

Das Blatt

The American Goethe Society's Electronic Newsletter

Barbara W. Alsip, Editor

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AGS FAUST-FEST A GRAND SUCCESS, AND WE DIDN'T SELL OUR SOUL!

Over 55 AGS members and nonmembers gathered at the German Embassy House Friday, October 22 to launch the Faust-Fest with Oktoberfest beer and wine and animated conversation. Greeted by Frau Trautlieb Hülz, Cultural Attachée, and Dr. Irmgard Wagner, AGS President, the group next enjoyed a sumptuous Bavarian feast, which included bratwurst, bauernwurst, roast pork, dumplings, rotkohl, sauerkraut, salad, apfel strudel and rote Grütze. The evening concluded with everyone singing Faust songs and Lumpenlieder.

On Saturday, October 23, at the Goethe-Institut, attendees watched excerpts from the Murnau and Gründgens' film versions of *Faust*. After a lunch of German cold cuts and salad, participants attended either a book conversation on *Faust*, moderated by Dr. Wagner, or dramatic readings of *Faust* in German, led by Dr. Simone Seym. A drawing was held to determine winners of the Faust quotations game played Friday evening at Embassy House. Christoph Zaenglein of The German School won a CD of Faust songs and Bill Kugler won a bottle of white wine from the Hermannhof Winery in Hermann, Missouri, a town settled by Germans in 1837. Ted Libbey, author of *The Basic CD Library*, capped the Faust-Fest activities with a lecture on "Faust in Opera."

By the way, new Faust productions are being staged this season at the Hamburg Schauspielhaus (Gründgens' old theater) and at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. The Hamburg production received extraordinary praise in *Die Zeit*; the Berlin production came off less well. However, the twin review concludes, "Der Faust ist zurück. Das beste Stück der Nation."

For a review of the AGS Faust-Fest, please see Emily Grosvenor's article, "Faust Still Fascinates" in the October 29, 2004, edition of *Germany This Week* from the German Information Service. The article is reprinted on our Web site, www.americangoethesociety.org

SNAPSHOT OF THE AGS VICE PRESIDENT

Dr. Barbara Wittman Alsip is the granddaughter of German and Austrian emigrants who met and married in Texas after arriving there in the 1870s. Paternal grandparents hailed from Königsberg and Wien; maternal grandparents were from Oberstadtitz [stet]

and Rottweil. Dr. Alsip, a native of San Antonio, learned American English, "household" German and Tex-Mex Spanish simultaneously as a toddler.

She received her BA and MA in French and Spanish from Texas Christian University and her Ph.D. in French from Emory University. Dr Alsip was a college/university professor for 17 years, with the last 12 years at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois, where she taught phonetics, 17th century French literature, and seminars on Corneille, Racine and Molière. She also taught courses in 20th century French drama and literature in translation. Most of her publications and papers are in the field of French drama.

She came to Washington, DC, in 1979 and eventually went to work for the U.S. General Accounting Office (now Government Accountability Office) as a communications analyst. Her favorite assignment there was teaching an executive briefing skills course to the international audit fellows. In 8 years, she taught auditors, accountants, evaluators, and trainers from 65 different countries, kingdoms, and republics.

LEBKUCHEN: A CHRISTMAS TREAT FROM NÜRNBERG

Gingerbread's origin in Nürnberg is likely no accident, as the city lies along ancient trading and spice routes. The word "*lebkuchen*," however, remains a mystery, because the term has nothing to do with "*leben*." The most probable origin is from the Latin word "*libum*," a flat, round, unleavened small cake. Another source claims it comes from the words "Laib' ab," which meant "Brot' laib."

The first records of Nürnberg gingerbread bakers date to 1395. The oldest written gingerbread recipe dates from the 1500s. But it was not until 1643 that the Nürnberg City Council approved a gingerbread guild. As of July 1, 1996, quality standards for Nürnberg gingerbread are registered under RAL RG 0131, and it is a protected product throughout Europe and is authorized to use the EU stamp.

Many, many recipes for *lebkuchen* exist, and we do not claim to know which is authentic. You can find several on our Web site, www.americangoethesociety.org under "Spezialitäten."

CULTURAL NEWS FROM GERMANY

Goethe-Institut Branches in South Germany Will Close. Branches in Prien, Rothenburg, and Murnau will be closed in the next few years. All are located in small Bavarian vacation towns. The Goethe-Institut Board is exploring new avenues to reach prospective German-learners.

Plans and Events for Schiller Year 2005 Have Already Begun! Two public German TV channels have programs in the works. The ZDF is sponsoring a theatre competition for high school students to perform a Schiller drama. Winning entries will be filmed and broadcast at the "Berliner Festival Schiller 05" in May. The ARD is producing a documentary on young Schiller after his first theatre success with *Die Räuber* and will broadcast it on Schiller's death day in May. In Marbach, the Schiller Nationalmuseum threw a big birthday party on November 13, with a speech by Christina Weiss, the *Bundeskulturstaatsministerin* on the subject of "Klassiker heute?!". The Stuttgart State Theatre recently hired Hasko Weber, best known for his creative staging of the classics, as its director. He most recently staged *Die Räuber* in Hamburg.

A German Snowflake Floats Above Fifth Avenue. Munich-based Ingo Maurer and his team suspended a 1,433-pound snowflake of 12,000 five-faceted Baccarat crystals above the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street for the holiday season. Maurer worked *pro bono* on the project, and it is expected to generate as much as \$5 million a year for the UNICEF fund with the sale of miniature reproductions, also of Baccarat crystal.

