



**Stadt Leipzig**



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**Press Release**

1 September 2016

**Leipzig Commemorates the 9th of October 1989 with the Motto  
"Courage – Values – Change"**

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, more than 70,000 people from all parts of the GDR gathered in Leipzig for what was to become one of the most decisive movements of the Peaceful Revolution. Despite the threat of a firing order, they peacefully stood up against the SED regime and cried out, "Wir sind das Volk" [We are the people] and "Keine Gewalt" [No Violence]. Today, October 9<sup>th</sup>, marks a crucial event that contributed to the collapse of the GDR in 1989.

On this anniversary, Leipzig and its guests gather at the original sites to remember historical events by offering the Prayer for Peace and a Speech on Democracy at the St. Nicholas Church, followed by the Leipzig Festival of Lights at Augustusplatz. A wide range of other activities are available for the thousands of visitors from all generations, including exhibitions, panel discussions, film screenings, readings and art installations.

According to Mayor Burkhard Jung, "The celebrations of October 9<sup>th</sup>, supported by our motto, 'Courage-Values-Change', renew and bring to the forefront that power of civic fellowship from Autumn 1989. In Europe, where internal pressure is mounting, most people long for stability. Change is seen as a challenge to our values. But democracy must be filled with life, and always be continually demonstrated and restored. To take over responsibility for these changes requires courage. With tolerance, responsibility and trust, this process can succeed."

**Prayer for Peace and Speech on Democracy**

The traditional Prayer for Peace kicks off the festivities on October 9<sup>th</sup>, with the traditional prayer offered at 5.00 p.m. at St. Nicholas Church. Ever since 1982, peace, environmental and human rights groups have regularly invited others to join in prayers for peace at St. Nicholas Church. The 'Monday demonstrations' departed from this point in September 1989. The sermon will be offered by Pastor Yassir Eric from the European Institute of



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Migration, Integration and Islamic Issues. The BachChor choir of the St. Nicholas Church will provide musical accompaniment under the direction of cantor Jürgen Wolf.

Since 2001, the Speech on Democracy has occurred to highlight the celebrations of October 9<sup>th</sup>. In addition to representatives of the constitutional bodies of the Federal Republic of Germany, numerous international guests have been welcomed to Leipzig during these festivities. Due to the fact that, since 2010, the focus has been on European topics the speech has been offered by people who are committed to the values of the Peaceful Revolution in Europe. The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, will offer the speech on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

For many years, the organization, “The Day of the Peaceful Revolution – Leipzig, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989” has been coordinating the many commemorative events. Its members are citizens, organizations, institutions, museums and other facilities that have direct connections to the Autumn of 1989. This organization is supported by the city of Leipzig.

Free printed programs are available from today throughout the city, and include plenty of exhibitions, lectures, readings, guided tours, etc., not only related to the festivities of October 9<sup>th</sup>, but also to events from September 2016 - January 2017. The program is free to download from [www.lichtfest.leipziger.freiheit.de](http://www.lichtfest.leipziger.freiheit.de).

### **Leipzig Festival of Lights – An Emotional Highlight on the October 9<sup>th</sup>**

After the Speech on Democracy in the St. Nicholas Church, the Leipzig Festival of Lights is an emotional conclusion of October 9<sup>th</sup>. Augustusplatz, which in 1989 became a famous historic place of assembly, will be the scene of a nearly hour-long program interwoven with text, music, dance, photography and video into a multi-layered performance under the artistic direction of Jürgen Meier. Performed by actor Sylvester Groth, musician Mike Dietrich, the Leipzig ballet with choreography by Mario Schröder, the performance focuses on Groth, who portrays the visionary citizen, the cosmopolitan.

Bold and confident on one hand, while critical and thoughtful on the other, Groth addresses the overarching topics of the evening using modern texts and historical quotes from Kant to Kennedy. In a symbolic role, Sylvester Groth becomes a coach, pit against the opposition: those gathered together at Augustusplatz.



