

## Battery Life

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After several years of renovation, the municipal art gallery in Bitterfeld–Wolfen reopened this fall with an archival exhibition on the „Bitterfelder Weg“. The forgotten artistic doctrine of the early years of the German Democratic Republic had originated in the small town, which, however, is much better known for its chemical industry. The development of the chemical industry, again, is largely attributed to the local availability of brown coal.

The musical tribute for the exhibition opening was performed by students from the local music school. Their shared instrument was a stage piano – a Yamaha keyboard – placed in front of a 1969 painting of chemical workers. The seven performers had rehearsed „Sieben Leichte Klavierstücke“ (I) from 1971 by Günter Kochan.

The short miniatures did not have any titles, the composer only numbered them from one to seven. But since the performers wanted to have titles, they came up with their own. They were announced before each performance and included in the official program.

1. Waldelfe, 2. Prasselnder Regen, 3. Regenweg, 4. Katzenmusik, 5. Minenarbeiter, 6. Schatzsuche, 7. Der Springer (II).

A week earlier, I had visited the chemical plant to see a new factory building, which is still under construction. It will be Europe's first lithium refinery. From next year on, battery–grade lithium hydroxide will be produced in Bitterfeld–Wolfen, with lithium sourced from the Mibra mine in Minas Geras, Brazil, and – possibly – from Zinnwald, Germany.

The mines in the German Ore Mountains, where lithium had been extracted over a century ago, were partly turned into museums after the fall of the Wall. They are scheduled to resume extraction in 2025.