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My trip to Berlin

The Waldorf School at Märkische's center

I had the opportunity to visit a Waldorf school in Berlin and compare it to my Waldorf school, I go to in Prague. Both of the schools have a lot of things in common: They both have the typical Waldorf subject - Eurythmy and it's taught pretty much the same way. Students exercise to the music, walk and create special forms. It helps their bodies to be coordinated and their minds to be alert. I've noticed that slightly the Waldorf school at Märkische's center tends to focus more on art. Students have art twice a week. Art is divided into 3 subjects that every student attends in certain periods – modelling, painting and working with metal. Music is usually played during these subjects. I must really say, that I was surprised how talented and creative the students were at these subjects. Their ideas, the way they expressed themselves in art and their skills were terrific. I was really amazed with what they could do. The school compared to my school has an orchestra! I unfortunately didn't have the chance to listen or visit some lessons, because for some reason they were always cancelled. I didn't really like the way English was taught, because they never seemed to communicate, but just write tests and discuss irrelevant issues. But I don't think it was the teacher's fault, I think the problem was hidden in the educational system. I believe the teacher was preparing them well for the final exams, but not for practical things in life. I would say that English is taught better at my school and the only reason, why students in Germany are slightly better at English, is probably because English is a Germanic language and they have better accents than Czechs. I liked the way French was taught. They were always reading a book from Antoine Marie Roger de Saint-Exupéry „Little Prince“. They would read a short part and after that prepare dialogues or I guess discuss about it (I don't exactly know what they were talking about, because I have never had lessons of French). The teacher they had for French was a native speaker, so I am sure she could speak very well. It's difficult to evaluate Maths, because I only had the opportunity to visit lessons, where they were just doing some exercises, so I didn't get the chance to see some special methods.

I like the possibility of parking your bicycle in front of the school. Many students didn't use the public transport and instead they rode their bikes.

The school's cafeteria was very small, so now they are building a bigger one. The school building is made out of wood, which is a typical thing for a Waldorf school, but it's probably not that important.

I had the luck to visit two classes - eleventh and tenth grade, because eleventh grade had exams for three days. I think that this system has its good and bad sides. The good side of it is, that students go to school more often. This system also prepares students for university. The problem I see is, that a student can have a bad day, therefore fail a test.

Eleventh grade had literature for their main lesson for three weeks. They were reading and deeply analyzing a book called „Sansibar und die letzte Grund“. The story took place in the 2nd world war. The book had important characters: boy, Juditha, Knudsen, Gregor and Helander. And if I understood well, the main characters decided to move a small statue, that was situated in a church (that was to be confiscated by the nazis) to Sweden. The main characters dealt with serious problems. I think the name of the book relates to a place full of adventures, where one of the protagonist dreams of going to. During the lessons the class would discuss the main characters. The teacher would ask them interesting questions. At the end they were divided into groups. Every group drew a story of one of the main character and presented his or her life, what he or she experienced, what made him or her make some certain decisions and how he or she ended up. I enjoyed the lessons, even though I didn't understand the students or the teacher properly, because my German isn't good enough. The students paid attention carefully and expressed their point of views and ideas often.

I spent 3 days in tenth grade, due to the exams I have mentioned before. They had Physics. They were learning about speed, acceleration and things that are related to this topic. The teacher showed them how to logically solve physical problems and work out conclusions. The teacher added eurythmic exercises, before the lesson started, to refresh their minds. I pretty much understood what they were talking about, because I only needed a few basic words and as soon as I found them in the dictionary, I didn't have a problem to understand what they were saying or what issue they were talking about.

The atmosphere in tenth and eleventh grade was different. I noticed that the girls and boys in tenth grade didn't really get along, or spend time together. I think the girls had other interests than the boys. The boys didn't really want to communicate with me either, but I didn't really try that hard, because I didn't feel welcomed among them. The girls were on the other hand very friendly. They were kind to me. When I had problems with understanding something, they tried real hard to explain everything to me. I even spent some time outside with them, when they weren't busy at home or with school.

In eleventh grade the class seemed to be one great team. Everyone was everyone's friend. But most of them were busy after school, so I didn't get a chance to hang out with them.

It was an honour for me to visit this school. I learned more about Rudolf Steiner's philosophy. I don't think that my German improved that much, because I would have to be there for a very long time.