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The dancers of the Leipzig ballet follow along in a constantly changing act. In consent at times, dismissive at others, they move between breakup and consolidation, future and past. For the dramaturge, ballet director Mario Schröder drew from choreographic features of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise", a hymn dedicated to enlightenment. The music events of the evening are overseen by Mike Dietrich, who has developed a sound collage with classical and contemporary elements for the Festival of Lights.

Large screens in the background which display historic photographs and video clips, interspersed with media depicting current events accompany the production. Jürgen Meier's assembly of dramatic scenes and images support and intensify on-stage action and create additional layers of meaning.

Designed and implemented by the Leipzig Festival of Lights, Tourismus und Marketing GmbH.

**Events on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

- 17:00 Prayer for Peace, St. Nicholas Church
- 18:30 Speech on Democracy, St. Nicholas Church
- 20:00 Leipzig Festival of Lights, Augustusplatz

**For further information:**

[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)



## Statements

### **Iris Gleicke, Federal Government Commissioner for the New Federal States and Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy**

“Courage – Values – Change: The theme of this year’s Leipzig Festival of Lights has been well chosen. Peaceful protests against the ruling communist regime were carried out in many places throughout the GDR on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 1989. In Leipzig alone, more than 70,000 men and women gathered in the streets in courageous protest for freedom and democracy, despite the imminent threat of specialized military forces to stop them. With the call, “We are the people“, and “No violence!”, they came together to march across the Leipzig inner-city ring road. Their firm, non-violent advocacy of freedom and democracy initiated the fall of the Berlin Wall, the institution of free elections and the unification of Germany. Given current challenges, I wish for our society to have more of that great courage and resolute peacefulness that was so impressively demonstrated by the East German people in the dramatic days and weeks of 1989.”

### **Burkhard Jung, Mayor of the City of Leipzig**

“The celebrations of October 9<sup>th</sup> supported by our motto, 'Courage-Values-Change' bring to the forefront again that power of civic fellowship from Autumn 1989. In Europe, where internal pressure is mounting, most people long for stability. Change is seen as a challenge to our values. But democracy must be filled with life, and always be continually demonstrated and restored. To take over responsibility for these changes requires courage. With tolerance, responsibility and trust this process can succeed.”

### **Tobias Hollitzer, Spokesman for the “Autumn 89” initiative**

“With the triad of the Prayer for Peace, the Speech on Democracy and the Festival of Lights, every year on October 9<sup>th</sup>, we remember the democratic ideals of the citizens in 1989 that gave them the force required for the self-liberation from dictatorship. We need this shared, positive memory as a starting point for the active shaping of our European future in these times of serious tension, violent conflict and regression due to dictatorship.



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Therefore, the Peaceful Revolution of 1989/1990 is an important legacy to Central and Eastern Europe.”

**Volker Bremer, Managing Director of Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH**

“The festivities that unfold on October 9<sup>th</sup> have an appeal that extends beyond the borders of Leipzig each year. With programs such as the Festival of Lights, we are able to reach out to both young and old, to citizens and guests of Leipzig and to remember together the events of the Autumn of '89. We live in peace and freedom today, but this did not come easily. It is a fact that needs to be emphasized time and again. The struggle for democratic values is as relevant today as it was then.”



## Brief Biographies of the Contributors to the Festival of Lights

### Sylvester Groth



Sylvester Groth is one of the most renowned German actors. He has starred in various big screen productions such as “Inglourious Basterds”, “Codename U.N.C.L.E.”, and “Stalingrad”. He is also quite a name in popular television series, including “Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter”, “Deutschland 83” and “Polizeiruf”. Sylvester Groth received amongst others the Deutscher Fernsehpreis [German TV Award] and the Grimme-Preis [Grimme Award] for his roles. He also belongs to the ranks of the great German audiobook and radio narrators. Born in 1958 in Jerichow, Sylvester Groth studied acting at the State Drama School in Berlin. He became known to audiences with the movie, “Der Aufenthalt” in 1982.

