

# Press Release

Weimar, 8th July 2008

## Welcome to the Weimar Cosmos

As in a focal point, 500 years of German culture and history are concentrated in Weimar. Extraordinary climaxes alternate with long periods of downfall all the way to the derogation of civilization. Weimar always stays small, standing up to itself – in regard to its significance – in the sense of inverted proportionality. Goethe recognizes this at the beginning of his life in Weimar when he writes this verse in 1792:

*O Weimar, dir fiel ein besonder Loos,  
Wie Bethlehem in Juda klein und groß.*

*(O Weimar, you drew a special lot,  
like Bethlehem in Judea, small and large.)*

Here, the prophet in him is not speaking, but rather the scholar of history, who is familiar with Weimar's role being located in the heart of the Old Empire. When Goethe decided on Weimar, he came to the province, but by no means to a cultural no man's land. When he died here 50 years later, Weimar was firmly anchored in the minds of his contemporaries as a cultural miracle in European format.

This reputation of Weimar charged itself up in a most legendary way over the course of the entire 19th century and up until World War I, which finally led to the end of the Empire. It is not the least important result of this legend that we are able to matter-of-factly speak of the Weimar Constitution and the Weimar Republic today. And the legendary radiation of the Bauhaus also has a great deal to do with the fact that here in Weimar, in the birthplace of the German classics, the Bethlehem of modernism was then created as the State Bauhaus.

However, we did not title this publication, with which we present the Master Plan 2008 – 2017 of the Klassik Stiftung to the public, Weimar Legend, but rather Weimar Cosmos. There are just as many good reasons for this as there are meanings of the word Cosmos, according to its Greek origin.

Cosmos means order. Weimar Cosmos describes how the collections and inventories are put into a new order. Whoever saw the smoking masses of debris from which the library conservators sorted out the charred remains of the most valuable folios for days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2004, can appreciate what is meant by this order: the maintenance and security of the collection. After the library, which will deal with the consequences of the fire, but also with the backlog of conservation tasks waiting for attention, for the next years and decades, we must urgently attend to the secure storage and restoration of the collections of the Goethe- and Schiller-Archive, the graphic art collection and the entire remaining art possessions of the foundation,

and they must be put in order. Outsiders see few of these huge tasks. However it is clearly the livelihood of the Klassik Stiftung to take on these tasks now. Parallel, the central depot of the museums will be built and the Goethe- and Schiller-Archive adapted to today's demands by a general refurbishing. These two building measures alone will cost some 20 million Euros. They are to be completed by 2010/2011. Throughout the entire period of the Master Plan, comprehensive programmes of restoration and digitalisation will be implemented in the collections of the foundation.

Cosmos means world. Weimar is a whole world, a universe of culture and German history. The Weimar Cosmos aims to make this world accessible to everyone who visits Weimar, in order to experience more about Germany than one can read about in books. It is exactly this complete context of cultural tradition that the Weimar Cosmos will produce and make visible. In order to do so, it needs the city palace. Because only here is it possible to welcome, inform and introduce visitors to the Weimar Cosmos. The finest hours and the deepest downfall that took place in the civilised world belong to the context of cultural history that is to be explored and made accessible: "From Heaven through the world to Hell". Only in this complete spectrum does Weimar become a world.

Cosmos means embellishment. The beautiful painting, *Cornelia, Mutter der Gracchen* by Angelika Kauffmann hangs in the Weimar palace. We see a splendidly dressed woman, who is showing another woman, Cornelia, her valuable jewellery. Cornelia points to her children who enter the room carrying parchment in their hands and chalk boards under their arms, making clear that, although she owns no jewellery, she has something much more valuable than that. Weimar's programme concept per se is that culture is actually education. From the very beginning, when Sibylle von Cleve, the wife of the imprisoned Elector Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous, was chased out of their former residence with her children and arrived here in 1547, until today, the Weimar Cosmos can only be experienced in the mode of education. There are many more splendid collections than the one in Weimar. But it would be difficult to find another one besides the collection of the Klassik Stiftung with such continuity and universality, systematically oriented around the ideal of an individual notion of education. If the Klassik Stiftung succeeds in making Weimar to a place of learning once again, the Weimar Cosmos will also make its contribution to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and henceforth to the *res publica europea*.

The departure to this new chapter of Weimar's history has a programme. It is called Weimar Cosmos and you are holding it in your hands. For a long time, Weimar seemed to lie in a sort of sleeping beauty slumber. The Stiftung Weimarer Klassik cared for its splendid isolation without noticing that the mildew of nostalgia had covered everything. There is not much left of that. The catastrophe in the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek awakened many, inside and outside of the foundation. Suddenly it became clear what was at stake. Intellectually and materially great efforts were and are still being made to put the Weimar Cosmos back in the only place where its existence makes sense: in the midst of the European public that is searching for new paths for our young century.

The Klassik Stiftung Weimar is immensely grateful to the German Parliament, to the representatives of the national government responsible for culture and media, and to the Free State of Thuringia.

Hellmut Seemann  
President  
Classic Foundation Weimar