

THE AXEL CORTI COLLECTION

FOUR FEATURE FILMS BY AXEL CORTI

God Does Not Believe in Us Anymore (1982)

Santa Fe (1985)

Welcome in Vienna (1986)

A Woman's Pale Blue Handwriting (1984)



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for Jewish Film

The National Center for Jewish Film

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AXEL CORTI (1933-1993)

Axel Corti, one of Austria's most important theater and film directors and journalists, was born in Paris in 1933. Spending his childhood in France, Italy, Switzerland, England, Germany, and Austria, he was educated at 13 different schools, and while in university he focused on German and Romance languages and literature, although he was also schooled in agriculture. At the end of World War II, the Corti family moved to Austria, where Corti began work at the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) in the late 1950s.

Corti's work as in the theater began in 1958. Two years later he was invited to the Vienna Burgtheater, where he began as assistant to many of Austria's leading stage directors. Within a few years he was writing and directing major productions in Austria and throughout Europe. Corti began directing for television and film in the 1960s and is best known outside of Austria for the sweeping and groundbreaking film trilogy *Where to and Back* (*God Does Not Believe in Us Anymore*; *Santa Fe*; *Welcome in Vienna*) produced between 1982 and 1987, and the critically acclaimed feature *A Woman's Pale Blue Handwriting*.

In 1968 Corti launched a weekly news and opinion radio program to which he was dedicated until he died. Well known and respected, but not always loved, for his regular commentaries on domestic politics and the arts, Corti was a leading figure on the Austrian cultural scene for over thirty years in a career that included television, radio, and film writing and directing, opera production, championing modern Austrian drama and literature, and teaching. Corti was the recipient of many prestigious awards and prizes for these and other works. He died of leukemia in 1993.



“A filmmaker whose restless, intelligent camera eye is always fixed on the fresh and illuminating phrase, gesture, moment.”

– John Powers, *L.A. Weekly* (Aug 7-13, 1987)

“A committed and often controversial purveyor of uncomfortable home truths.”

– Ian Traynor, *The (London) Guardian* (Feb 12, 1994)

“For decades, Axel Corti fought with words and pictures for humanity and tolerance, and against hate, racism and shutting people out. With numerous films, he made a considerable contribution to the fight against forgetfulness, falsification and denial of Austrians' responsibility for the horrific deeds of Nazism.”

– Austrian Culture Minister Rudolf Scholten upon Corti's death

WHERE TO AND BACK / Wohin und Zurück

Film Trilogy by Axel Corti

God Does Not Believe in Us Anymore
Santa Fe
Welcome in Vienna

Directed by Axel Corti and written by Georg Stefan Troller, loosely based on Troller's own experiences between 1938 and 1946.

Each award-winning film stands on its own as a fully-realized drama.

"Remarkable films." – Deborah J. Kunk, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (Aug 8, 1987)

"At once intimate and epic and an impeccable period re-creation, 'Where to and Back' is a masterpiece shot in gritty black and white and populated by several dozen richly drawn characters." – Kevin Thomas, *Los Angeles Times* (Aug 3, 1987)

"A masterful, engrossing, novelistic trilogy." – Kevin Thomas, *Los Angeles Times* (Aug 7, 1987)

"What Corti and Troller have done is what artists do: illuminate the life, the lives, within the history – the terrible drama, the bizarre comedy, the wry contradictions." – Stanley Kauffmann, *New Republic* (Aug 30, 1992)

"The story of individuals compelled to reshape their identities against the backdrop of World War II." – Annette Insdorf, *New York Times* (July 24, 1988)

GEORG STEFAN TROLLER - Screenwriter of 'Where To And Back' Films

Georg Stefan Troller was born to a Jewish family in Vienna in 1921. After high school he began training as a bookbinder, but Nazi violence forced the teenager to flee Vienna. In 1938 he emigrated – via France and North Africa – to the United States. Troller worked in a bookbindery from 1941 to 1943, when he joined the U.S. Army. During the last years of World War II, he was stationed in Europe and assigned to a division that questioned prisoners of war. Troller's company remained stationed in Munich until 1946.

For several years after completing his military service, Troller studied English literature at the University of California, eventually returning, briefly, to Vienna and then Paris, in 1949, where he settled and began work as a journalist in 1951. Throughout a long career as a writer and journalist, Troller wrote for various radio and television programs broadcast in West Germany, including the radio program "Pariser Journal" which he produced for 10 years, and programs for ZDF. Troller had collaborated with director Axel Corti on several projects, including *Young Dr. Freud* (1976), before the two men teamed up on *God Does Not Believe in Us Anymore*, *Sante Fe*, and *Welcome in Vienna*, three feature films which became the *Where to and Back* trilogy. The films, written by Troller and directed by Corti, are loosely based on Troller's experiences between 1938 and 1946.

