an independent producer on films like RENNSCHWEIN RUDI RÜSSEL/RUDI THE RUNNING PIG, DIE APOTHEKERIN/THE PHARMACIST, FETTE WELT/FAT WORLD, DIE BUBI SCHOLZ STORY/THE BUBI SCHOLZ STORY and AIMÉE & JAGUAR.

HANNO HUTH *Production*

Hanno Huth is the most successful German film producer and distributor. His most recent successes were WERNER/DAS MUSS KESSELN, KLEINES ARSCHLOCH, DIE APOTHEKERIN/THE PHARMACIST and THE COMEDIAN HARMONISTS. In total these films were seen by over 12 million viewers in Germany alone and grossed approximately 120 million DM.

Hanno Huth began his career in 1977 as a trainee at the Berlin branch of United Artists. After finishing his education, he worked for United Artists for several years in South America. Back in Germany, Hanno Huth worked for UIP in Frankfurt, before joining Senator in 1984. For the past ten years he has been managing director of Senator. He is also head of Senator Film Production and in this function he has produced Joseph Vilsmaier's STALINGRAD, Peter Jackson's HEAVENLY CREATURES and Angela Pope's HOLLOW REED, three films directed by Helge Schneider as well as FELIDAE by Michael Schaack and MANTA-THE FILM.

His next project is the adaptation of Thomas Brussig's novel HELDEN WIE WIR and the release of the cosmopolitan thriller STRAIGHT SHOOTER starring Dennis Hopper and Heino Ferch.



Interview with Maria Schrader

How did you feel when you were offered the role of Felice, which is such a special part?

I read the screenplay in one night. I cried a lot, and I was overcome by the thought of being allowed to act in this film. It made me very happy, but I was also slightly intimidated. Basically, I felt that way all through the shoot. I admired Felice, and was fascinated by her.

What makes the role so special?

It was the first time I had ever played a real person. It was a completely different feeling, because I did not have to invent everything myself. I read letters from Felice, and I was able to copy her handwriting; I saw photos of her. I could form a very clear picture of her. On the set there was a 1942-43 telephone directory with Lilly Wust's name in it, and that was a strange feeling.

What do you admire about Felice?

Until now all the characters I played had inner conflicts. They were inwardly torn, unhappy with themselves. Felice is like a bolt of fire. She is such a healthy person. She is so strong and energetic. She is aware that her life could soon be over, and this knowledge gives her the courage to live life to the full. Instead of pulling the cover over her head, she climbs to the top of the 10-meter high tower and jumps. That is what makes her a wonderful and intense person.

How did you manage to convey the feeling of pressure under which Felice is living?

I tried to imagine how much fear a person can experience, and how much love. I think it is possible to learn what it feels like not to be able to take life for granted, to know that it could end tomorrow. Everything becomes quicker, more exciting, more alive, because death is near. Felice fights against becoming a victim. She has the upbringing and the understanding to articulate this feeling.

The film is a love story between two women, which is unusual.

I avoided taking something like "how to be a lesbian" lessons. It's the same thing like being non-jewish: At first there is hesitation; you fear that you might not be experienced enough. But I know the feeling quite well: Women often fascinate me, as well in an erotic sense. And I think that the love between Lilly and Felice was not determined by technique. It was simply a truly sexual and human encounter, without calculation. That is always difficult to convey in front of the camera, and depends on how you get on with your partner, irrespective of whether it is a woman or a man.

How did your work with Juliane Köhler develop?

We met during the casting, but didn't see each other again until rehearsals, just before the beginning of the shoot. We became friends, and I respected her. She surprised me again and again. Juliane has a lot of strength and stamina. She enters into a scene completely, like a real theatre actress. I knew I could hit the ball over the net with all my strength and be certain she would hit it back. We were able to concentrate unbelievably well together. That is ideal in film, both as an actor and as a viewer, to forget oneself.

How would you describe Max Färberböck as a director?

Sometimes he was remorseless. I was happy about that because it showed that he liked my work. He was convinced that I was the right person to play Felice. On this basis, he could criticise me (and I could criticise him, too). The shoot was emotional. Max pushed us very far. I wouldn't have had the courage to emphasise Felice's emotions to such an extent if it hadn't been for Max.

There have been many films about the Second World War. What is new about this film?