Accommodation

I stayed at a family. They lived nearby Charlottenburg (a castle) and a lovely park. I was very lucky to meet such awesome people. They had 3 children and 2 cats. Their children attended activities after school. Their young son had drum lessons and he played football at the weekends with his friends. Their daughter (Lucia) was a good ballet dancer and she also did horse riding. Their older daughter (Camilla) was good at folk dancing. The parents (Katja and Martin) worked in many theaters. Recently they started to build their own theater. Thanks to them, my skills in German language improved in a couple of days. At first I had troubles understanding even the basic phrases, but in 2 days I got much better. They also had patience with me, so they would speak slowly to make sure, that I understand them well. We also watched tv sometimes or a film in German language. I didn't have a chance to understand much, but it helped me to listen to the language. They were very busy, so they didn't have much time to take me out. They usually gave me a map of Berlin, so it was impossible for me to get lost there. It was very nice to be in a family, where every single one of them was an artist.

I was invited to 2 plays. The first play was for very young children, so I could understand everything, what Katja was saying. It was really cute and funny. Katja had a good friend, who worked in The National Theater, so she got me a ticket with a discount. I went to see a play from Aeschylus. It was about the war at Salamis, where Persians lost the battle. The play started in a very funny and comic way. There were two men and a wall, that stood between them. Neither of them said a word. Suddenly, one of them started to giggle and the other one too. After that one of them started to move the wall, in order to have more room on his half, where he was standing. The other one didn't like that so they started to fight. It was a precise and well-taken way of symbolizing war. At the end the wall was spinning around and they were running in confusion. It was my favourite part of the play. Then the play started. Atossa, the mother of Xerxes is informed, that her son lost the battle against the Greeks. She

decides to go and resurrect her husband and find out, why her son lost. The ghost of her husband appears and says, that he lost because he built a bridge and that made the gods furious (it was a bridge that connects the Aegean sea and the sea of Marmara). I didn't really understand how it ended, because my German isn't good enough. I'm glad I saw the play and I liked it. The actors didn't really move their bodies, but you could see how they were very concentrated. I think it had to be very difficult for them.

At night I talked about Prague and the parents told me about Berlin. It's pretty interesting that Katja had a father, who lived in Prague, I think he was a famous jazz composer. She had many cds from him, but we never listened to them. I had to translate a letter they got from Prague, it was about Kamil Behounek's copyrights and I was surprised how many songs were used in well known Czech films.

I always liked talking to them, because it was good for my German and they had a few things in common with me, but also many different points of views. I really felt sometimes like a pessimist among them. They seemed to be full of hope and trust. Or maybe, they didn't want to express or open themselves up to some topics we discussed.

I went to the cinema with their older daughter Camilla. We went to see a film called „Pina“ It was about art and the so called „Tanztheater“ style which was founded by Pina Bausch. The movie was full of surprises for me all the time, because I expected to see a typical boring American film, where the main character makes his/her dream come true. And when the movie started, I was already thrilled by the beginning. There was a group of dancers, that were dancing on a ground covered with soil. They danced in a very vigorous way. And it had so much power, thanks to the background music from Stravinsky „The rite of spring“. The expressions on the faces, the dancers made were very important in the movie too, because sometimes they expressed themselves without moving their bodies, by just making faces, which were filled with emotions (love, fear, sadness, passion ect.). Many of the dancers in the film mentioned „Pina“ always encouraging them to be crazier. I highly recommend this movie to anybody, who at least is a bit interested in art.

Berlin

I explored many places in Berlin. It's a big city compared to Prague and there are so many people from a lot of countries (Netherlands, Turkey, France, Russia, Italy, America ect.). The city offers many exhibitions, concerts and other events. I really liked the atmosphere, that

was created by street artists and buskers. It's a shame, that I didn't see any concert, because many bands, I like play often in Berlin. Berlin doesn't have many hills like Netherland, so many people use bicycles. But if you want to have a bicycle in Berlin, you need a good lock! Katja told me, that once she lost her key to her lock, so she bought a cheap lock and the next day her bicycle was gone. She told me, that her lock was more expensive than her bicycle!

It's funny how in the first days, I wasn't really realizing how big Berlin was. I was surprised, that even some of the students I went out with, took a map. They didn't know many places, I told them about, or asked about. It's also unusual how Berlin has everything twice (National Theater, National Opera, Zoo), because it was once divided.

