

PRESS RELEASE

A Positive Résumé for Bertelsmann’s Digital Summer of Culture

- **A stage for art, culture, and partners from the creative industries in times of Corona**
- **More than 400,000 views of concert streams, digital UFA Film Nights and live broadcasts from the Blue Sofa**
- **Interactive formats such as audience chats with authors during the book fair were particularly popular**

Berlin/Milan/Gütersloh, November 10, 2020 – Bertelsmann concludes its digital summer of culture with a positive stocktaking: In 2020, the year of Corona, it attracted thousands of people with concert streams, a digital silent film festival, and live broadcasts of author talks. Hybrid and interactive formats, such as conversations on the Blue Sofa or audience chats, which Bertelsmann organized with well-known authors on Facebook during the Frankfurt Book Fair, were especially popular. Overall, Bertelsmann’s summer of culture achieved a gratifyingly high reach on its own and partner channels, generating more than 400,000 views.

Karin Schlautmann, Head of Corporate Communications at Bertelsmann, said: “Bertelsmann is a vibrant part of the creative industries, a home for creatives, and a dependable partner in the cultural sector. It was important for us to show a presence with the digital summer of culture, especially in times of corona-related hardship. Our initiative gave a stage to European music and film heritage, but also to literature and its protagonists, while also bringing joy to a broad audience. Our message is clear: we stand by creatives and our cultural partners, even in difficult times.” Bertelsmann will continue to make its cultural formats available online under the Culture@Bertelsmann umbrella brand and will add in-person events as soon as this is possible again, emphasized Schlautmann.

The digital Culture@Bertelsmann series began in June and July with online activities by the Group’s own Ricordi Archive in Milan, where treasures from 200 years of Italian opera history are housed. Besides live recordings of rare operas that Bertelsmann and the Berliner Operngruppe had presented at the Konzerthaus Berlin, one project in particular met with a great response: In a crowdsourcing effort initiated by the archive, approximately 3,500 historical Casa Ricordi business letters, most of them handwritten, were transcribed by music lovers from all over the world to make them accessible for music research.

August was dominated by the UFA Film Nights silent film festival, which in light of the current situation took place exclusively online instead of in the open air on Berlin’s Museum Island as usual. The livestream included Fritz Lang’s technically visionary masterpiece “Frau im Mond” (Woman in the Moon) (1929), the semi-documentary silent film “Menschen am Sonntag” (People on Sunday) by Robert Siodmak, Edgar G. Ulmer, and Billie Wilder (1929/1930), and Lotte Reiniger’s “Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed” (The Adventures of Prince Achmed) (1926), the first full-length animated film in history. The music for the films was provided by star DJ Jeff Mills, chill-out pioneer Raphaël Maronneau, and the Ensemble Trioglyzerin. The digital UFA Film Nights attracted nearly 15,000 fans of silent film online.

In October, the month of the Book Fair, everything revolved around literature and the Blue Sofa: The partners Bertelsmann, ZDF, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, and 3sat set up what is probably the best-known piece of furniture in the German literary world at Bertelsmann Unter den Linden 1 in Berlin to coincide with the digital Frankfurt Book Fair. Using a new hybrid concept and in compliance with strict hygiene regulations, they welcomed more than 60 authors there, who presented their current books under the hashtag #DasBlaueSofaDigital. The talks were broadcast live by ZDF for three days and are still available at [zdfkultur.de](https://www.zdfkultur.de) and [das-blaue-sofa.de](https://www.das-blaue-sofa.de). To date, they have been viewed online almost 250,000 times. The publishers involved drew a thoroughly positive conclusion. "This year's Blue Sofa was like a Frankfurt Book Fair in miniature," said a representative of the publisher Siedler, summarizing the atmosphere.

After their conversations on the Blue Sofa, several authors, including Christian Berkel, Campino, Richard David Precht, Düzen Tekkal, and this year's German Book Prize winner Anne Weber, switched to Bertelsmann's Facebook channel where they answered questions from the audience. For the authors this was a welcome opportunity to personally get in touch with their fans. "An excellent format. It strikes a chord," said a delighted Christian Berkel, who had presented his book "Ada." "I thought it was really great to be able to talk to the audience," he added. For Düzen Tekkal, author of "#GermanDream," the social media format was "intense and emotional."

Bertelsmann recorded a good 42,000 views of the Blue Sofa on Facebook alone. The Blue Sofa's own Instagram account also clocked more than 43,000 views. Starting in September, responses were posted there from around 200 authors who Bertelsmann had asked about their books and expectations of the Book Fair.

Information on the digital summer of culture can be found on the Bertelsmann website www.bertelsmann.com/culture-digital. On social media, Bertelsmann's cultural activities can be found mainly on www.facebook.com/Bertelsmann and by using the hashtags #BertelsmannCultureDigital and #DasBlaueSofaDigital.

Bertelsmann has long been involved in the cultural sector in many different ways, both nationally and internationally. Its Culture@Bertelsmann activities comprise exhibitions, readings and concerts, the Blue Sofa literary format co-created with partners, and the Group's commitment to preserving Europe's cultural heritage.

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the broadcaster RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has 126,000 employees and generated revenues of €18.0 billion in the 2019 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world. Bertelsmann aims to be carbon-neutral by 2030

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