



**Stadt Leipzig**



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## Press Release

9 July 2015

### **Leipzig Commemorates the 9th of October 1989 with the Motto “Liberty – Equality – Fraternity?”**

With the call “Wir sind das Volk” [We are the People] and “No Violence”, 70,000 people gathered on 9 October 1989 to march across the Leipzig inner-city ring road to demonstrate for freedom and democracy, and thus to pave the way for the fall of the Wall, and for the unity of Germany and Europe. The dramatic events of Autumn of 1989 encourage people even today. The remembrance of those days is kept alive by the citizens of Leipzig in many ways, in particular, the commemoration of the 9th of October.

On this day, the focus will be on the Prayer for Peace and the Speech on Democracy at St. Nicholas Church, as well as on the Leipzig Festival of Lights at Augustusplatz. At the original settings, Leipzig people and guests of the city remember together the historic events 26 years ago. With exhibitions, panel discussions, film screenings, readings and many other formats, a wide range of events will reach every year thousands of visitors of all generations.

Mayor Burkhard Jung on this theme has stated, “Our motto this year, 'Liberty – Equality – Fraternity?' is more than 200 years old and has still not lost any of its meaning. Of course, 'liberty' is central to the Autumn of '89. But when we look beyond the borders of Europe and see the misery of tens of thousands of refugees, then 'fraternity' also becomes much more critically important. Seeing the one who is fleeing as a brother or sister – that needs to be very much in focus in the autumn of this year.”

#### **Prayer for Peace and Speech on Democracy**

Since 1982, peace, environmental and human rights groups had been regularly invited to Prayers for Peace into St. Nicholas Church. From here emanated the Monday demonstrations in September 1989. After the Prayers for Peace on 9 October, more than 70,000 people gathered in the city centre of Leipzig for a non-violent demonstration – the breakthrough for the Peaceful Revolution.



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The Prayer for Peace at St. Nicholas Church will be under the motto "Ribbon of Peace." The Reverend Bernhard Stief will be holding the sermon and Jürgen Wolf (organ), the cantor at St. Nicholas Church, will be in charge of the musical accompaniment.

Following this, the Speech on Democracy will take place at St. Nicholas Church. Since 2001, the Speech on Democracy has continuously represented one of the highpoints of the Autumn of '89 series. Every 9th of October, a representative from one of the three constitutional organs of the Federal Republic of Germany has spoken in the church.

For many years, the "Day of the Peaceful Revolution – Leipzig 9th October 1989" Initiative has been seeing to the coordination of the many great commemorative events. Members of this initiative include local residents, organisations, institutions, museums and other groups that have a direct connection to the Autumn of 1989. The initiative is supported by the City of Leipzig. The organiser of the Festival of Lights is Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH.

### **Leipzig Festival of Lights – Emotional Highlight on the 9th of October**

After the major anniversary celebration on the occasion of 25 years of Peaceful Revolution, where the festival stretched over the entire inner ring road, the Leipzig Festival of Lights 2015 returns to Augustusplatz and explores new themes: while, in recent years, the focus was on neighbouring countries to the east and their movements for democracy, the emphasis is now on issues surrounding civil society. "Freedom - Equality - Fraternity?" is the motto of this year - critically backlighting this statement and, thus, punctuated by a question mark. The identity of the individual in a Germany, once divided and now reunited for 25 years, is the intellectual starting point of the evening.

### **The Festival of Lights has a New Thematic Focus: Florian Lukas and Pinar Atalay Illuminate the Role of the Individual in Areas of Conflict within Society**

Die Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH and the artistic director of the Festival of Lights, Jürgen Meier, have gained some prominent allies in bringing the commemoration to life: actor Florian Lukas (*Weissensee*, *Grand Budapest Hotel*, among others) steps into the shoes of people looking back. Against the backdrop of historical audio and visual material, he will read literary sequences. Current references to this are created by a news broadcast, presented by journalist and television host Pinar Atalay. For this, a television studio will



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appear on stage. The topic of feeling alienated or protected also plays a central role here. The Leipzig Opera Choir, under the direction of Alessandro Zuppardo, makes up the third component of the evening. As a kind of musical "We," the choir represents the whole of society, thereby making for a counter-balance to personal retrospection and the fast-paced nature of news.

Speakers and the choir work in front of projection screens, upon which historical scenes, living images from Augustusplatz and current news stories will be projected. With the interplay of text, images and music, a suspenseful panorama will be unfolded.

Throughout the evening, the visitors of the Festival of Lights are, as in previous years, invited to form an illuminated "89" with thousands of candles.

#### **Events on 9 October 2015**

17:00 Prayer for Peace, St. Nicholas Church

18.30 Speech on Democracy, St. Nicholas Church

20:00 Leipzig Festival of Lights, Augustusplatz

#### **Further Information at:**

[www.leipzig.de](http://www.leipzig.de)

[www.lichtfest.leipziger-freiheit.de](http://www.lichtfest.leipziger-freiheit.de)

[www.herbst89.de](http://www.herbst89.de)



## Short Bios of Contributors to the Festival of Lights

### Florian Lukas



After guest appearances at various theatres, Florian Lukas played his first main role in the 1990 Peter Welz film, *Banale Tage*. After that, many roles followed in films and series, such as in *Tatort* (1996) or in the television film *Dunckel* (1997). Lukas was honoured with the Bavarian Film Awards for his roles in *St. Pauli Nacht* (1998) and *Absolute Giganten* (1998). But he was especially made famous by award winning Wolfgang Becker film *Goodbye Lenin!* (2003), for which he received the German Film Awards, as well as a Bambi Award. He went on to act in films, such as *Kammerflimmern* (2003) or *Keine Lieder über Liebe* (2005) with Jürgen Vogel and Heike Makatsch. Since 2010, he can also be seen in a main role in the *Weissensee* series, for which the cast won the German Film Awards in 2014. Likewise, in 2014, he played a supporting role in the high calibre Hollywood production, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, directed, written and produced by Wes Anderson. (Photo: Stefan Klueter)

