

Festival of Lights 2013

By tradition, the Leipzig Festival of Lights takes place on the 9th of October at Augustusplatz. This year, under the headline, "How's it Going? Through Prague!", after — "Poland" in 2011 and "Hungary" in 2012 — this artistic and civic project will look into the theme, artistically and in terms of content, of the events in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (until 1989 — SSR), among others, the Prague Spring in 1968 and the Embassy Occupation by GDR Refugees in Prague in 1989. Additionally, there will be an accompanying aspect of this year's topic and country of emphasis: the 40-year sister city relationship between Leipzig and Brno.

Augustusplatz, as the historical gathering space for the demonstrators in the autumn of 1989, will also make up the venue for this year's Festival of Lights. There the participants will experience an artistic performance made up of a video projection on the façade of the Opera ? a stage presentation, as well a musical production. Under the motto, "How's it Going? Through Prague!," the artistic director of the Festival of Lights, Jürgen Meier, the stage director and author, Ralph Oehme, the musician, Mike Dietrich, Ty Sy áci, the band from Brno, as well as actors in a striking play related to the history of the former Czechoslovakia and the GDR.

The entrance of the Leipzig Opera will serve as a projection screen and will act as the backdrop of a symbolic train station, in the middle of which the performance will take place. The play will centre around a family, which will make the individual dimensions of the Prague Spring incident of 1968 visible, through the different scenes, the occupation by GDR refugees of the German Embassy in Prague in 1989 and their exit through Dresden to the Bavarian town of Hof. The band "Ty Sy áci" accompanies the dramatic display with striking live music. A video presentation, made up of historical footage and live images, which were arranged with an individually composed sound layer, will supplement the performance

Additionally, the visitors of the Festival of Lights of previous years are warmly welcomed to Augustusplatz with candles to form a lit "89" as a large group.

The Festival of Lights is being organised by Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing (LTM) GmbH in cooperation with the city of Leipzig and the initiative "The Day of the Peaceful Revolution – Leipzig, 9 October 1989."

"We are the People" [Wir sind das Volk]

On 9 October 1989, in Leipzig 70,000 people set the course for fundamental changes in Europe. Their non-violent protest and their courageous engagement for liberal-democratic basic rights created the conditions for the fall of the Berlin Wall. On the occasion of this year's focal point "Czech Republic and Slovakia", the 2013 Festival of Lights places a special emphasis on to the historical events of the Prague Spring in 1968, the occupation of the German Embassy in Prague in 1989, exit of the GDR refugees through Dresden to Hof, but also the wave of return after the year 1989. The aspects of loss and alienation in a changing society shape the artistic debate on different forms of expression, such as acting, video, music and text. For this purpose, the LTM GmbH Festival of Lights Committee cooperates once again with the artistic

director Jürgen Meier. Also this year, artists from various genres make up the performing team, including the Leipzig theatre director and author Ralph Oehme, the musician and producer Mike Dietrich, the Brno band "Ty Sy áci", the writer and managing director of the German Creative Writing Program Leipzig (DLL), Claudius Niessen, an ensemble of Leipzig actors as well as amateur performers from Jörgens Dance School.

How's it Going? Through Prague! Video Installation

The video installation follows the path into freedom chosen by thousands in the year 1989 that took the way out via the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Prague. In retrospect it will be relived at what a rapid pace events proceeded and how mutually dependent they were. The state that the refugees fled ceased to exist shortly afterward and the Germany they headed to from Prague was shaken to its foundation in the turmoil that followed the 9th of November 1989. A return to the "old" home now meant a journey to a new country and was associated for many with feelings of inner conflict and alienation. The video performance combines stage events and temporal horizon with historical material and filmed scenes as well as text overlays on a symbolic train station destination board.

How's it Going? Through Prague! Play

The plot revolves around the individual dimension of historical events. On a stage in front of the opera house, actors and bit players deal with topics like "Leaving and Arriving," using the example of a Leipzig family. This family is divided by a rift: the son and daughter in law want to leave the country, the parents want to stay. After the exit visa is rejected, the children flee to the Prague Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. For the protagonists, the feelings of loss, euphoria and alienation are tightly interwoven. Their individual faith is amplified en masse by the bit players, who make the odyssey Leipzig –Prague–Dresden–Hof visible in vivid images. An actor, who is removed from the action, narrates the scenes from today's perspective.

How's it Going? Through Prague! Soundtrack / Live Music

The sound performance at the Leipzig Festival of Lights 2013 merges the levels of content with the dramatic sequences of the overall performance. The composition is determined by the theme of the "journey". "Everything that is, escapes" (Kafka) is the basic motif that is translated into reality in the shape of sound patterns and mixtures by using digital production methods of modern pop and dance music. Through synthetically generated rhythms, classical instruments, excerpts from speeches of contemporary politicians and sound bytes, the historical events become of topically relevant again. With dynamic and anarchic chanting, the live music counterpoints the action on stage.

