

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Friday Film Fest Series



Eine Million Minuten (2024)

May 15 | 6.30pm
Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of Pennsylvania
611 Spring Garden St.
Philadelphia, PA 19123

“Eine Million Minuten” 2024



Director: Cristopher Doll
Screenplay: Monika Fässler, Tim Hebborn
Malte Welding, Ulla Ziemann
Christopher Doll

Based on: Wolf Küper: One Million Minutes:
What my Daughter taught me about time

Camera: Andreas Berger
Music: Dascha Dauenhauer
Editing: Alexander Dittner
Time: 125 minutes

Cast: Tom Schilling as Wolfgang Küper
Karoline Herfurth as Vera Küper
Pola Friedrichs as Nina Küper
Piet Levi Busch as Simon Küper
Hassan Akkouch as Ben
Anneke Kim Sarnau as Claudia Hergenrath

Commentary by Karl Moehlmann

**Save these dates for our
next season 2026/ 2027**

2026
October 9 | November 20

2027
January 15 | February 19 | March 19
April 16 | May 21

An uncommon solution

What is unique about this story is not the all-to-familiar problems stemming from work-life balance, but rather that this couple finds a solution that is still uncommon in today's working world. Not every couple can manage to go on a trip around the world for two years and maintain their professional and economic status. The Küper family was fortunate that employers in Germany, working in concert with the government, seem more able and willing to set up "*Teilzeit, Gleitzeit or Halbzeit*" conditions in such circumstances. Despite the somewhat 'privileged' situation of the Küpers, the story nonetheless resonates with anyone who has ever struggled to think creatively about solutions to very common problems, including but not limited to work-life balance.

The journey that takes the Küpers from Thailand to Iceland (the serendipitous result of Nina stopping a spinning globe with her finger) is not only filled with beautiful scenery but also with real solutions to the special needs of each family member. Whether everyone can emulate the Küpers in their temporarily nomadic existence remains a question but their example in this wonderful story provides a multitude of *Denkanstöße für jedermann*.



Wolf Küper

This comedy is based on Wolf Küper's unexpected mid-life autobiography. Born in 1973, Küper received his PhD in international environmental studies from the University of Bonn in 2006. After spending time in the rain forests of South America, then working on a biodiversity project in Africa and finally becoming an environmental consultant with the UN, he ended his scientific career in 2010, a decision triggered by a request from his daughter. That request led to a family trip through *Australasien* that lasted one million minutes. Küper narrated this experience in a book (*Eine Million Minuten*) that was published in 2016 by Penguin Random House. His book reached a ranking of #16 on the *Spiegel-Bestsellerliste* and #7 at Amazon. It has been translated into several languages.



Dolls Debut

After producing movies for his partner Karoline Herfurth (*Wunderschön, Einfach mal was Schönes (2022)*), Christopher Doll saw great potential in Küpers book and decided to direct it himself with Herfurth and Tom Schilling portraying the Küper couple.

With Schilling (*Napola* (2004), *A coffee in Berlin* (2012), *Never look away* (2018), *Brecht* (2019), *Fabian – Going to the dogs* (2021)) and Herfurth (*Das perfekte Geheimnis* (2019)) Doll was able to leverage dual star power for his debut as a director.



A common situation

Vera and Wolf, a young couple with two small children, five-year-old daughter Nina and one-year-old son Simon, seem to be living a happy and comfortable life in Berlin. Wolf, working for the United Nations as an expert on preserving the earth's biodiversity, is frequently away from home, attending conferences or visiting far away projects. Vera is stuck at home taking care of the household and tending to the needs of their children.

Their daughter, having been diagnosed with a delay in her motor development (*Entwicklungsverzögerung/Bewegungs- und Koordinationsstörung*), needs special treatment, thus adding to the extreme stress that Vera already feels. She has hit a dead end trying to balance her own part-time employment with the needs of her family while her husband is not present enough to share the burden. She confronts Wolf with an ultimatum: "*Ich*

bin so fertig. Ich kann das nicht mehr. Ich schaff' das nicht. Ich will das auch nicht. Ich bin so nicht glücklich. Ich kann das nicht noch mal weitermachen die nächsten 5 Jahre".

Initially, Wolf doesn't seem to understand the severity of the situation. He suggests hiring an au-pair girl and going to couple therapy. He insists that his job requires his full attention and the time it takes travelling the world. As the main provider for the financial needs of the family he sees no alternative to the demands of his career. Moreover, doesn't the importance of his environmental work justify some form of sacrifice in his personal life?

It takes an eye-opening session with a specialist doctor who advises them about the needs and treatment options of their daughter to slowly change his mind. It's all about spending time together with Nina so that she can develop freely and happily. Nina herself had expressed to her father with childish naivety that she wishes they could spend a million minutes together only for *die schönen Sachen*. While in her childish mind a million minutes are simply more than five minutes, Wolf realizes it would be exactly 694.4 days or almost 2 years.

Standing in front of a large board with all the dates for environmental conferences, meetings and projects for the next two years, Wolf finally comes to the realization that it would be impossible to balance his job requirements with the needs of his family, especially his special needs daughter. He has to put his family first unless he wants to see it going *kaputt*. But a change from an in-person to a virtual assignment and a consent by his supervisor and organization would be required to make this possible.