

## Writers' Responses 2007

It was a pleasure to attend the Festival, not only because I had an opportunity to speak to a full house of enthusiastic readers, but also because it was flawlessly organized. The staff was wonderful! **Isabel Allende, USA** 

I enjoyed the festival very much, and I hope to visit Berlin again soon. The entire team was wonderful, and the festival was very interesting. It was a delightful experience, and one which I will heartily recommend to the writers I know!

#### Tash Aw, Malaysia/GB

The days that we have spent here since our arrival have been perfect reminders of the extraordinary moments we experienced in Berlin. The festival, its organisers and of course the people, all made the very best impression. Every activity I was involved in was organised to the tiniest detail: Hosts, interpreters and actors were all indispensible aides for me (and my books). Infact, I sent a report to the Argentinean State Office, in which I delineated the workings of the festival and stressed the importance of having poets meet their fellow writers, their readers and potential readers, all in an atmosphere that strongly stimulates reflection and exchange.

The children and adolescents with which I conversed, have earned their own paragraph. The intelligence and honesty of their questions and observations left the greatest impression on me. I honestly have to say that – even when I think and rethink – the only suggestion that I could make for next year, is to do everything exactly the same way.

## Liliana Bodoc, Argentina

I want to say thank you for invitation and for warm visit! Now I know, that the best friends (and organisators as well :)) live in Berlin.

## **Andriy Bondar, Ukraine**

My Berlin-experience was terrific, very inspirational. The organization was flawless and the location of the presentations very befitting. High-ranking guests and an interesting program. My chaperon was very amiable and competent. And our tour guide was a delightful man with a comprehensive knowledge of Berlin. A festival that is definitely worth the effort and will hopefully continue in the future. It was a pleasure to take part in.

#### Piedad Bonnett, Colombia

I just wanted to say thanks again for an absolutely SPLENDID time. It really was the best. I'd be more than delighted to come again. The organisation was superb. The cars, the hotel, the arrangements... everything was so calmly efficient and relaxed. With everything taken care of, all we have to think about is our performance. Excellent. The 'personnel' were fantastic. The assistants, helpers, drivers, organisers... everyone involved was so helpful, welcoming, kind, keen, enthusiastic. You feel as if you're amongst friends.

The festival location was great, and the events themselves were top class. Everything was very professional - sound checks, mics, actors, mediators – and all the little touches (like the introductory music) worked beautifully. The audiences, too, were brilliant: prepared, eager, good fun, and treated with respect. I really appreciated the carefully thought out schedule – not too many events, but not too few, and a really good range of different audiences, different set-ups, different perspectives. And, finally, the overall atmosphere and hospitality was the best I've ever experienced. Simple unbeatable. Like a very nice home from home. If only every festival was like this!

## Kevin Brooks, UK

I had a wonderful time in Berlin – I really enjoyed meeting the other writers, and especially the poetry event, which I think went off very well. I think the organization was fantastic, the food, transport, ameneties for writers – all were not lacking and it was the little touches – like having a city tour organized by the charming Fred Riedel and other things that I really appreciated most.

#### Tishani Doshi, India

I have been invited to various readings and a few book fairs, but felt most at home at this literature festival in Berlin. I sadly missed the celebrations and the closing ceremony, because I was occupied with other things and did not notice. There's nothing more to add, except to thank you for your friendliness. I am holding onto the festival as a good memory.

# Guillermo Fadanelli, Mexico

I am very happy to have taken part in such a well organized festival. The locations were well chosen and the coordination was very competent. It was a both unique and worthwile experience for me and I will definitely take lots of good memories with me back to Brazil. It was a real pleasure and we will assuredly see each other again someday.

#### Ferréz, Brazil

I would like to thank you again for the invitation. It was a wonderful evening, above all with the readings by Mosebach and Kennedy which I enjoyed listening to. I really liked Marion Brasch's presentation – and generally speaking, the main venue and publicity have meanwhile acquired an impressive size.

#### Julia Franck, Germany

Thank you for the amicable arrangements for my stay in Berlin. I really enjoyed myself and hope that my presence contributed a little to the success of the festival. I am holding onto the festival as an especially good memory.

#### Jorge Franco, Colombia

And thank you so much for the invitation. I felt very at home and thought the festival was totally amazing.

#### Arno Geiger, Austria

I have read at literary festivals on three continents and some large islands and I can say that the berlin literaturfestival is certainly the best organized and most hospitable. It is also in one of my two or three favourite cities. Furthermore, the German breakfast is a masterwork of civilization. (Have I said enough to be invited back?)