It is a true story about an unusual love affair and therefore quite modern, especially in a second World War Two setting. I think that we can learn something new about those times through the story of AIMÉE & JAGUAR. We can learn about a radical hunger for life. Lilly Wust had four children and a husband at the front, yet she still had new lovers all the time. I was astounded by this fact. Felice is also a contradictory character: she falls in love with Lilly, but also has other female lovers; she works for a Nazi newspaper and belongs to a resistance organisation. She goes to the Adlon Hotel, and to concerts, although she knows how dangerous this is.

What have you learnt as an actress from your work on this film?

I've learnt how lucky I am to live in a different time. And I have learnt to remember Felice. The more scared she was, the braver she became. I think it was Tucholsky who said, "We cannot creep through life on tiptoe just because we are afraid." That is still relevant today.



Interview with Juliane Köhler

Up until now you have concentrated on acting in the theatre. What attracted you to this film role?

A role like this only comes along once every ten years. I immediately identified with this woman. The material is wonderful. I love historical stories. Contemporary stories come up all the time.

How did you work your way into this period and this character?

At first I read a lot about the historical background. I simply tried to get to know this woman as closely as possible. That is what I always do: I feel my way towards a character until I know her inside out and then I can slip inside her. The screenplay was very good, very precise, alone through reading it I could understand the character. Then I use my imagination, and so does the director. During the shoot, it was a great help that Lilly Wust's flat had been rebuilt so realistically in the studio. When I stood on the set, it was like going back in time.

I thought a lot about the way women were in those days. What was it like to be a housewife, the mother of four children, the wife of a soldier? It was difficult for me to judge her. I simply said to myself, she has four children, she has been awarded a bronze 'mother cross' by the Nazis for giving birth to her children, she gets a lot of ration tokens, she has many advantages. If someone is uncritical, they can feel quite comfortable within the system. I suspect that it was like this for Lilly Wust until she met Felice.

Why was it interesting to play this character?

Her development is interesting, her courage to fight for her love and leave her husband. I thought that she was a wonderful woman. This always happens to me when I play a character. The more involved I become, the more I like them. I try to justify everything she is and everything she does. I justified everything Lilly did to myself, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to play her.

Compared to Felice, Lilly is a rather conventional person.

I also like that aspect of her character. I'm not vain about that at all. I think that was the way she was. I love her rather conventional clothes. I love all her characteristics. But there is also something special about her, otherwise she could not have fallen in love with Felice. She is not just a simple, conventional woman. If she would have had other opportunities in her childhood, she would have developed quite differently. But she married this man and had four children. That was her fate. The course of her life was determined in many ways. Then Felice came along and filled the void in her life.

How do you explain the fact that Lilly is prepared to change her life so radically?

She is the type of person who wants all or nothing. There is so much power in her love. Felice is the love of her life. She does everything for this love. She goes as far as trying to track Felice down in a concentration camp, something we can hardly imagine today.

What was it like to meet the real Lilly Wust ?

She was just as I had imagined her: witty, resolute, direct. She says what she really thinks. I think she learnt that because of the life she led.

Did it make a difference that Lilly Wust is still alive in Berlin today?

Of course I was afraid of doing something wrong. When I met her I tried to look at her with x-ray eyes and see right through to her. I wanted to embrace her personality. I wanted to get very near to her so that I could reproduce her real character.

Was it difficult to act the love affair between two women?

Not at all. It was good fun. I got to know Maria and we liked one another. It is probably easier to do a love scene with another woman because there isn't the same level of inhibition. I think that for Lilly and Felice, it was a love affair irrespective of gender. Felice was the person who promised Lilly a different kind of life. It cannot be taken for granted that when two actresses have equally important roles in a film they will work well together. There are not many actresses like Maria Schrader who react so swiftly. It was exciting to work with her. Whatever variation I used in a scene, she always picked up on it. We were able to really enter into scenes together.

What was it like working with Max Färberböck?

I had great confidence in him. He introduced me to the character with great sensitivity. I never felt alone. He supported me. He imagined, as I did, that Lilly is capable of such a strong love affair because she is spiritually gentle. Often he just needed one word to make a decisive point. I understood him very well.

What do you remember of your experience on AIMÉE & JAGUAR?