*(Photo: Oliver Feist)*

### Leipzig Ballet



The Leipzig Ballet, which traces its origins back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, is now one of the most premier international dance companies. In the 1940's, Mary Wigman reached a milestone with her choreography of Carl Orff's “Carmina Burana” in the expressionist dance style. Since the opening of the new opera house in 1960, nearly all major ballets d'action, as well as new pieces have been performed. The arrival of Uwe Scholz as artistic director and chief choreographer in 1991 introduced a new era. His first Leipzig premiere, “Die Schöpfung” [The Creation] still is the hallmark of the company with its characteristic neoclassical style. Symphonic ballets followed, such as “Die Grosse Messe” [The Great Mass], “Siebente Symphonie” [Symphony No. 7], and Symphony No. 8 (Bruckner), which were performed as guest appearances throughout Europe and in Hong Kong. After the passing of Uwe Scholz in 2004, the new Director of Ballet, Paul Chalmer, made his mark, among others, with a three-year Stravinsky cycle. Mario Schröder has been ballet director and chief choreographer for the Leipzig ballet since the 2010/2011 season.

*(Photo: Ida Zenna)*





### Mario Schröder



The Leipzig Ballet has been led by Mario Schröder as Ballet Director and Chief Choreographer since the 2010/2011 season. He has staged performances such as, “Chaplin”, “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens, “Ein Liebestraum” [A Love Dream], based on music by Richard Wagner, “Pax 2013“, and “Mozart Requiem”. In the 2015/2016 season, performances include “The Tales of the Brothers Grimm”, “Lobgesang” [Hymn of Praise], and various selected choreographies from the series, “Cityscape

Dances“. Mario Schröder was born in Finsterwalde, and received his dance training at the Palucca University of Dance Dresden. He was a first soloist with the Leipzig ballet from 1983 to 1999, under the direction of Uwe Scholz from 1991. He also studied choreography at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts Berlin. In 1999 he was appointed artistic director and chief choreographer of the Mainfrankentheater in Würzburg before moving to the same position at the Theater Kiel in 2001. Having previously created more than 80 choreographies, Mario Schröder has worked as a dancer and choreographer in Japan, the US, Russia, Mongolia, France and other European countries. In Germany, his works have been performed at the Deutsche Oper and the Komische Oper Berlin among others, as well as at the Aalto Ballet Theatre in Essen. He has worked on choreography with names such as Ruth Berghaus, Maxim Dessau, and Nikolaus Lehnhoff. Mario Schröder is a board member of the Federal German Ballet and Dance Theatre Directors. *(Photo: Kirsten Nijhof)*

### Mike Dietrich



Mike Dietrich is a Leipzig DJ, musician, producer and composer. He started his career in the 1980's as a pioneer hip-hop activist of the Leipzig breakdance scene, which was then a subculture between socialist everyday life and state surveillance. Soon after, he began composing and producing his own songs. Among others, he has worked with Herbie Hancock, Saul Williams and Xavier Naidoo. In addition to the

Festival of Lights, Mike Dietrich has worked for other projects of Leipzig Tourismus und Marketing GmbH. For example, in 2013, he worked side by side with light artist Philippe





Morvan, on the “Cosmogole” art installation which commemorated the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Monument to the Battle of the Nations in 2013. At the end of September, the French city of Lyon will celebrate the premiere of their collaborative work titled, “25 Her(t)z” which will spotlight Leipzig, the City of Music. Dietrich arranged the sound collage for both light-sound-installations. *(Photo: Westend-PR)*

### Jürgen Meier, Artistic Director



Jürgen Meier studied Academy of Fine Arts Münster, at the University of Münster and at the St. Martin's School of Art in London. He has taught at various universities, including the Leipzig Academy of Fine Arts. Meier has received several awards, including the Wilhelm Morgner Award of the city of Soest for painting. In 1993, he founded the Elster-Park Art Club (known today as the Leipzig Art Club) and initiated an artistic project titled “Imaginary Hotel” on the grounds of the former Buntgarnwerke [yarn factories] in Leipzig-Plagwitz.

