

We Will Not Be Silent

By David Meyers

Synopsis: "We Will Not Be Silent" tells the true story of Sophie Scholl, a German college student who led the only major act of civil disobedience during the Second World War. The play is not about the Holocaust - but examines the role ordinary Germans played in the rise of Hitler, and also the moral strength and clarity that led a group of German students to risk their lives for a righteous, but hopeless, cause.

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CHARACTERS

SOPHIE SCHOLL, 21

KURT GRUNWALD, late 40s, a Nazi police officer

HANS SCHOLL, 24

SETTING

A prison cell in Munich, Germany. February, 1943.

The cell is sterile and institutional; a large interrogation table sits at center, with two chairs beside it. A small bucket rests in the corner. Otherwise, the room is empty. It is cold, frightening.

NOTE: A slash (/) indicates where the next line of dialogue begins.

WE WILL NOT BE SILENT

SCENE ONE

Over the blackout:

We hear a series of voices - young, passionate, strong. They overlap and crash into each other, building until they reach a deafening crescendo.

VOICE

A call to all Germans!

VOICE

Cast off the cloak of indifference you have wrapped / around you.

VOICE

The guilt of Hitler goes beyond / all measure.

VOICE

You must eliminate this system before it is / too late-

VOICE

Offer resistance - passive resistance - wherever / you may be.

VOICE

Support The White Rose. Distribute our **leaflets!**

VOICE

Sabotage all gatherings and rallies of the Nazi Party.

VOICE

Make copies of this leaflet and / distribute them.

VOICE

The White Rose is your guilty con / science.

VOICE

We will not be silent. We will not leave you in peace!

BAM. Lights up. A prison cell.
Munich, Germany. 1943.

KURT GRUNWALD, a Nazi police officer (late 40s), has just closed the large metal door of the cell. He carries a stack of files.

SOPHIE SCHOLL, 21, sits at an empty table, wearing handcuffs.

GRUNWALD

Good afternoon, Ms. Scholl.

He sees the handcuffs - stops.

GRUNWALD

Did no one take these off?

(no response)

I told them to remove...

Grunwald goes to Sophie, takes off the handcuffs.

GRUNWALD

I apologize for that ... unpleasantness.

(pause)

It's nice to finally meet you, Ms. Scholl.

Sophie looks at him, confused.

SOPHIE

I'm sorry ... Do I know / you?

Grunwald takes a stack of papers, and places them on the table.

GRUNWALD

I was transferred to Munich when your publications began appearing. I've been following you for quite some time.-

SOPHIE

My publications?

Pause. Grunwald looks at her, smiles warmly.

GRUNWALD

I want you to know - at the outset, Ms. Scholl - that I am not your adversary. I am not a member of the Gestapo, the SS. I am not interested in parties or politics...

(confiding in her)

I should not be saying this, but I am ... not wholly unsympathetic to your views.

Unfortunately, the way you've chosen to advance them has violated the law.

SOPHIE

I'm sorry - I think you've made a mistake.

Pause. Grunwald stops, looks at her.

GRUNWALD

You are Sophie Scholl, yes?

SOPHIE

Yes.

GRUNWALD

You are 21 years old?

SOPHIE

Yes.

GRUNWALD

Sister of Hans Scholl, daughter of Robert and Magdalena?

SOPHIE

Yes.

GRUNWALD

You live at Leopold Strasse?

SOPHIE

Yes.

GRUNWALD

And you are one of the founders of "The White Rose"-

SOPHIE

/ What?

GRUNWALD

-An organization that has called for the overthrow of the Nazi Party, and the defeat of-

SOPHIE

No. / No!

Grunwald gestures to the pamphlets.

GRUNWALD

So you have not seen these pamphlets before? You did not create them?

SOPHIE

No.

GRUNWALD

You do not know that they urge the German people to sabotage the war? To remove Hitler?

SOPHIE

No.

GRUNWALD

You did not distribute them at your university this morning?

SOPHIE

No. Of course / not-

GRUNWALD

You have not been distributing them throughout Germany for the past six months?

SOPHIE

I don't know what you're talking about.

A pause. He looks at her.

GRUNWALD

Please Ms. Scholl-

SOPHIE

But I didn't do these things.

GRUNWALD

Then why did the guard at your university detain you?

SOPHIE

I don't know.

Grunwald gestures to the pamphlets.

GRUNWALD

He said you were distributing these pamphlets. That you threw them from a balcony-

SOPHIE

He's lying.

GRUNWALD

Why would he-

SOPHIE

Did you find any pamphlets? When you arrested me?

Pause.

GRUNWALD

We did not.

SOPHIE

Then how can I have been distributing them?

(off Grunwald's silence)

I only had my suitcase. I saw the papers on the steps, but-

GRUNWALD

You saw them?

SOPHIE

Yes, as I entered the main building. I know I should have said something-

GRUNWALD

Then why didn't you?

SOPHIE

Because I was scared.

GRUNWALD

Of what?

SOPHIE

This. That I would be held resp / onsible-

GRUNWALD

That it would attract attention to your family, perhaps?

(pause)

To your father ...

SOPHIE

My father has nothing to do with this.