The third day 2 students from 10th grade took me around the most famous parts of Berlin. First I saw „The Brandenburg Tower“ (it's more like a gate). After that they took me to the TV-tower and to the Berlin Cathedral. We didn't go inside the Cathedral, because they have been there before and they didn't want to spend money on it, which is understandable. They took me to an exhibition about Holocaust. There were huge blocks of stones built nearby and they were dedicated to the victims of Holocaust. I didn't really like the exhibition, I don't know if it's because of the topic, or the way it was done, but I had enough in half an hour.

If I had to recommend an exhibition, I really loved „The story of Berlin“ . It presents the whole history of Germany and Berlin. The exhibition starts from the 13th century, where Cöln and Berlin, where the cities of business. Then it continues throughout the 14th, 15th, 16th century, then it continues with The Prussian king Friedrich I. My favourite part of the exhibitions where the twenties. The exhibition was really good, because in every century you could read about whatever interested you from that century (war, science, health, religion) and simply skip the things, that didn't interest you. The exhibition was provided with visual and sound effects, which made it even more fun. The exhibition wasn't very cheap, it cost 10 euros, but despite that, I am glad that Katja recommended it to me and that I went there.

I also visited Charlottenburg's park. People where doing many activities there. People were playing football, jogging, busking, or riding their bicycles. The park had some buildings and beautiful statues from the 17th century. It was a nice change for me to spend some time out of the city among some trees and fresh air.

In a way Prague and Berlin look similar, but the people seem to have a different attitude. But being a tourist is completely something else, than living there, so that could be

the reason, why I feel it that way. I would definitely like to visit Berlin again and now that I have contacts, I should be able to go there again.

Photos:



The assignment was to create any kind of animal out of clay (10th grade)



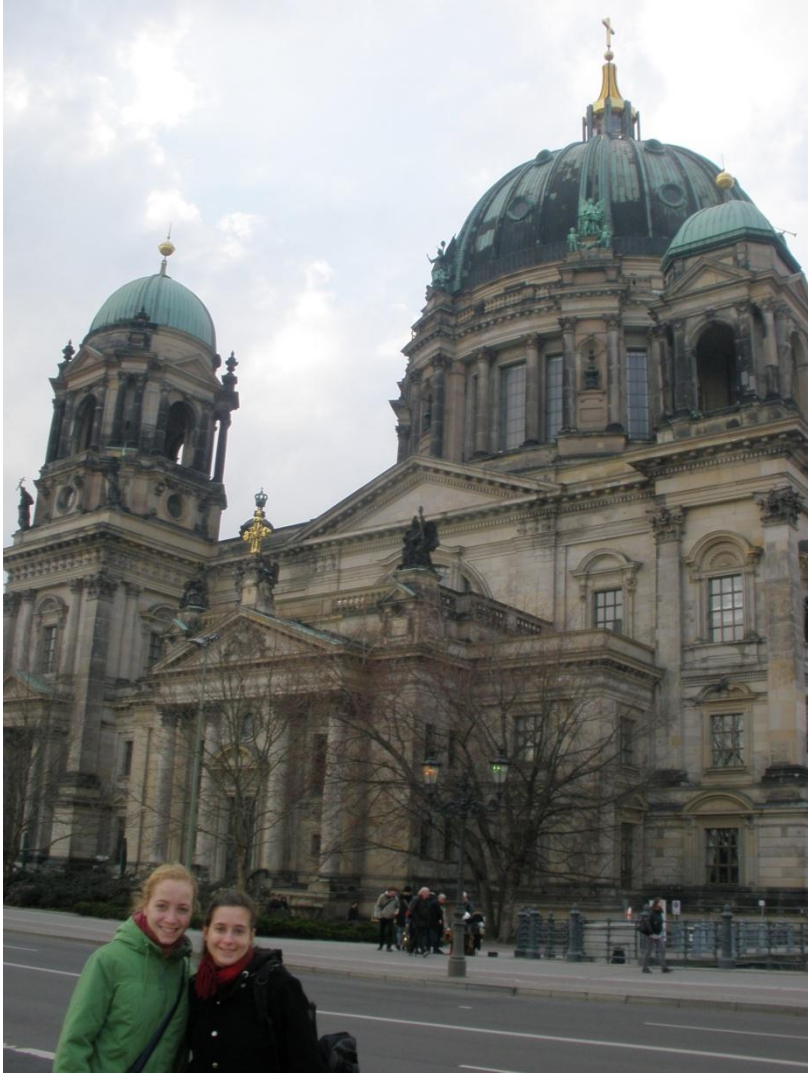
11th grade



School building



Bradenburg tower (gate)



Berlin's cathedral (Berliner

Dom)