His media projects include: Digital skin, Saturn Hamburg, 2000; VEAG Media Façade, Berlin, 2000; Light Swarm, Interactive City, San José, USA, 2006. In 2010 he participated in the XII International Architecture Biennale in Venice. His city lighting projects titled, “Modellprojekt Innerer Ring, Leipzig” and “Nordstadtplatz Heiligenhaus” were honored by the Federal Environment Ministry.

Jürgen Meier has been the artistic director for the Leipzig Festival of Lights since 2009.

*(Photo: Olaf Martens)*

*The photographs of the artists are available to download in printable quality online at:*

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



## **Statements from Contributors to the Festival of Lights**

### **Sylvester Groth, Actor**

"The Leipzig Festival of Lights is a wonderful opportunity to pause and think about all these great things that began in Leipzig in the Autumn of 1989. People took to the streets and changed the world! However, we should not just look nostalgically back in time, but also forward, to be aware that change is always possible when people get together and act. Our future is not destiny - we decide."

### **Mario Schröder, Director and Chief Choreographer of the Leipzig Ballet**

"The idea of the Festival of Lights is not only to remember, but at the same time to deal with our history and to make it transparent in a different way. The topics are to a certain extent my own story, not only from my participation in 1989 in the demonstrations. The Festival of Lights gives me the chance to reflect on the Peaceful Revolution and its significance, as well as attendant questions in my work with the Leipzig Ballet in and for this city. Our responsibility as artists, and as people who live in this city, is to convey themes like freedom and tolerance and to help the next generation understand our own cultural and social history."

### **Mike Dietrich, Musician and DJ**

"Those days and weeks have been written deep in memory, not only for me as a then 19-year-old; the change was felt everywhere. The Autumn of '89 had loud and quiet moments. For example, on the train ride to the demonstration to the city center: Although the trams could hardly accommodate the volume of people, I will always remember the silence. Today I would say it was probably the tension. In complete contrast to jubilation, once we had marched across the inner-city ring road and everything was peaceful. Therefore, my soundtrack is also a piece of quiet and loud passages - As in my memory."



**Interview with Marit Schulz (Supervising Manager for the Leipzig Festival of Lights) and Jürgen Meier (Artistic Director)**

*With the motto "Courage - Values - Change", the 2016 Leipzig Festival of Lights takes up the civil society focus of the previous year. What is behind this headline?*

Jürgen Meier: "This year we once again move the individual to the center of the action. This time we look at the question of what role each individual plays in social processes.

