



by Christopher Kloeble
Klett-Cotta
July 2025 / 240pp
Fiction

To the Stars Against All Odds *Durch das Raue zu den Sternen*

review

Christopher Kloeble's 'To the Stars Against All Odds' is an inventive family saga, rich with musical imagery, and will appeal to readers of *The Fell* by Sarah Moss (Picador, 2021) and *The Sky Is Everywhere* by Jandy Nelson (Walker Books, 2015). Set in 1990s rural Bavaria, the novel follows thirteen-year-old Arkadia Fink, nicknamed 'Moll', as she grieves for her eccentric, music-obsessed mother after her mysterious disappearance.

Arkadia is smart, driven, and resourceful, but her fierce confidence is a façade. Narrating in the first person, she is an unreliable but irresistible storyteller, her perspective both humorous and heart-wrenching. Arkadia has a passion for music that she has inherited from her mother, who believed Beethoven was a woman. She is convinced that if she joins a renowned boys' choir her mother will return, and her single-minded pursuit of this goal becomes an obsession. Her ambition strains her relationships with the adults who care for her, especially her grieving father and her elderly friend Bernhardina, a former confidante of her mother.

The novel's structure mirrors Beethoven's 9th Symphony, with each 'movement' marking a turning point in Arkadia's emotional and musical journey. Kloeble makes masterful use of musical metaphor and rhythm throughout the tale, allowing the novel's themes of loss, longing, and identity to unfold gracefully. Arkadia's voice oscillates between sharp observational humour and lyrical reflection,

particularly when music or memory overtakes her.

'To the Stars Against All Odds' is a novel about coming to terms with absence and uncertainty. Arkadia's mother is both central and elusive, her mental illness and eventual fate obscured by silence and Arkadia's refusal to face the truth. During a televised choir performance in Berlin, Arkadia finally confronts reality and begins to make peace with her past.

Kloeble's decision to centre the story on a girl trying to succeed in a boys' world – both musically and emotionally – adds a compelling feminist dimension to the novel. The themes of grief, mental illness, and the search for belonging are treated with nuance and are universally relatable. Like his earlier work, *Almost Everything Very Fast* (Greywolf, 2016, tr. Aaron Kerner), this novel captures the emotional complexity of quirky, deeply human characters.

'To the Stars Against All Odds' is an original and affecting novel with wide appeal. It deserves to be translated into English and will delight readers who are drawn to unique coming-of-age stories.

Find out more:

<https://www.klett-cotta.de/produkt/christopher-kloeble-durch-das-raue-zu-den-sternen-9783608966572-t-9123>

press quotes

Christopher Kloeble has written a novel so full of music and hope, it makes you want to dance.

Takis Würger, author of 'The Club' and 'Stella'

about the author



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Christopher Kloeble is the award-winning author of four novels, and has been translated into ten languages. He also writes screenplays and has taught creative writing and literature at the University of Cambridge, Hong Kong University and numerous colleges in the US. He was

awarded the Jürgen Ponto Stiftung Prize for best debut for his first novel, *Amongst Loners* (2008). His novel *Almost Everything Very Fast* (2016), currently being adapted as a TV series, was published in English by Graywolf Press (USA) and nominated for the International Dublin Literary Award. His most recent novel, *The Museum of the World*, was published by dtv in 2020 and in English translation by HarperCollins, and is being adapted for the stage. In the 1980s and 1990s, Kloeble sang in a famous German boys' choir.

Previous work: Das Museum der Welt, dtv (2020), Home Made in India, dtv premium (2017), Die unsterbliche Familie Salz, dtv (2018), Meistens alles sehr schnell, dtv premium (2012), Wenn es klopft: Erzählungen, dtv (2009), Unter Einzelgängern, dtv (2013)

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