### Pinar Atalay



Pinar Atalay began her career path at Radio Lippe, a local station in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. After that, she went from being the morning host and managing editor to Antenne Münster, a commercial radio station. At WDR Fernsehen, a television station, she regularly hosted the *Cosmo TV* program and wrote and reported the *ARD-Aktuell* program in Hamburg. Until the end of 2014, she also hosted the political talk show *Phoenix Runde* on the Phoenix network. Pinar Atalay has hosted *NDR Aktuell* since 2009, as well as the ARD business news broadcast *Plusminus* since the beginning of 2014 and *ARD Tagesthemen* since March 2014. (Photo: rehao)



## Leipzig Opera Choir



With the founding of the Leipzig City Theatre at the start of the 19th century, the first professional opera choir in Leipzig came into being. The opera choir received its current home with the opening of the opera building in the year 1960 with the strength of 69 choir members. From this point on, the choir has worked with such conductors as Franz Konwitschny, Paul Schmitz, Vaclav Neumann and Kurt Masur. These conductors and the choir director of that time, Andreas Pieske, who would lead the choir for 30 years, laid the corner stone for the quality it enjoys today. For its merits, the Opera Choir has received the City of Leipzig's artistic award. The ensemble received new artistic inspiration in the 1990s through its managing director at the time, Udo Zimmermann. One major highlight is "Pax Questuosa," a joint production with the Leipzig Ballet. Starting in 1991, the Opera Choir worked with choir directors Volkmar Olbrich, Anton Tremmel and Sören Eckhoff. With the start of the 2011/12 season, Alessandro Zuppardo was named as the new choir director of the Leipzig Opera. In the recent past, conductors, such as Lothar Zagrosek, Marek Janowski, George Albrecht, Jirí Kout, Nello Santi, Fabio Luisi, Riccardo Chailly and current managing director and general director of music, Ulf Schirmer, have made for the artistic quality of the Opera Choir. Its extraordinary performance quality, which is based on the foundation of the realistic musical theatre (Joachim Herz), has been a hallmark of this ensemble, until recently, with conductors such as Ruth Berghaus, Peter Konwitschny or Dietrich W. Hilsdorf. *(Photo: Andreas Pohlmann)*

## Alessandro Zuppardo



Alessandro Zuppardo studied piano, composition and chamber music at the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome. In the 1990s, he was director of Coro Lirico Marchigiano at the Macerata Opera Festival as well as the Teatro Carlo Felice Choir in Genoa. Many years of collaboration connects him to the opera houses of Nizza and Monte-Carlo as well as with the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, among others. Alongside that, he worked in the area of song repertoire and accompaniment – including for vocalists, such as Renato Bruson, Mariella Devia, Roberto Scandiuzzi and Cecilia Bartoli – and he gave



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master courses in Taiwan, Mexico, Japan and Portugal, as well as seminars in German song and repertoire. In 2002, he first received an engagement at the Frankfurt Opera as a solo coach, and then, as of 2003, as choir director. Since the 2011/12 season, Alessandro Zuppardo has been choir director at the Leipzig Opera. *(Photo: Andreas Pohlmann)*

*Photographs of the artists, we will send you in printable format upon request. Please contact [presse@marketing-leipzig.de](mailto:presse@marketing-leipzig.de) or, by phone, +49(0)341 3338-134 / -125.*



**Interview with Jürgen Meier, artistic director of “Leipzig Festival of Lights”**

*After the large celebration of 2014, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution along the entire city ring road, the festival is now returning to Augustusplatz.*

*What awaits visitors?*

Jürgen Meier: After dealing, in the past few years, with in the pursuit of liberty and democracy in the GDR and other Eastern European countries, now civil society is the overriding topic. The focus is on people as their own entities – on the individual. What happened to the people in the divided, and then later, united Germany? We deal with the question of being alienated and protected in one's own country.

*The motto of the evening is “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity?” – What connections do you see between France and Germany?*

Jürgen Meier: The ideal of the liberated, self-determining citizen went through a renaissance in France at the end of the 18th century.

The linguistic appeal of the Peaceful Revolution, therefore, belongs in the tradition of this European liberation movement. In selecting our motto, we very consciously placed a question mark on the end. It is our intention to critically reflect on the extent to which we have come in realising these ideals. Right now, in the midst of the backdrop of the European Union, which, above all, identifies itself as a trade area, this question has never been more current. And, of course, this is in regards to the aspect of 25 years of German unity.

*How will you realise this motto artistically?*

Jürgen Meier: This year, the production is based on three pillars. For one, we were able to get actor Florian Lukas. He embodies the role of the individual people in society, representing the desires and hopes of the individual. By contrast, we show news of world events. Television host Pinar Atalay will read the news in a news studio specifically set up for this purpose. In the third pillar, the Leipzig Opera Choir will embody the voice of society. Additionally, we are going to mix in some historical audio and visual material on a video projection screen. From the combination of all of these, a suspenseful panorama of associations will emerge.



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We would like to thank all of our sponsors, promoters and partners.

## Lichtfest Leipzig 2015

Wir danken den Sponsoren, Förderern und Partnern



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In Zusammenarbeit mit der Initiative „Tag der Friedlichen Revolution – Leipzig 9. Oktober 1989“



Stand: 01.07.2015



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