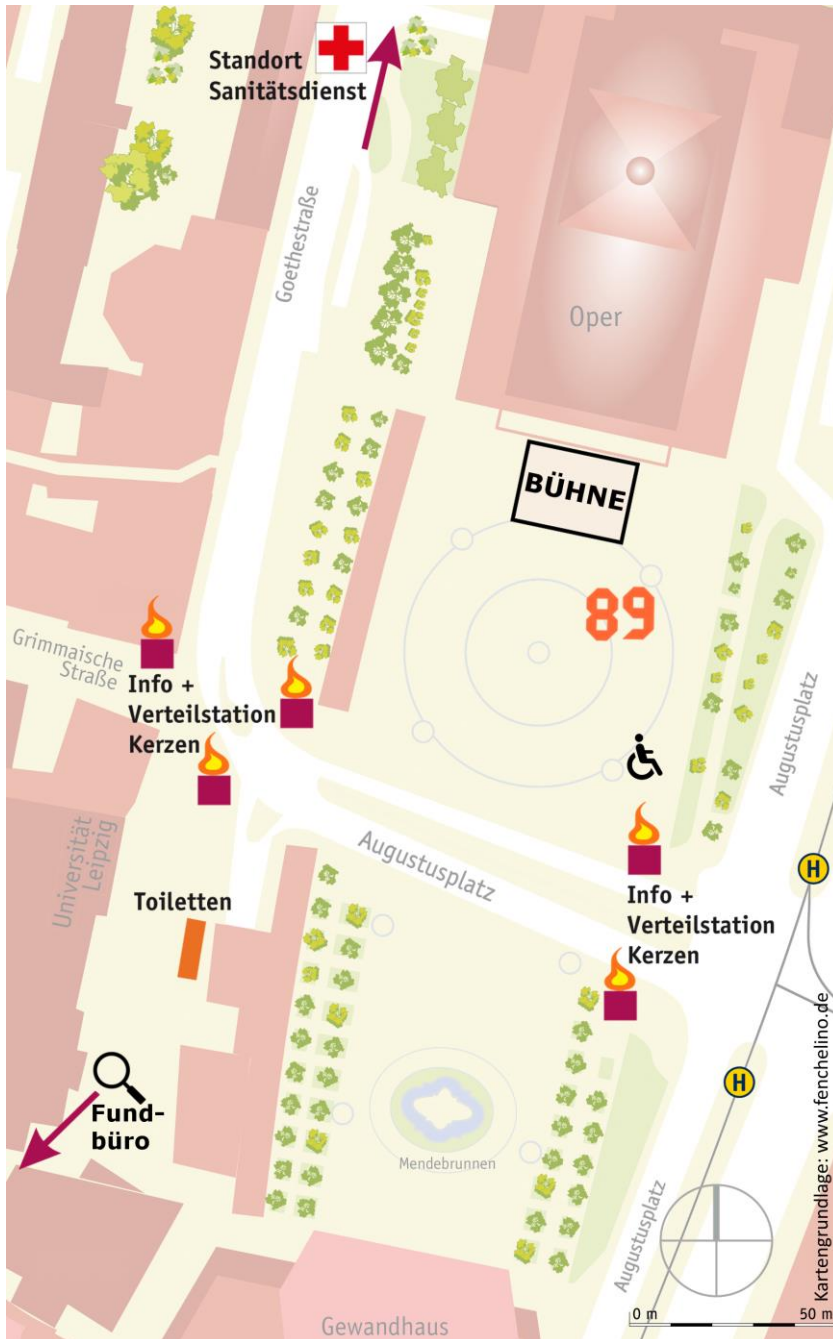
Immanuel Kant states that you must, 'Have the courage to use your own reason.' That's our program. What values are important to us? And do we have the courage - even against resistance – to advocate for these values solidly united? Only then change is possible. In the Autumn of '89 these three variables came together. The people took to the streets peacefully and defied the armed security forces for their desire for democracy, freedom of speech, and codetermination, and their protest provided the basis for the fall of the system and other far-reaching changes."

*Where does the theme for the Festival of Lights come from?*

Marit Schulz: "The motto for the festival is first developed in a workshop with representatives of civic society. Key issues are discussed and priorities are identified. After the theme is found, we go through an intensive process of selecting and contacting the artist. Although the video, music and text elements play a major role in any Festival of Lights, they were filled with life and accentuated in very different ways in the past by the participating artists. Thus, the Leipzig Festival of Lights has hosted bands, choirs, orchestras, dance, theater, performance artists and soloists who have all provided their own momentum. We have succeeded in putting together another special team: the actor Sylvester Groth, choreographer Mario Schröder, the dancers of the Leipzig Ballet and the musician Mike Dietrich, artists who all bring in their very personal experiences."



### Map of Augustusplatz



#### Access:

Augustusplatz is best reached by bus, tram and S-Bahn. Always use the Georgiring entrances to the Augustusplatz parking garage. Exiting is possible on Goethestraße.



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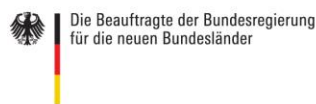


# Lichtfest Leipzig 2016

Wir danken den Sponsoren, Förderern und Partnern



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In Zusammenarbeit mit:



Stadt Leipzig

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





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