

The Lessing Society

To perceive difference not as a disturbance, but to appreciate it as stimulation and enrichment: the Lessing Society committed itself to this maxim of Lessing's ethos when it was founded, in order to encourage and provide a framework for academic debate.

With his emphasis on the search for truth and simultaneous respect for the differing convictions of others, Lessing offers a model for meeting the challenges of a pluralistic postmodernity and of a contemporary multicultural society. Such is the objective of the Lessing Society in promoting study of G. E. Lessing's work today.

Sounds enticing?

Then please consider joining the LS!

By joining the Lessing Society you enable and support the regular publication of the Lessing Yearbook and contribute this way to the continuation of this international forum of discussion.

Membership application

You can download the application form on the website of the Lessing Society:

<http://www.lessing-society.germlit.rwth-aachen.de/>

Dues

Student membership (renewable for 4 years) \$ 25

Active membership, including libraries \$ 35

Sustaining membership \$ 75

You can pay your dues securely via Pay Pal. The link is on the website of the Lessing Society („Preamble, Membership Application and Dues“)



www.lessing-society.germlit.rwth-aachen.de

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Handwritten signature of G.E. Lessing in black ink.

Handwritten motto "Lügeln nur Lügen" in black ink.

In 1966, Gottfried F. Merkel and Guy Stern (who emigrated from Hitler's Germany in 1937) founded the American Lessing Society at the University of Cincinnati. The name was later changed to Lessing Society in consideration of the organization's international members. Not only was this the first global Lessing association, but it remains one of the most distinctive institutions in the US that focuses on Enlightenment research.

From its very beginning, the society's goal was to promote the understanding of Lessing as an enlightener and cosmopolitan. It dedicated itself to revealing the vital strength of his thinking and preserving the work of the 'German Voltaire,' who aimed to emphasize the liberal values of his epoch in theory and practice. Lessing's commitment to religious tolerance as well as his intellectual grasp of the idea of tolerance – understood here as acknowledgement and consideration – played an especially major role.

In addition, Lessing was a highly versatile intellectual; he was an agile man of the theater who reformed the dramatic arts and strived to become a 'German Molière'; he was reviewer and critic,

but also a scholar, philologist and classical scholar, theologian, and philosopher of religion. The work of the Lessing Society serves to research the plethora of Lessing's intellectual interests, and in doing so, to uncover his various roles in the debate culture of the Enlightenment.

From its beginning, the Lessing Society has dedicated itself to the context of the European Enlightenment and thereby also considered other groundbreaking authors of Lessing's epoch. As being a key figure of the European Enlightenment, Lessing should also be considered within the context of global affairs, whereby the research on the reception of Lessing and the theater tradition of his plays in extra-European cultures should gain significance.

The Lessing Society makes a point to broaden the reception of scholarly studies on Lessing and his literary range, research on the German and European Enlightenment, and updates on the academic work in this field. Moreover, it aims to provide a forum of discussion for studies on the 18th century. For this reason, the Lessing Society is in collaboration with the following organizations: the Wolfenbütteler Lessing-Akademie, the Lessing-Museum and the Arbeits-

stelle für Lessing-Rezeption in Kamenz, the Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts, the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, the German Studies Association, and the Modern Language Association. Being part of this constellation, the Lessing Society is able to establish contacts between various scholars who work in the field of German literature within the context of European Enlightenment. The association organizes lecture series and international symposia. Since 1969, it also publishes the Lessing Yearbook. In addition to the Yearbook, numerous conference proceedings have been released that have been recognized as trendsetters in the shaping of current discourses.

Members of the Lessing Society receive the Lessing Yearbook and – at irregular intervals – the newsletter Notes & Notices, which contains information and updates on the latest activities and objectives of the society, and which also publishes calls for papers. You are invited to participate actively in the Lessing Yearbook and our international conferences.