Do One in Four or One in Six Americans Trace Their Roots to Germany? The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau reports that 43 million Americans, some 15.2 percent, trace their roots to Germany. This number is down sharply from the 23 percent reported in 1990. However, the Census Bureau advises that many Americans selected "Western European" or "Northern European" as their general heritage in 2000. These categories were up 195.5 percent and 148 percent respectively from 1990. Other "single ancestry" groups like English and Irish were down sharply too, and the increase in the western and northern European categories likely accounts for the difference. (Information drawn from *The Atlantic Times*, November 2004.)

COMING EVENTS

AGS Events

- **Wednesday, December 1: Dramatic Reading.** Continued dramatic readings of Kleist's *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, Dolley Madison Library, McLean, Virginia, 7:30pm to 8:45 pm, with a social hour in a nonsmoking neighborhood pub for those interested. *Alles auf deutsch!*
- **Thursday, Dec. 2: Book conversation** on Michael

Jürgs, *Der Kleine Frieden im Großen Krieg* (*A Small Truce in the Great War*) and Stanley Weintraub's, *Silent Night*. The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce. Goethe-Institut, 6:45 PM.

- **Saturday, Dec 11:** Holiday Cheer. Restaurant luncheon outing, Wurzburg Haus, Rockville, MD. Please telephone John Loth at 703-242-8840 or e-mail your acceptance to jloth@cox.net by Thursday, December 10, as we must give a firm number to the restaurant.
- **Wednesday, January 19, 2005 :** **Dramatic Reading.** Completion of the dramatic readings from *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*.
- **Saturday, February 12:** Small group luncheon, 1 pm. Restaurant to be determined.
- **Wednesday February 16:** Dramatic Reading. Video of the famous Peter Stein staging with Bruno Ganz in the title role of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*. (Ganz has the role of Hitler in the new film, *Der Untergang*.)
- **Thursday, February 24:** Book Conversation: Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden* (*On Perpetual Peace*). Goethe Institut-, 6:45 pm.
- Saturday, March 12: Small group luncheon, 1 pm. Restaurant to be determined.
- **Saturday, March 31:** Lecture, Professor Ted Kinnaman, GMU, "Kant Today in American Philosophy."
- **Saturday, April 9:** Small group luncheon, 1 pm. Restaurant to be determined.
- **Wednesday, April 20:** Dramatic Reading. Text to be determined.
- **Thursday, April 28:** Book Conversation. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (*Storm of Steel*). Goethe-Institut, 6:45 pm.
- **Thursday, May 12:** Lecture. Professor Marion Deshmukh, GMU, "German Graphic Artists and Culture: From Holbein to Heckel. In conjunction with the National Gallery of Art exhibit entitled "Six Centuries of Prints and Drawings: Recent Acquisitions. (November 14, 2004, through May 31, 2005.) Goethe-Institut, 6:45 pm. **Annual business meeting to follow.**
- **Saturday, May 21:** Small group luncheon, 1 pm. Restaurant to be determined.
- **Wednesday, May 18:** Dramatic reading. Text to be determined.
- **Wednesday, June 15:** Dramatic reading. Text to be determined.

Other Events

Through January 9, 2005: “Albrecht Dürer, A Renaissance Journey in Print.” Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia.

Friday, February 11 and Sunday, February 13, 2005: The Virginia Opera presents Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* at the George Mason University Center for the Arts.

Friday, April 22 and Sunday, April 24: The Virginia Opera presents Gounod’s *Faust* at the George Mason University Center for the Arts.

Continuing Through May 31, 2005: The National Gallery of Art exhibit of “Six Centuries of Prints and Drawings: Recent Acquisitions.”

JUST A FRIENDLY REMINDER: DUES FOR 2005 ARE DUE IN JANUARY: \$25 FOR INDIVIDUALS AND \$40 FOR A FAMILY MEMBERSHIP.

For further information, please contact the following officers: Irmgard Wagner at iwagner@gmu.edu, Barbara Alsip at BKWAlsip@aol.com, or John Loth at jloth@cox.net or 703/242-8840.

THE BOOK CORNER

- Well-known author Christoph Hein, one of the famous dissident writers in the former GDR, was named Director of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. His latest novel, *Landnahme (Land Grab)* was published to high praise earlier this year. A dramatization was staged at the Dresden Theater. Hein is the recipient of the Schiller Gedächtnispreis awarded November 10.
- The Nobel prize in literature for Austrian dramatist and novelist Elfriede Jelinek caused puzzled comments in the German press. Her best-known work is the 1983 novel, *Die Klavierspielerin (The Piano Player)*.
- At this year’s Frankfurt Book Fair, the peace prize of the German book trade went to Hungarian author Peter Esterhazy, scion of that illustrious Hungarian family. Importance of family origins is the main theme of his major work, *Harmonia Coelestis* (2000), which deals with 600 years of Esterhazy family history.
- In anticipation of the Schiller Year 2005, the 200th anniversary of his death, many new editions and monographs have been published. *Die Zeit* recommends Rüdiger Safranski, *Schiller oder die Erfindung des deutschen Idealismus* and Sigrid Damm, *Das Leben des Friedrich Schiller*. Shorter works also recommended are two books entitled *Friedrich Schiller*, one by Kurt Woelfel and the other by Peter-André Alt.

Of note: The American Goethe Society will celebrate Schiller at its 2005 Classical Oktoberfest.