GRUNWALD

Then tell me who does. Tell me who the leaders of The White Rose are-

SOPHIE

I don't know. I swear.

Pause.

GRUNWALD

And it was your father you were planning to visit today?

SOPHIE

Yes - my parents in Ulm. I was going to take the train home after my classes.

GRUNWALD

And that is why you brought your suitcase with you?

SOPHIE

Yes. So I wouldn't have to pick it up later.

GRUNWALD

Because you were going to bring it home - to your parents?

SOPHIE

Yes.

GRUNWALD

Then why was it empty?

A slight pause. Then:

SOPHIE

I spent the previous week with my parents, in Ulm - and I brought back my sheets and clothes to be cleaned at that time. I had nothing to bring with me today.

GRUNWALD

Then why did you need a suitcase?

SOPHIE

To bring back the clothes my mother washed... And she often gives me food to take back...

A longer beat. Grunwald looks at her.

Then:

GRUNWALD

Are these names familiar to you: Willi Graf - Alexander Schmorell - Kurt Huber?

Sophie looks at him, decides to answer.

SOPHIE

Willi is a friend of my brother, and I spent some time with Alex last summer - we were working on our theology studies together. And Professor Huber is one of my lecturers at university.

Grunwald makes some notes in Sophie's file.

SOPHIE

Can I call my parents - to tell / them-

GRUNWALD

Have you bought any postage stamps recently?

SOPHIE

What?

Grunwald looks at her with a fixed gaze.

GRUNWALD

Have you bought any postage stamps recently?

SOPHIE

...well, yes, about two weeks ago, at the Post Office on Leopold Street.

GRUNWALD

How many?

SOPHIE

I'm not sure... Maybe ten 12-Pfennig stamps, and five 6-Pfennigs.

(trying to be helpful)

There are a few left if you'd like to see them. They're in my bag - the guards took it, but-

GRUNWALD

Have you ever owned large quantities of paper?

Sophie laughs quietly.

GRUNWALD

Do I amuse you, Ms. Scholl?

SOPHIE

No, of course not.

GRUNWALD

You are under investigation for *treason*-

SOPHIE

Treason?

GRUNWALD

-a crime with a mandatory sentence of death. I strongly suggest / that you-

SOPHIE

For what? What have I / done?

GRUNWALD

For founding The White Rose. For sedition and defeatism, for subverting the war effort and destroying the will of the German people / to-

SOPHIE

I have been a member of the Hitler Youth since I was 12. I was a Führerin of my JM squad, and Gruppenführerin-

GRUNWALD

(looking at her file)

But you resigned - two years ago.

A slight hesitation.

SOPHIE

... I did.

GRUNWALD

Why?

SOPHIE

...due to differences of opinion with the regional Führerin. It had nothing to do with politics.

Grunwald looks at her.

GRUNWALD

It had nothing to do with the views of your Father? His arrest for denouncing Hitler?

SOPHIE

No.

GRUNWALD

Or the arrest of your siblings? Their support for subversive activities'?

SOPHIE

No. That was-

(pause)

The case against my siblings was completely unjustified. They were exonerated. Werner is serving in the Army / now-

GRUNWALD

And your father? Was his punishment unjustified?

SOPHIE

...my father *does* feel differently. ... He believes... *believed* - in the idea of a democratic government.

GRUNWALD

And in the-

(reading from the file)

-“criminality” of the Nazi regime, yes?

SOPHIE

But he never tried to influence us with his views. He permitted us to join the Hitler Youth. He renounced his criticism of Hitler.

GRUNWALD

Or perhaps he chose to advance it through other means...

SOPHIE

He didn't. I swear-

GRUNWALD

Ms. Scholl, if you are honest with me, I can advocate for leniency on your behalf. Perhaps I can even save your life. But if you-

SOPHIE

I have never been involved with this group. I don't share their views, and I don't share the views of my father.

Pause. Tension.

GRUNWALD

I see.

A beat.

SOPHIE

Is Hans here?

GRUNWALD

He is speaking with my colleague next door.

SOPHIE

May I see him?

GRUNWALD

Absolutely not.

Another pause. Grunwald makes a note in his file.

SOPHIE

So what happens now?

GRUNWALD

If what you have told me is true, you and your brother will be free to go.

SOPHIE

We will?

Grunwald looks at her.

GRUNWALD

(genuinely)

Just because I wear this uniform, does not make me a monster, Ms. Scholl...

He makes a note in her file.

GRUNWALD

Remain here, please.

He turns and begins to exit.

SOPHIE

Wait.

He turns back, a glimmer in his eye.

GRUNWALD

Yes?

SOPHIE

(pause)

There's a small book - a prayer book- in my bag. The officers wouldn't let me bring it in.
May I have it?

GRUNWALD

I will see what I can do.

He turns and exits. Blackout.

SCENE TWO

Over the blackout, we hear another series of cascading voices. They are fiery, vibrant, strong.

VOICE

Why do the German people stay silent in spite of all these / crimes-

VOICE

Why do you let them rob you of your rights, one after / another.

VOICE

Every people deserves the regime it is willing to / endure.

VOICE

Support the resistance! Distribute our / leaflets-

VOICE

It is high time to root out this brown / horde.

VOICE

No punishment is commensurate with the crimes / of this regime.