It was an intense experience, which I never felt in the theatre. Recently I wrote to Lilly Wust. When her reply came and I saw her name written with the return address on the back of the envelope, I was shocked and my heart thumped. Lilly Wust, I thought, but that's me.

Interview with Max Färberböck

It is surprising that you chose a story set in the Second World War as your first film for the cinema. What attracted you to AIMÉE & JAGUAR?

The chaos of Berlin in 1943 attracted me. It was a huge confusion of shouting politicians, of murderers, informers and panic-stricken people who stumbled from one day to the next without any sense of direction. The city was burning and German actors like Heinz Rühmann and Marika Röck were singing in the popular films of the time along with it. It was like a dance on the volcano. The women put make-up on, looked attractive, and climbed over corpses on the way to their rendezvous. All this melted into one large cry. The cry of a city which can still be heard echoing in the back courtyards today. This melting of past and present, this typical Berlin feeling of chaos and war, has attracted me for years, and AIMÉE & JAGUAR was the story which fitted to that.

AIMÉE & JAGUAR is a radical love story between two women. Why were you interested in it?

The yearning, the abyss, the immensity; all those terrible German things which one hears in the music of Furtwängler, and which deepdown have a malignant beauty. To deny them or to belittle them would be dreadfully stupid. Love has a volcanic strength to sweep people away, to liberate them. The film is a kind of tribute to the possibilities of life. Felice and Lilly's fate was to really experience something which has been rediscovered over and over again in the great classical stories, love which attracts death.

Was that the reason why the Americans, for example Winona Ryder's agents, tried to acquire the rights?

It could be. A love story about a cheerful, cosmopolitan Jewish girl and a celebrated Nazi mother of four children is per se interesting. Varying psychological nuances can be drawn from it, as can relevant conflicts. At first we wanted to bring the ideological conflict potential into the foreground, but then real experience surfaced. Glances, fear, lies and disguises, the enormous erotic attraction of a situation in which one cannot say who one really is because the truth could destroy everything.

It seems as though it is easier to have a radical love affair in times of outward danger. Why?

Whenever they escaped unharmed from a bombing raid, people had a feeling of lightness. To the great chagrin of the Nazi party - which hated Berlin women - Berlin was a highly promiscuous city. There were people who had lost their relatives and who danced at parties until they collapsed. Felice was also renowned for her conquests. Instead of hiding away, she went to a dressmaker and, like her Jewish friends, she was much more elegantly dressed than any of the Nazi women. She took what she could from life. Every moment which she stole from the Nazis was a victory. Even so, I don't think it was the threat of death which welded Lilly and Felice together. There are many interpretations as to why an iridescent creature like Felice should fall in love with a German Nazi sympathiser, but everyone has to decide for themselves which interpretation they believe in.

It is difficult to bring a historical story alive. What was your approach?

I didn't have an approach. I read historical books until something came alive. Above all, concerning the Third Reich, there is an immense resistance to overcome. Everything smells of cliché and dead images until one realises that people in those days were not historical shells but extremely alive, quick thinking and just as modern as we claim to be today.

The story took place 56 years ago. How did you achieve a feeling for the historical period?

All I had to do was stand in front of the mirror and look for the face of my father and my grandfather. I thought about what people are capable of, positively and negatively. What happened in those days was a highly complex combination of different factors, if one attempts an overall interpretation, one is lost. There are many reasons why this country recently gave birth to the nightmare of mankind. How people lived with it at the time, what it meant for each individual, is equally complex. It was a time of insoluble contradictions, of huge conflicts, and all a film like this can do is to show real people and not historical puppets. And then a feeling for the historical period evolves by itself.

What is it like to make a film of a real story, and to know that Lilly Wust is still alive in Berlin today?

To tell a true story you have to destroy everything and rebuild it. With luck you end up with a part of the poetry of truth, of concentrated experience. However there is a responsibility, an endeavour not to sell truth for less than it is worth. What it means in this case, I won't elaborate on here. It was important and challenging to avoid making a sentimental love story and yet to evoke the power of emotions, with all references to the historical period, the people and the possibly large ambivalence of their actions.

There is no jumbled moral in the film, no condemnation of the events, no aesthetic embellishment or avoidance of things which were hard and painful in real life. In other words, where there is dirt we have left it, but we have also shown the beauty.

