

# The Blue Bear

Newsletter #11  
September 2023



Happy greetings from Berlin!

We are back in full swing for the Fall Semester 2023 with 22 students in attendance. 19 from Duke and three from other universities: Oberlin, Vassar, and Wesleyan. But all of them are Berliners now!

In September, we already went on two excursions. The first day trip was to the city of Potsdam with its majestic gardens of the Palace of Sanssouci (French for „Without Worries“). This educational excursion was, as always, expertly lead by Matthias Pabsch who teaches the Art and Art History courses in our program. The second excursion was a full weekend trip to the city of Leipzig. We will tell you all about that in our next newsletter.

For now, enjoy this newsletter that looks back on our Spring 2023. We hope you'll join us soon at Duke in Berlin to start German from scratch or expand your knowledge of German alongside our course offerings in English: *Applied Conversational AI (CompSci)*, *The Ghost of Polarization Haunting Western Democracies (PoliSci)*, and *Berlin Art and Architecture (Art History)*.

Mit herzlichen Grüßen

Tin Wegel (Resident Director)

Lina-Sofie Raith (Program Assistant)

# Top 5 Berlin Movie Moments

by Cate Knothe

It has now been one month since my return to the United States following a semester in Berlin. Although I am beginning to establish a routine back in Durham, there are still times when I find myself going through a moment of reverse culture shock. But, most frequently, I find myself missing the accessibility of art galleries, museums, and small independent movie theaters. More than anywhere else I have ever lived, Berlin seemed like a city for art and especially cinema. With theaters in every neighborhood—or Kiez as Berliners say—and one of the largest, most prestigious film festivals in the world, Berlin was truly an ideal location for a film fanatic like me. To reminisce on my movie-going activities while in Berlin, I wanted to make a quick Top 5 list. So, for anyone interested in the cinema scene of Berlin, here are the five greatest movie moments of my spring semester in the German capital.

## 1: Berlinale

I had an auspicious arrival in Berlin—it lined up almost perfectly with the start of the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale). From February 16-26, I was going to at least one film per day and traveling across the city from East to West and West to East. In the end, I saw around 14 feature films and 5 shorts. I visited close to 10 movie theaters and auditoriums across the city, and I even went to a Berlinale Crew Call party with my host mom.



Cate at Berlinale  
© Cate Knothe

Although I had no life other than class and Berlinale for those ten days, I was truly in cinema heaven. I also got to know Berlin and visit parts of the city I would have never ventured to without the encouragement of a pre-purchased ticket (looking at you Verti Music Hall). The majority of the films were a bit... wild, but I left with some new favorites including Celine Song's *Past Lives* and Makoto Shinkai's *Suzume*.

## 2: Freiluft Kinos

Freiluft Kinos, or open-air cinemas: They're like drive-in movie theaters, but without the cars and in the middle of a park. Basically, they're an amazing way to experience movie watching during the height of the summer. One of my favorites I visited was Freiluftkino Friedrichshain where I saw the Michael Cera-helmed dramedy *The Adults*. The film itself was just a fun and entertaining flick but seeing it at a Freiluft Kino truly enhanced the experience. Curled up in a blanket under a clear summer sky, eating popcorn and listening to the sounds of park around me... that, for me, is a kind of paradise. Other fun Freiluft Kinos I visited included one at the Kulturforum and a free one, the Open-Air-Kino im Kranzler Eck.

## 3: Babylon Theater & Silent Films

Now, I love a silent film. In my hometown of Boise, Idaho, the local orchestra would hold an annual silent film night where they would play live music alongside silent short films. It was foundational for the growth of my love of early silent film. However, it has been difficult to find venues that offer opportunities to enjoy both silent film and live music (or, the way silent films were originally made to be enjoyed). This



Cate's favorite Indie theatre in Berlin  
© Cate Knothe

semester, I discovered the Babylon Theater in Berlin, a place where a live orchestra performs with silent films at least once a week. At this theater, I had two incredible experiences: watching *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* with live orchestra. *Metropolis* is already one of my most favorite films. Seeing it with a live orchestra gave it new life and helped me understand the significance of the film in a way I had never registered before.

#### 4: Movies at Zoopalast

Zoopalast is an actual palace. The main auditorium has 791 seats, but each theater looks as if it has been directly transported back to the 1950s. Every time I would watch a film there, I felt as if I was time travelling to the 20th century. This was also the closest cinema to my apartment in Berlin, so I was here... a lot.



#### 5: Celebrity Sighting at Kino in der Kulturbrauerei

During one of my final movie-going experiences (*Oppenheimer* at Kino in der Kulturbrauerei), I saw a celebrity who had a significant impact on my German-learning path. Back in high school, I started watching the web series *Druck* to practice my German listening skills. The series is set in Berlin and follows a group of high schoolers as they undergo the pressures and anxieties of growing up. During my entire semester in Berlin, I had thought back fondly to what I have learned about the language, culture, and city due to *Druck*. Then, while buying popcorn and slushies at the movie theater before *Oppenheimer*, I saw the actor of one of the main characters from season one. For anyone who knows the show, I was standing in the concession line directly behind Jonas. It was crazy. One of the most influential shows in my German-language journey... and I saw the actor for one of my favorite characters. Providence, it seems.



## Coming Together Through Art

by Esteban Paulino

An aspect of German culture I enjoyed was how much they valued history, art, science, and general education through their abundance of museums, galleries, and theaters. Berlin is one of the most storied cities in the world, so I'm grateful I got to access all of this information when necessary.

Furthermore, even though I come from a big city like New York, the museum culture in Berlin felt more prominent and lively in their society. It was great to see people from all over the world and of all ages come together to learn more about various topics.



Feel free to email us at [duke@international.fu-berlin.de](mailto:duke@international.fu-berlin.de) with any questions about the program or to get in contact with one of our current (or former) Duke-in-Berliners.