#### Robert Grey, Australia

Thank you so much for inviting me to the Festival. I had a wonderful time. Your generous hospitality, your kindness, your amazing organisation, made everybody feel great. It was obviously a huge success, judging by the crowds. I loved Berlin, so much that I would love to come back and stay for a few weeks, learn a bit of German. It is a dream, but not too difficult to realise.

## Shusha Guppy, Iran/UK

What I like most about festivals is the vivid yet also comforting grief for that which one has missed, that also gives that happy feeling of richness – if the festival will take place again the next year. How I would have liked to hear Jorie Graham! And A.L. Kennedy! Just to mention two – and how wonderful, that no hope is lost, but that I just have to wait till next year.

#### Katharina Hacker, Germany

It was such a privilege to be in Berlin among so many extraordinary writers, and with such authentic and delightful hospitality.

## Tony Hoagland, USA

Enclosed again is a big compliment for the smooth execution of the event. It was lovely to be a part of it.

#### Felicitas Hoppe, Germany

The whole organisation of the festival as well as the children's participation in all their meetings with the authors were really impressive. I felt like I was an author writing in their own language. As far as the organization of the festival is concerned, I also felt like everything was moving around me, as if I were the only invited author. All your colleagues' kindness and effectiveness was something admirable, too! Surely it was one of the cornerstones in my career, a participation that changed the way I cope with things. From now on, a new period of my career starts, a period, however, sealed by my participation and all experiences I had in Berlin!

# Vagelis Iliopoulos, Greece

The festival seemed very well organised – the accommodation was great and very quiet – which is unusual – the transport was good, the venues were ideal and generally I can't think of anything that I'd improve. I had a very pleasant time indeed. And Berlin is always a fine city to visit.

## A. L. Kennedy, UK

When I played hard to get, it was because of the experience I have with what they call bookfestivals for children in Holland, where they rent a number of writers to act like clowns for hundreds of overexited children who are turned crazy by loud music, popular idiots from television, exploding balloons, bad food and worse drinks. So I was not accustomed to people like you who actually do their work and do it so carefully. I'm therefore grateful that we got to know you and the festival.

## Guus Kuijer, Netherlands

How is it possible a week in a foreign land can forge such strong affection? I had a truly wonderful time from beginning to end. Your matchmaking (with Paul Holdengraeber and Sieb Posthuma) was beyond inspired. And it's the very first literary event (or rather *series* of events) that accommodated my professional schizophrenia. I cherish my time with you and your staff, as well as the encounters with librarians, book lovers, children (young and less young). Chapeaux! (Hats off!)

#### Allen Kurzweil, USA

It was wonderful – the children's audience, the organization, the hippies' times atmosphere at the festival. Maybe, the best impression I got is about Berlin's children: They are so open minded, so natural and interested to get to know all the things of life, about my country Lithuania, about my family, about literature and how to write... The festival is most of all successfull when contacts between authors and their audiences are opened up. And I think, this is what happened in Berlin.

#### Vytautas V. Landsbergis, Lithuania

I was struck by the tone of the literature festival berlin: it was that of reflections and meditative comments rather than declarations. And this made that festival a wonderful learning occasion: people had no certainties to sell, only doubts to probe and questions to ask. The fact that your invitees came from the four corners of the planet made it like a microcosm of what a multi-cultural future will be: an opportunity to listen to others. An opportunity to empower yourself by sharing doubts instead of clubbing others by market-oriented truths. I thank you a lot for giving that opportunity to meet, among other things, Indian friends I have not seen since the 1980s.

#### Fatema Mernissi, Morocco

Writing to tell you how fantastic you are – you gave me the most remarkable experience a writer can have: an audience, loving care, polishing of my ego, and an intellectual challenge. [...] I had a thoroughly challenging and stimulating intellectual experience. I enjoyed my co-writers, my audiences and all of the festival hosts. [...] It was fabulous, fun and friendly.

#### Pnina Moed Kass, USA/Israel

It was wonderful. My chaperon, the hotel, the literature critic that was at my reading... Wonderful personnel. It was a delight to be a part of this festival. I felt in very good hands and well attended to. The teamwork with the festival was sincere and professional. I returned home glowing. Everything, from the aid in distribution of works to possible translations etc., is very important to a writer. For this reason, an invitation to a festival such as the Literature Festival in Berlin is of great significance. I hope that we will see each other again next year. As for my experience, I only have laudable things to say.

#### **Empar Moliner, Spain**

Pierre and I hold our stay in Berlin in especially good memory. Although I am not a demanding person, I still find it nice to be treated like a very important person for a few hours: Nice hotel, chauffeured car, meals in restaurants, journalists and photographers. I can tell you: I came back down to reality the minute our plane landed.