The film is dependent on the casting of Aimée and Jaguar. What was decisive for you?

The film is dependent on all the actors, who hopefully achieve the right tone. Nevertheless Felice Schragenheim was not exactly an easy person. She loved life, children, she was informal, highly educated, rational and unrestrained. She enjoyed lying and she needed the truth. She was presumptuous, very susceptible erotically, and was ensnared by Lilly with all the power of her heart. She was daring, rapacious, and driven by fear. To convey all these emotions requires the kind of acting ability we see in other countries or in German films of the 1930s. Our films are edited more rapidly nowadays, but you can still see how vague, unlinear and imprecise much of the acting is. Maria Schrader is different. She can express all the variations of life without - and this was the more important - betraying Felice's secret.

When you read Lilly Wust's letters, you understand what it is like when a person begins to fly. I don't know any other contemporary German actress who is capable of abandoning sticky German film realism and who could so lightly and truly express the flight of Lilly's soul as Juliane Köhler. She shows us how cinema actresses acted at that time and how it has been copied by young German women, until film and life became one. Lilly Wust was completely inwardly torn and over-burdened when she discovered her second self, her truth. Juliane shows us what that means and what it is like to experience bitterness and not to recover for the rest of one's life.

Out of the supporting cast, it is surprising that you chose Detlev Buck and Heike Makatsch, neither of whom one immediately associates with historical roles.

When I started working on AIMÉE & JAGUAR in January 1995, Heike was on television. She was attractive, husky and lively. I imagined that Felice and her friends were the girlies of their time. It was Heike's liveliness which pushed the story forwards for me. So she was there from the beginning, and I'm glad it stayed that way.

As far as Detlev was concerned, what could be more inspiring, than working with an actor and director, who is admired and loved throughout the country for his humor? What would he have done in those days anyway? Probably become a soldier. When he agreed to take the part, I thought, "If he does it, he will give everything." And that is what happened. He was just like Günther Wust. He also wanted everything. He wanted to be a good soldier, a father, lover and husband. Everything. With no central point or sense of direction. He only wanted to be there. And that is how Detlev plays the part, completely unpsychologically, direct, and always making an exhibition of himself. He is already dead before the bullet hits him.

What was it like for you to become so deeply involved in this story and this historical period?

The past and the present are separated only by a thin line. When one realises that the people in those days were not stupidified lunatics but were close to the way we are now, it becomes clear that there is no shock for humanity which could not be repeated.

Lilly Wust after 1945

What happened after AIMÉE & JAGUAR:

In May 1945 when the war ended, Lilly Wust began to search for Felice Schragenheim. She waited at the station when trains were due from the East. She displayed missing person notices, and had an announcement read over the radio. She tried to find her amongst people who had survived the concentration camps, and she searched for her via the UNRRA (United Nations Relief und Rehabilitation Administration). In vain.

In the winter 1945-46 Lilly ran out of coal for heating. She moved to her parents' house with her youngest child. She began to write her "Tränenbüchlein / Book of Tears", in which she wrote down all the letters and poems which Aimée and Jaguar had written to one another. On 14th, 1948 Felice was declared dead by the district court at Berlin Charlottenburg. The time and place of her death are unknown. She probably died during one of the infamous death marches.

In spring 1949 Lilly attempted suicide.

In April 1950 Lilly remarried. Her husband, Willi Beimling, ran an electrical shop. She worked there all day long and cooked in the evenings. Later she described this marriage as "An absurd marriage undertaken in panic." In February 1951 she divorced. Since the end of the war Lilly has been intensely involved with Jewish culture. Her son Eberhard converted to Judaism and emigrated to Israel. At the age of 50 Lilly had her first full-time job. She worked as a cleaning lady at a textile factory in Berlin-Zehlendorf and became the "good spirit" of the staff.

In 1981 Lilly was awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz (Order of the Federal Republic of Germany). After Felice's arrest she had sheltered three other Jewish women. Two weeks after the awards ceremony, Lilly nearly tripped over a stone which had been deliberately placed in front of her door. The door of her flat was smeared over and over with liquid manure.

Lilly Wust is 85 years old and lives in Berlin. Her diaries, Felice's papers, the photos, letters and poems are stored in two suitcases. After her death the suitcases will be handed over to her son in Israel.