God Does Not Believe In Us Anymore

/ An uns glaubt Gott nicht mehr

Austria, 1982, 110 minutes, b&w, German with English subtitles

Part I: *Where To and Back / Wohin und zurück*

Director Axel Corti
Screenwriter Georg Stefan Troller
Cinematographer Wolfgang Treu
Editors Klaus Riemer, Werner Swoss
Lutz Kleinselbeck

Ferry Johannes Silberschneider
Alena Barbara Petritsch
Gandhi Armin Mueller-Stahl
Mehlig Fritz Muliar
Fein Eric Schildkraut
Kron Georg Corten
Gross Georg Marischka
Kornfeld Kurt Mejstrik
Dolba Bernd Jeschek



Vienna 1938. After Kristallnacht and the murder of his father, Ferry Tobler (Johannes Silberschneider) a young Viennese Jew flees from the Nazis and profiteers of Vienna. He scrambles for various exit visas and entry permits, and finally arrives in Prague, where he meets an anti-Nazi German soldier (Armin Mueller-Stahl) who has escaped from Dachau and a sympathetic Czech relief worker. Together with other Jewish refugees, the three make their way to Paris and eventually to Marseille, hoping to sail to a safe port.

“An enlightened ‘road’ movie.” – Vincent Canby, *New York Times* (July 20, 1988)

“An unusually sensitive and well-crafted work which throws the viewer into the middle of the turmoil experienced by Jews trying to evade Hitler’s inexorable advance.” – Jon Hofferan, *Los Angeles Reader* (Aug 7, 1987)

“Corti purposefully avoids pumping up the narrative, and his straight-forward and understated style allows the multi-dimensional characters, as well as the historical details and ironies of their plights, to emerge gradually.” – Jon Hofferan, *Los Angeles Reader* (Aug 7, 1987)

“Georg Stefan Troller’s literate script doesn’t eschew the ideological conflicts and dollops of philosophy which are invariably a part of the Jewish experience, and Corti fruitfully exploits the relationship between these cerebral considerations and the more pressing existential concerns of the protagonists.”
– Jon Hofferan, *Los Angeles Reader* (Aug 7, 1987)

“With unerring brilliance, Corti finds and exposes small moments of meaning. His canvas is huge, but his brush stroke is delicate.” – Deborah J. Kunk, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (Aug 8, 1987)

“A suspense-ridden adventure.” – Kevin Thomas, *Los Angeles Times* (Aug 3, 1987)

Santa Fe

Austria, 1985, 110 Minutes, b&w, German with English Subtitles
Part 2: *Where To and Back / Wohin und zurück*

Director Axel Corti
Screenwriter Georg Stefan Troller
Cinematographer Gernot Roll
Editors Rolf Ballmann, Werner Swossil,
Lutz Kleinselbeck

Alfred "Freddy" Wolff Gabriel Barylli
Lissa Doris Buchrucker
Dr. Treumann Peter Lühr
Ferry Tobler Johannes Silberschneider
Mrs. Shapiro Monika Bleibtreu
Popper Gideon Singer
Dr. Bauer Heinz J. Klein
Frau Bauer Tilly Breidenbach
Feldheim Ernst Stankovsky
Frau Marmorek Dagmar Schwarz
Ameranth Leo Mazakarini
Binder Joachim Kemmer



WINNER Best Teleplay, Baden-Baden TV Film Festival (1986)
WINNER Golden Nymph, Monte Carlo Television Festival (1986)
WINNER International Press Award, Monte Carlo Television Festival (1986)
WINNER Red Cross Award, Monte Carlo Television Festival (1986)

New York City 1940. A ship arrives filled with exhausted refugees. Alfred "Freddy" Wolff (Gabriel Barylli) a young Austrian Jew dreams of starting anew in the mythic American West, but instead struggles to overcome the piercing alienation of immigrant life. Freddy's world of émigré acquaintances includes Popper, a prize-winning photographer who now takes passport photos and Lissa, the daughter of a delicatessen owner, with whom Freddy dreams of traveling to Santa Fe.