I was very pleased to meet "my" translator and give life to the cartoon with him. The loveliest was, without a doubt, our premiere in the hall with the musician, the actor, etc. But, I thought that the most successful was the presentation for the deaf, in which my French, translated by Tobias, was then translated into sign. Three languages for one truly intimate exchange – in the end, we all want to exchange ourselves.

#### Marie-Aude Murail, France

Thank you for inviting me to the festival in Berlin. I really enjoyed it, and the city and the reception too. All those that took care of me were very friendly and made my stay comfortable and carefree. Congratulations on the catalogue, with which you did a great job. I do not have any suggestions for improvement, except to carry on as you have done so far.

## **Guadalupe Nettel, Mexico**

This is the best festival I have been to, from the start to the end, including everything. The time for preparation, it was amazing how you translated our texts, the organisation, the logistic, the friendly and professional people working at the festival, from the drivers to those who served you in the tent. I also think that I could find that atmosphere spilling over the audience. I never felt left alone, someone was always there when I needed. Always helpful and happy. Incredible!!! I can't think of anything that could have been done better.

#### Moni Nilsson, Sweden

The 7th International Literature Festival was a great experience for any writer, young or old, emerging or established. It was inspiring to be around so many people who loved literature and were open to literature from all over the world.

#### Willie Perdomo, USA

I had a great time in Berlin. I thought the author support and accommodations were first rate. Events were on time and well attended. It was a good festival. I was happy to be able to attend the readings of other authors and to spend time with them. It was a great festival and I especially appreciate that my books were on sale.

#### Sapphire, USA

Berlin Literature Festival has a special place among all the literary festivals around the world. Here is a festival wherein literature is not confined to segregated spaces. In Berlin literature belongs to everyone, not only the elite. It breathes with and within the whole city. For an author it is a unique intellectual and spiritual stimulation to be part of this great festival.

#### Elif Shafak, Turkey

Thank you for inviting me. I felt it was extremely well organised and enjoyable. The prison visit was certainly a highlight. Please thank all your staff for their hard work and courtesy. I was especially impressed by the catalogue.

#### Nicholas Shakespeare, UK

Oh oh oh, how I miss Berlin already!!!! I can't put into words how wonderful the expierence was for me but certainly also for Ton (and Odette). It felt like a nice warm bath of nice, interested people, having the same passion for children's books, but also looking to life in general in a "soul-mate" kind of way. Needlees to say again how wonderful a job you did (with all your wonderful assistances!), you understand the art of perfect organisation but with a very personal touch!

### Sieb Posthuma, Netherlands

When I think back to the week I spent in Berlin it is with great tenderness and a sense of immense pleasure. I was really impressed with how well-organized and carefully thought out my stay in Berlin was. With what precision and at the same time charm and enthusiasm your staff worked. I am remembering fondly our "hospitality tent": how cozily we drank the wine inside and what a wonderful sound the falling chestnuts made outside. Last but not least, each trip in the VIP cars was a treat, because not only did all the drivers speak excellent English, but each one of them supplied me with fascinating details of Berlin's life.

#### Vladimir Radunsky, Russia/USA

My memories of the festival are only the best. I really enjoyed it and got to know a lot of authors, and not just Spanish speaking ones. I think that the global character of the festival makes it an especially interesting meeting. And the diversity of the audience (children, adults, prison inmates) was perfect. All that's left to say is that the organization was very good. Very punctual and organized. Thank you so much for everything.

## Santiago Roncagliolo, Peru

I found the festival to be, in all aspects (atmosphere, organization, team, etc.), fabulous and I am very happy to have taken part in it. I am very thankful for the attentiveness with which I was taken care of. The team was in my opinion unsurpassable. In this respect, I have no suggestions for improvement for next year. I wish you the best of luck.

# Eduardo Sguiglia, Argentina

It was wonderful to be there as part of the Festival... I have been to many festivals in the past but yours was not only perfectly organized but it created for the participants a warm and unpretentious atmosphere, which gave us all a chance to feel part of the Festival and what is more welcomed by you all.

#### Haris Vlavianos, Greece

The festival was amazing, powerful, provocation, and political which I very much appreciated. The organization, the atmosphere, the hospitality is very very fine. Food, wine, etc. THE STAFF SO helpful, considerate, engaged, and SMART! The translations by all accounts (my German friends say so) seem very good. The anthology seems terrific. Very impressed by the scope and the concept.

#### Anne Waldman, USA