Interview with Lilly Wust

Are you touched by the fact that a film has been made about your life?

I gave my story to the world. Now it is not my property anymore. The book already tore me away from my life, and now there's a film. Actually, I don't have anything to do with it. I flew to Cologne to see the shoot. I was there on the first day. I met Maria Schrader and Juliane Köhler. We liked one another. I'm very happy with the choice of these actresses, even though I would never have worn a cardigan like the one Juliane wears in the film.

Isn't it strange when someone appears on screen and says "I am Lilly Wust"?

Yes, it is. But Juliane Köhler is just right. I liked her a lot. She is reserved and very pretty. But Lilly isn't as important as Felice in this story.

Did you think Maria Schrader was a good choice for the role of Felice?

Yes. She is attractive, also very pretty, intelligent. Maria is perhaps more reserved than Felice. Felice was very cheerful.

Do you remember the first time you met Felice?

Of course. It was in Berlin, in the Café at Bahnhof Zoo. She was a very elegant young woman who always wore tailor-made clothes. She was bewitching, she was someone you like the minute they walk into the room. She had enormous strength. She was 8 when her mother died, 13 when her father died, which made her mature for her age.

Did Felice court you immediately?

She flirted with me right away. She was a real seductress. She showered me with flowers, complimented me. I liked that very much. Who wouldn't? We wanted to forget the war. We were rigorous with ourselves and with life. We were in danger every day. The Allies were approaching. The bombs were falling - so what? We wanted to live for the day without thinking about tomorrow. We didn't talk about it much. That's the way things were, there was no point in talking about it.

We danced a lot, talked about literature. I had been a good housewife until then. The people I met through Felice were lively, cosmopolitan. I thought they were wonderful. It was a different world. My husband was Prussian. Very German. He was a nice man, but we were not made for one another. I was never jealous when he had affairs.

What about your many affairs?

I was an attractive young woman. Men wanted me. So they had me! But it wasn't that many. In those days German mothers were supposed to be faithful to their husbands, but there was a lot going on behind the scenes.

What was special about your relationship with Felice?

Felice freed me. I loved her. I never stopped loving her. Suddenly, I knew who I was. I grew up for the first time because of her, even though I already had four children. I didn't get on with men. I always felt strange with them. I felt used, inferior. With Felice everything was right. I could give love - that was the big difference.

How did you react when Felice told you the truth?

It happened a month after she had moved in with me. She always disappeared for days. One night I questioned her. Normally, I don't ask questions. She always came up with new excuses. Then she said to me, »Will you still love me if you know who I am?« Then she told me. It was like watching a film. Everything became clear. I understood why she stayed away, why everything was so secretive. I embraced her. She was a person in need. I wanted to protect her. That was enough for me.

Weren't you afraid for yourself and your children?

I wasn't afraid. My four children protected me. When the Gestapo wanted to question me, I said to my eldest, "If I don't come back, look after your brothers." But the Gestapo didn't dare take a mother away from her four children.

Did you and Felice talk about politics?

Of course. There was a map on the wall and we followed the progress of the war. We listened to the BBC. Felice was not cautious when she was with me.

How do you feel about the premiere of AIMÉE & JAGUAR?

I think it will affect me deeply. The book has already changed my life. For years I was completely alone. I worked, came home, watched TV, slept. It was only on Sundays that I lived in the past. I have never stopped loving Felice, that is why I cut myself off from the world. I felt it was my responsibility towards Felice. I gave my consent for the book and the film because I wanted to create a memorial to Felice.

ERICA FISCHER

Author of the book AIMÉE & JAGUAR



Erica Fischer was born in England where her parents had emigrated. In 1948 she and her parents returned to Austria. Since the late 1970s, Erika Fischer has worked as a journalist. She now lives and works in Berlin as a journalist, writer and translator.

When Lilly Wust was 80 years old, she told Erica Fischer her story. The book AIMÉE & JAGUAR was written after long, intense discussions, extensive research, and was based on the letters and poems which Felice and Lilly wrote. AIMÉE & JAGUAR was first published in 1994 and immediately entered the bestseller lists. It has now been translated into 11 languages. In 1998 it was published in paperback by dtv Verlag.

