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## NEW IDEAS IN BERLIN— "Kulturbotschaften" at the Lithuanian Embassy

Raminta Lampsatyte



*The Lithuanian Embassy in Berlin, Germany*

Culture messages and embassies of culture - this is the double meaning of "Kulturbotschaften." On February 18th a new series of expositions, concerts and lectures or readings, including a literary salon, started in Berlin in the newly opened Lithuanian Embassy. The beautiful old building in the Charitéstrasse in the center of Berlin has a top floor ideally suited for banquets or any kind of cultural "event." It has many windows, a glass verandah overlooking the garden and good acoustics because of a wooden floor reflecting musical and spoken sound in a very harmonious manner. At the initiative of Ambassador Vaidievis Gerasimavicius, Chargé d'affaires Vytautas Leškevičius, the pianist Raminta Lampsatyte and cellist David Geringas the Lithuanian Embassy decided to start this new series in Berlin.

The first exposition in the overfilled penthouse was a photo exposition of Algimantas Kezys' Weltengel or angels on earth - more specifically angels in the form of Lithuanian folk sculptures seen as angels through the camera lens of Algimantas Kezys and transformed through color and computer.

A Lithuanian catalogue supplied the exhibition with texts concerning revelation, angels and other messengers. The catalogue has been translated into English and German and will be printed as a second edition this spring. Kezys showed the angels in Berlin while reminiscing about his first visit to Berlin in 1947. At that time he had fled from Lithuania and escaped death many times by inexplicable means. Someone came and told officials to let him pass, or someone took Kezys over the border for seemingly no reason at all. Kezys has never stopped pondering over these coincidental landmarks in his life and decided that non-celestial angels would be a fitting theme for his return to Berlin in 2003.

Through the initiative of the founders of the "Kulturbotschaften," Kezys' angels will be further exhibited at the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, a Gothic chapel in the old city of Brandenburg near Berlin, and at a town hall in Hamburg, the Rathaus Rellingen. The Berlin exposition was the beginning of a series of celebrations for Kezys' 75th birthday this fall. The festivities will extend to Lithuania, where, before the famed Song Festival, Kezys will exhibit documentary photos of the Lithuanian colony in Pennsylvania's coal mining district, a colony that has disappeared, in a crumbling church gallery near Panevežys, an initiative of the archdiocese and Pastor Gudelis.

Accompanying the exhibition Raminta Lampsatyte "christened" the concert grand piano with a piece by Max Reger from the series "Träumereien am Kamin" illustrating the fluttering of angel wings. With her a young soprano from Buenos Aires,

Juliette Lee, dedicated the hall to art with Tosca's aria "Vissi d'Arte" by Puccini and Wagner's "Dich teure Halle grüss' ich wieder," Elisabeth's aria from the opera *Tannhäuser*.

In keeping with the idea of "Kulturbotschaften" to combine art and music with the spoken word, a lecture - demonstration added to the program. The German television film director Stefan Pannen demonstrated a cross-section of his 17 films about Lithuania and described Lithuania as seen through German eyes.

After this grand opening on the occasion of Lithuania's 85th Independence Day, the series "Kulturbotschaften" has many new projects planned. In March the Vilnius String Quartet will perform German and Lithuanian works; in April a Berlin salon will illustrate the theme "Bahnhof" or train station in word, sound and picture. Members of the audience must contribute something to the theme.

The next exhibitions planned are those of Stasys Eidrigėvičius in May together with a reading by Sigitas Geda and a piano concert by Andrius Vasiliauskas, the paintings and installations by Duncan Macaskill (London) with a British music concert by Daniela Bechly, an exhibition of the works of Algimantas Švėgžda with the dedication of the memorial plaque on the building where Švėgžda lived in Berlin, the etchings of Petras Repšys, a photo retrospective show of Raimundas Urbonas, who died tragically at a young age in 1999, and readings and sketches by Aldona Gustas. Emigré artists and authors are to be included in the series - the poetry of Živilė Bilaišytė and Eglė Juodvalkė, and music by Vladas Jakubėnas and Juozas Bacevičius. Concerts are planned with Violeta Urmanavičiūtė and Vilija Ernst-Mozūraitytė. The writer-philosopher Vydūnas will be the theme of a lecture by Prof. Bagdonavičius from Vilnius University, combined with a visit to the Humboldt (formerly Kaiser Wilhelm) University, where Vydūnas taught Lithuanian and Oriental languages.

The Lithuanian Embassy plans cultural exchanges with other embassies in Berlin - British, Polish, Hungarian, Swedish and Austrian, as well as the other Baltic sister states. In propagating an exchange of cultures, the Lithuanians are quite avant-garde, even in Berlin, and have therefore met with much enthusiasm.

Algimantas Kezys made a few photographs of the Lithuanian Embassy in the Carithéstr. 9, meant as an invitation for our readers and all visitors to come and visit the embassy and the series "Kulturbotschaften."