"A totally absorbing picture, which examines with complete assurance the hopes, doubts, and memories of immigrants who have no place to call home." – Amy Lawrence, *Los Angeles Reader* (Aug 7, 1987)

"Freddy's personal story becomes a way of evoking an entire milieu: the community of immigrant Jews struggling to survive in an America that doesn't really want them. Corti and Troller have a sure hand with the nuances of this émigré community – the delusions, the face-saving lies, the world-weary generosity, the ache of memory, the longing for love that is impacted like an abscessed tooth....It shows us hard, complicated lives and does so with compassion rather than sentimentality, ironic awareness rather than sarcasm or rude humor." – John Powers, *L.A. Weekly* (Aug 7-13, 1987)

Welcome in Vienna

Austria, 1986, 126 minutes, b&w, German with English Subtitles
Part 3: *Where To and Back / Wohin und zurück*

Director Axel Corti
Screenwriters Georg Stefan Troller, Axel Corti
Cinematographer Gernot Roll
Editors Ulrike Pahl, Claudia Rieneck,
Klaus Riemer, Werner Swossil,
Lutz Kleinselbeck

Alfred "Freddy" Wolff Gabriel Barylli
Sergeant Adler Nicolas Brieger
Claudia Schütte Claudia Messner
Captain Karpeles Hubert Mann
Russian Woman Liliana Nelska
Stodola Kurt Sowinetz
Treschensky Karlheinz Hackl
Lieutenant Binder Joachim Kemmer
Oberst Schütte Heinz Trixner



WINNER Golden Hugo, Best Film, Chicago International Film Festival (1986)
WINNER Best Teleplay, Baden-Baden TV Film Festival (1986)
WINNER Bronze Leopard's Eye, Locarno International Film Festival (1987)
WINNER Best Director, San Sebastián International Film Festival (1986)
OFFICIAL SELECTION Cannes Film Festival (1986)

Alfred "Freddy" Wolff (Gabriel Barylli), a young Viennese Jew who had escaped to New York several years before, and Adler, a left-wing intellectual from Berlin, return to Europe as American soldiers in 1944. When the war ends, Freddy and Adler are posted in Vienna. The advent of Cold War compromises and pervasive anti-Semitism shatter the idealism of both men as Freddy falls in love with the daughter of a Nazi, and Adler, disillusioned with Communism, falls in with a charming black marketeer.

"Vienna isn't the pre-war city he left. It's the bombed, carved-up, morally ambiguous terrain of *The Third Man*, a city in which everybody is trying to survive and get on with their lives... Whether it's the disillusioned communist, the weasley (and charming) black-marketeer, the struggling actress (and daughter of a Nazi), or Freddy himself – the characters must rebuild their lives on what feels to them like historical quicksand. Corti shows us their compromises, betrayals, dreams and opportunism, and he does so without finding villains or heroes... Such a sense of life's swirling complexity goes far beyond that of *The Third Man* and recalls (as critic David Thomson has noted) the density of *The Rules of the Game*. A fascinating, powerful film." – John Powers, *L.A. Weekly* (Aug 14-20, 1987)

"Aided by Gernot Roll's apt b&w lensing and Fritz Hollergschwandtner's essential art direction, Troller and Corti have recreated a moment in their country's past with cruel, vivid intimacy." – *Variety* (May 21, 1986)

"Remarkable for its fierce indictment of moral disarray in post World War II Austria and for its gritty recapturing of 1945 Vienna." – Walter Goodman, *New York Times* (June 1, 1988)

A Woman's Pale Blue Handwriting **/ Eine blaßblaue Frauenschrift**

Austria, 1984, 105 min, b&w, German with English subtitles

Director Axel Corti
Screenwriters Axel Corti & Kurt Wittig

From the novella "Oesterreichischer Rundfunk" by Franz Werfel

Starring: Gabriel Barylli, Friedrich von Thun, Krystyna Janda, Friederike Kammer, Rudolf Melichar, Thomas Kamper, Sabastian Baur

WINNER Prix Italia for Drama (1985)
WINNER Golden Nymph, Monte Carlo Television Festival (1985)
WINNER International Press Award, Monte Carlo Television Festival (1985)
WINNER Best Fiction Prize, International Critics of TV Magazines (1985)

It is Austria 1936 and Leonidas Tachezy (Gabriel Barylli), an Austrian government official happily married to the daughter of a prominent family, receives a unsettling letter. Twelve years before, as a student in Germany, he had an affair with a Jewish woman. Now she is asking for his help in placing a half-Jewish eleven year old boy in an Austrian school. This dramatic and complex film, based on a novella by the Jewish author Franz Werfel (1890-1945) delves into a man's ethical crisis. Is the child his? Should he help, and at a time when the Nazis are on the rise?

"Axel Corti, assisted by Kurt Rittig, has written a screenplay with the poetic force of its literary parent...Corti looks at one man's troubled heart with unspeakable clarity." – Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archive