Interview with Erica Fischer

Why were you interested in the story of these two women?

At first I was interested in Lilly Wust's transformation from German housewife and mother of four children into the passionate lover of a young Jewish woman. It was a story I had come across in the feminist movement of the 1970s, where women had got married and had children without ever admitting to themselves that they were attracted to other women. Suddenly they would fall in love and throw their whole past overboard. Lilly Wust received a pile of letters from all over Germany which showed that there were many such stories. While I was researching, I realised there was another story behind this first one, namely the transformation of a Nazi sympathising anti-Semite into a pro-Semite saviour of four Jewish women, and then the story became even more interesting. It became a very German story, capable of symbolizing the eternal German dilemma. At this point, because Lilly Wust refused to talk about her past in the Third Reich, my interest in the 'converted' Nazi sympathizer overshadowed the love story. I tried to allow all this ambivalence to flow into the book. I'm glad that Max Färberböck kept the ambivalence in the film.

Don't you think that all the stories about war and persecution have been told by now? How can the young generation be interested in AIMÉE & JAGUAR ?

The true stories are only just coming to light. Sadly, many of them will die with their protagonists. In the decades immediately following the war, victims and perpetrators were both silent. The perpetrators (and their children) are still silent, but in contrast, many of the victims feel the need to speak. Many will take their silence to the grave. I don't blame them. In the first decades after the war most of the stories which were told were simplistic. Apart from a few exceptions, such as Primo Levi, no one said that the victims' reactions to the horrors brought about in their lives by the Nazis were extremely varied. Now enough time has passed for us to be able to describe the ambivalence and the nuances on the side of the Jewish victims as well as on the side of the perpetrators and Nazi sympathisers. I think these stories are extremely important in order to free the victims from the anonymous mass and to present them as people with complex thoughts, feelings and behaviour. And we must stop seeing the perpetrators as demons. We can only think about how much negative potential there is in many of us and what social efforts are needed to keep it under control if we admit that they were human beings too.

What did it feel like to attend the film shoot of a story you had written?

I visited the set twice: once at the town hall in Schöneberg, which was serving as the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, and once at a night shoot on a Kreuzberg street. I think it is wonderful that the story I wrote down has been reborn in so many manifestations. There was the translation into 11 languages, several national and foreign TV and radio documentaries, some oil paintings of Felice Schragenheim, an exhibition about the life of Felice Schragenheim, a theatre play, a scenic reading, a musical version of Felice's poems, and now the feature film as a high point. It was exciting to attend the shoot. I understood what hard work it is to repeat a short scene over and over again with the same effort. Maria Schrader was like a brave little soldier, showing the same facial expression on command. On the night shoot in Berlin-Kreuzberg, I was impressed by how an illusion of reality can be created through lighting and darkness and an old car, despite the crowd of people standing or walking busily around. It had a magical effect on me. It was a mild summer evening, the actresses were wearing winter coats and thick scarves, and I couldn't tear myself away.



Felice Schragenheim and Lilly Wust, August 21st, 1944
Copyright Christel Becker-Rau/DOK

Extracts from Erica Fischer's book

A letter from Lilly to Felice, March 31st, 1943

Felice, I love you! What a feeling it is to be able to say that! Oh, Felice, the nicest fate I could hope for is that of lasting happiness. I want to live with you for a long, a very long time, do you hear? And life is so beautiful, so wonderful. Felice, do you belong to me - without limit? To me only? Please say you do, at least for a very long time to come, please! Do you love me? I'm acting like a seventeen-year-old, aren't I?

Be good to me, Felice, please? And yet please don't hold back. I wanted to lure you out of your hiding place. I am like a child playing with fire; will I get burned? A little? Totally? Felice, stop me! Isn't it just a little bit your fault that I'm so crazy, so totally crazy?

A poem from Felice to Lilly, Christmas 1943

*That there was a time before you - I can't believe!
To me, we've forever been this way,
Together, side by side in life and in dreams,
Surrounded both by darkness and the light of day.*

*You belong to me! Since you arrived,
And slowly at first, then full of trust,
Placed your heart in my hands, I have strived
For the strength to build a life for us.*

*So I have hope for days yet to come,
As this year nods and slips into air,
Because before me, like some emblem,
I carry the copper gleam of your hair.*
