

GOETHE MEDAL 2015

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY EVA SOPHER

WEIMAR, 28 AUGUST 2015

- Check against delivery -

While I greet you cordially in this manner, I ask for your understanding and forgiveness that I did not dare make the journey from the south of Brazil to Weimar. I will therefore make an effort to tell you about my life in this manner.

The German language is my native language as it was of all my ancestors. At the age of thirteen it was taken away from me because my father decided to move with us to Brazil to escape the gas chambers of the concentration camps. I need not mention that this fundamentally changed not only the language, but also the entire development of such a young person. I was forced to stand on my own two feet very early and envisioned my future in the arts and culture, at first as a profession in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, later – and still today – as a calling in my present home of Porto Alegre, where we moved when my husband, Wolfgang Klaus Sopher, was transferred there and without whose constant assistance I would not have been able to dedicate myself to music and the theatre for more than fifty years. We gained an interested audience with guest performances by orchestras and theatre ensembles from around the world, including, of course, very many from Germany. Teatro São Pedro, which the citizens afforded themselves 156 years ago and which is played at daily, is located in the centre of the city. Its presence led to yet another modern cultural centre and made the city into a cultural metropolis in southern Brazil.

Even if I sometimes have the feeling I am sitting on a fence, today I consider myself a cultural bridge-builder, a citizen of the world.

In my long life dedicated to the arts, I have received all possible honours, not just in Brazil. For me, finally receiving the Goethe Medal here in my fatherland is like completing the cycle of my cultural life for which I thank you very, very much.