

Lectures Offered by the Women's Education Association in Leipzig (1865–84)

Abstract

Founded in Leipzig in 1865, the Women's Education Association was like other groups of its kind in that it offered a combination of entertainment and Sunday school instruction. The lessons aimed to introduce women to a wide range of subjects at a low cost. Co-chaired by the early women's activist Louise Otto-Peters (1819–1895), the Leipzig Association gradually expanded its program to include regular evening courses as well.

Source

I. 1865 Evening Entertainment and Sunday School

[...] For a monthly fee, each member (of the Women's Education Association) receives three tickets, which she is obliged to give

to female workers or other women and girls known to her,
who are unable to afford a refined pleasure,
to attend the "evening entertainment" offered by the association.

Twenty-five of these events are held each year, with admission being permitted only to females.

They offer entertainment and instruction at the same time, the latter by means of one lecture each on topics suitable for broad circles of women, taken from history, nature, literature, etc., always giving special consideration to the association's purpose:

Expansion of women's horizons,
Elevation and inspiration for quiet hours of work,
Enlivening and strengthening [of women] in the interest of joyful employment, etc.

Included are recitations of classical and modern poetry, piano and vocal recitals, all performed by women. This is not just an exercise for amateurs but also for budding artists—even well-known ones sometimes perform; the instructive lectures are presented by ladies as well.

Furthermore, a Sunday school for older girls was founded.

Sunday school and the entertainment events at night, guided by the same principle of humanity and necessary self-help, complement each other.

Here, too, classes are given in elementary sciences,
French, and
female handicrafts

by female instructors—mostly free of charge. Sunday schools have already been recognized everywhere as a necessity for the male sex and accordingly introduced a long time ago; but for females they are still lacking almost everywhere and yet are doubly needed—as the active attendance of these schools shows.

Source: Louise Otto-Peters, *Das Recht der Frauen auf Erwerb*, 1866, pp. 80–81; reprinted in Margrit

Twellmann, *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung im Spiegel repräsentativer Frauenzeitschriften. Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Quellen 1843–1889*. Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1972, pp. 455–56.

Translation: Erwin Fink

II. 1867–68 Expansion of Sunday School to Evening Classes

Classes in:

German	Geography	Drafting
English	Math	Needlework
French	Commerce (Accounting)	Singing

1867–68: 25 Evening entertainment events or Sunday entertainment events:

Lectures:

Auguste Schmidt:

1. Nibelungenlied,
2. Gudrun,
3. The relationship between women's practical and ideal duties,
4. Herder's *Cid*,
5. The Paris World Exposition,
6. Otto I,
7. The history of German music up to Weber,
8. Egmont and the secession of the Netherlands,
9. The Sudeten Mountains,
10. Andreas Hofer,
11. Wieland's *Oberon*;

Henriette Goldschmidt:

- 12., 13. 14. On the position of women in different nations;

Louise Otto-Peters:

15. Striving for beauty
16. The genius of the household,
17. Idealism and realism;

Miss Hilscher:

18. Goethe's mother,
19. Charlotte von Schiller,
20. [Wilhelm] Tell;

Thekla Spann:

21. Maria Stuart,
22. Walther von der Vogelweide;

and others:

23. The freedom that I mean,
24. The meaning of the feast of St. John the Baptist,
25. Marie Antoinette.

Total earnings for the year

(Leipzig Women's Education Association): 246 thalers.

Source: *Neue Bahnen*, no. 13 (1868): pp. 45–46; reprinted in Margrit Twellmann, *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung im Spiegel repräsentativer Frauenzeitschriften. Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Quellen 1843–1889*. Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1972, p. 456.

Translation: Erwin Fink

III. Status of the Continuing Education School in 1875

Classes in:

(18 hours per week)

German	Math	Drafting
French	Geography	Engraving
English	Accounting	Tailoring
History	-	Machine sewing
-	-	Singing

Revenues of the Leipzig Women's Education Association in 1874–75	888.50 marks
Expenditures	655.30 marks
Balance	233.20 marks
+ Permanent Assets	1,158.61 marks
Assets in 1875	1,391.81 marks

Source: *Neue Bahnen* 10, no. 11 (1875), p. 84; reprinted in Margrit Twellmann, *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung im Spiegel repräsentativer Frauenzeitschriften. Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Quellen 1843–1889*. Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1972, p. 457.

Translation: Erwin Fink

IV. Status of the Facilities Operated by the Leipzig Women's Education Association in 1884

Evening entertainment events – Winter 1883/84: 26 events held

An attempt was made to keep up with contemporary events. As a result, commemorative days were organized for: Raffael, Leibniz, Luther, Zwingli; there was a belated celebration for the erection of the "Germania" monument and a funeral ceremony for Emanuel Geibel.

On many occasions, tableaux and short plays were performed on the hall's stage, partly read with assigned roles; choruses and duets were sung, the latter often in costume. In this way, serious pursuits alternated with humorous ones [...].

Source: *Neue Bahnen* 19, no. 10 (1884), p. 84; reprinted in Margrit Twellmann, *Die Deutsche Frauenbewegung im Spiegel repräsentativer Frauenzeitschriften. Ihre Anfänge und erste Entwicklung*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *Quellen 1843–1889*. Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1972, p. 457.

Translation: Erwin Fink

Recommended Citation: Lectures Offered by the Women's Education Association in Leipzig (1865–84), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/forging-an-empire-bismarckian-germany-1866-1890/ghdi:document-548>> [April 29, 2024].