



The Gospel According to Kafka

A Literary Collage
recited by Gregorij H. von Leitnis

Concept & Introductory Lecture:
Michael Lahr

Premiered at the
Elysium Festival Bernried / Germany (June 2011)

In his stories, Franz Kafka (1883 – 1924) leaves behind the realm of the possible and probable world in order to better understand the real world. His protagonists often are helplessly confronted with anonymous powers; they are imprisoned in a maze without exit. Fear and failure are dominant topics. In vain his protagonists look for a way out. A master of the absurd, Kafka describes the most fantastic events with a clarity and precision, that leads the reader to the limits of thinking. In Kafka's work the great upheaval of the 20th century is expressed almost like a vision. Like no other author, Kafka describes the emotional framework and living conditions of modernity. His name became almost equivalent with modern existence: today we call a situation "Kafkaesque" which cannot be explained in political, psychological or sociological terms.

Texts from Franz Kafka's short stories, letters, diaries, and aphorisms are woven together to a poetic collage.

Münchener Merkur, one of Germany's biggest newspapers, wrote about the premiere of this program on June 11 as part of the Elysium Festival Bernried: *'Away - from - here - that is my goal', Gregorij von Leitnis read in his captivatingly high-timbered voice. 'I do not need a supply of food, because this journey is so long, that I MUST die of hunger'. The Elysium director allowed the courage of desperation as well as the strength in recognizing absurdity and the quiet humility before God resonate, as Kafka concluded: 'Luckily this is after all a truly gigantic journey'.*

Before this final sentence, which gave one goose pimples, the audience, within a scant two hours, had gotten to know a Kafka mosaic of a different kind. (...) Intensive short stories, like from "The Hunger Artist", from "Law", and from "Vultures", in which the hopelessness and the cruelty of life were described in highly symbolical terms, changed the mood into one of quiet horror.

Arranger Michael Lahr had named the program "The Gospel according to Kafka", thus meaning "Glad Tidings", since, he said, even in Kafka there is an occasional joyful undercurrent. Indeed, reciter Leitnis found God in Kafka's lines and read with the dignified voice of God the Father: 'This one, you should not lock him up again. He will come to me...' Thus an evening of discoveries was rounded out.

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