



A programme of ROOM 28 PROJECTS

## **Music is the most Beautiful Creation of the Human Soul**

### The Theresienstadt Diary of Helga Pollak

Reading by the author of the diary Helga Pollak-Kinsky (photo left)  
 Hannelore Brenner-Wonschick, author of the book "The Girls of Room 28"  
 and the Berlin 'Zwockhaus' ensemble  
 with songs of the Theresienstadt Cabaret and of Ilse Weber

With their interpretations of the songs of the Theresienstadt Cabaret, the Berlin 'Zwockhaus' ensemble provides the congenial voice counterpoint at readings by Helga Pollak-Kinsky, born in Vienna in 1930. Helga, daughter of Otto Pollak, former owner of the popular concert coffeehouse 'Palmhof' in Vienna's Mariahilferstrasse, is the protagonist of the book 'The Girls of Room 28' by Hannelore Brenner-Wonschick. Helga, who survived Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, has participated in numerous readings since 2003, together with the author and primarily in the context of the travelling exhibition 'The Girls of Room 28', performances of the children's opera Brundibár or events related to Holocaust Remembrance.

When Helga reads from her diary, she imperceptibly takes the listener by the hand to the world of 1943-1944 and into the microcosm of Room 28 in the Theresienstadt Girls' Home, an 'island in a raging sea'. Listeners feel a growing closeness to the 12-14 year old – they take part in what she experienced, they feel what moved her, immerse themselves in the Theresienstadt ghetto life, in the daily life of Room 28, an atmosphere that already foreshadows the approaching tragedy.

The songs of the Zwockhaus ensemble – Winfried Radeke (concept, arrangement, piano), Maria Thomaschke and Andreas Jocksch (vocals) – also never fail to touch listeners' hearts. Their interpretations rekindle the spirit of Theresienstadt cabaret performances. The songs bear witness to the elemental power of art, to what artistic achievement, artistic creation can mean for human beings in the face of an abyss. The same emotional feelings are kindled by the diary entries of Helga Pollak.

**Songs from Theresienstadt presented by**

**ZWOCKHAUS**

**Dobry Den | Und der Regen rinnt... | Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt | Als ob |  
 Drunt'im Prater | In einem kleinen Café in Terezin | Karussell**

**Songs/ texts by Leo Strauss, Otto Skutecky, Martin Roman, Alexander Steinbrecher,  
 Hermann Leopoldi and Ilse Weber. Arranged by Winfried Radeke.**



**Friday, January 29, 1943**

I've moved into the Girls' Home. It's a sunny room in a building that once housed the military administration. The building is next to the church, the windows look out on the Main Square. I wish I could just look out of the window all the time because I can see beautiful mountains.

When it's clear, I can see a cross on top of one mountain, and on another mountain a castle.

**Wednesday, March 10, 1943**

Today one of our carers, Eva, made little signs for us to hang on our bunk beds. She asked us to choose a motto and a symbol that has a special meaning for us. I chose a lighthouse, and the motto: 'Always be ready'. Why did I choose a lighthouse? The lighthouse could be hope, the girls say. But in my mind we are all at the mercy of a storm, and around us is the raging sea - the war.

It is already four years now since my mother went to England, and four and a half years since I last saw her. It will probably be another long time before we see each other again. I long to see my mother so much! That's why I've put her photo in my diary and imagine that everything I write, I am writing to her.

### I am wandering through Theresienstadt

I am wandering through Theresienstadt  
With a heart as heavy as lead  
When suddenly the rampart show  
And put an end to my way.

There, on the bridge, I make a pause  
My eyes caught by the vale  
How much I'd love to just move on  
Until I am home again

„Sweet Home“ - you words so beautiful  
You are making my heart so sore  
They took away my home from me  
Now I have none any more

I turn away, aggrieved and pale,  
My soul lost in despair  
Theresienstadt, Theresienstadt  
When ever will the suffering end  
And freedom fill the air?

**Sunday, September 5, 1943**

What a day this was! But it is all over now. All of them are now in the Hamburg barracks, waiting to board the trains: Pavla, Helena, Zdeňka, Olile and Popinka. The goodbyes were hard, but we were all very brave, except for Helena, whom I saw really breaking down in tears for the first time.

At eight o'clock I went looking for Zdenka. She was with her entire family, all sitting on their luggage. She was so happy to see a familiar face before she had to leave that she wept and laughed at the same time.

I had terrible dreams last night, and when I woke up I had great dark rings under my eyes.

**Wednesday, April 5, 1944**

Today I attended a Beethoven concert. They played a violin sonata. Taussig played the violin and Professor Kaff the piano. Then came a piano sonata that Kaff played by heart. He lived the music. He played with his eyes closed. For me it was like a fairy tale, with fairies dancing and singing on a meadow at the edge of a wood.

After the concert I didn't want to leave. Why am I in Theresienstadt? Here? Everything was so beautiful—and now this dark, gray Theresienstadt. I would like to slip inside the piano, where there is music. And here on the outside is the prison.

**MUSIC IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATION OF THE HUMAN SOUL, SOMETHING PEOPLE HAVE CREATED OUT OF NOTHING!**



**ZWOCKHAUS**

**Winfried Radeke** (Director, Arrangement, Piano)

**Maria Thomaschke** and **Andreas Jocksch** (Vocal) | [www.zwockhaus.de](http://www.zwockhaus.de)