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# Four Minutes (Vier Minuten)

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**115 minutes, 2008, Germany**

**Director:** Chris Kraus

**Cast:** Monica Bleibtreu, Hannah Herzsprung, Nadja Uhl

## **Synopsis:**

This German drama from director Chris Kraus explores the intense relationship between a female prisoner and an older woman. A piano teacher, who is the older of the two, connects with the younger woman through classical music and eventually much more.

## **Review Laura Bushel, BBCi Films**

German writer/director Chris Kraus must know a thing or two about movie formulas, having concocted a film that combines the figure of the lapsed musical prodigy, the concept of a prisoner finding redemption, and a plot that revolves around a rebellious student being coached for a big competition finale. But that's not to say that *Four Minutes*, his drama about a violent female prisoner being coaxed back to the piano by an otherwise stern tutor, won't jolt you out of your seat in places like a bum note in a Chopin Prelude.

Jenny (Herzsprung) is the musical prodigy in question, a young pianist who performed around the world aged ten but who's now a convicted murderer. When prison piano tutor Mrs Kruger (Bleibtreu) tries to teach Jenny, something in her uptight piano-side manner and Jenny's propensity to beat people to a pulp clashes. But there's nothing like tinkling the ivories to make people open up and as Jenny's love for music is reignited, so Mrs Kruger (whose past is slowly revealed through flashback) devotes more of her time to her pupil.

*Four Minutes* makes pains to add backstory to its characters, but is prone to open up questions that are then left unanswered. It also treads a fine line between dark humour and pure gloom, which can make it drag. But embellishments come in the form of rich cinematography and strong performances from the film's leading ladies, especially Herzsprung, who is capable of turning from wild-eyed savage to conservatoire standard artist in a beat.