

## GOTTFRIED VON EINEM

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Gottfried von Einem was born on 24 January 1918 in the Swiss capital Bern into an Austrian diplomat family. His father, William von Einem was the military attaché of the Austro-Hungarian embassy.

According to another source, however, he was adopted by Einem, his natural father being the Hungarian aristocrat Count László von Hunyadi. His mother, Baroness Gerta Louise née Rieß von Scheurnschloss, was an officer's daughter from Kassel, led a lavish lifestyle between Berlin and Paris. The family moved to Malente in the Prussian Schleswig-Holstein Province, when Gottfried was four years old.

After his school days in Plön and Ratzeburg, Gottfried von Einem went to Berlin in 1937, to study at the State School of Music with the great Paul Hindemith, who had, nevertheless, just resigned his post in protest against the Nazi authorities. Through the agency of the tenor, Max Lorenz, he was a répétiteur at the Berlin State Opera, where, in 1939, Herbert von Karajan became Staatskapellmeister. From 1938 onwards, von Einem also worked as an assistant to the director Heinz Tietjen at the Bayreuth Festival. In 1941, he began to take counterpoint lessons with Boris Blacher and at that time he wrote his first work, *Prinzessin Turandot*, at the suggestion of Werner Egk. The ballet was first performed at the Dresden Semperoper conducted by Karl Elmendorff in early 1944 and became a success.

Previously, in March 1943, Leo Borchard had first performed Einem's *Capriccio Op. 2* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. His Concerto for orchestra written during the war was condemned by the Nazis as it contained elements of jazz.

During the war, von Einem and his mother helped fugitives escape the Nazis and they were both sent to prison for six months.

Through Blacher, Einem met his first wife, Lianne von Bismarck, whom he married in 1946. They had a son, Caspar Einem (born 1948), who became Austrian cabinet minister and who sat in the Council on the Social Democratic bench. In 1953, the family moved back to Vienna. Lianne von Bismarck died in 1962. In 1966, Einem married his librettist, the renowned Austrian playwright and author Lotte Ingrisch. Apart from Vienna, the couple spent much of their time in the Waldviertel of Lower Austria specifically, at Oberdürenbach and Rindlberg/Großpertholz, a virtually pristine region that clearly inspired not only his own work, but also the literature of Ingrisch.

The composer died in Oberdürenbach on 12 July 1996 after a long illness. He was 78

Gottfried von Einem composed mainly operas based on dramas. He was internationally recognized after the premiere of his first opera *Dantons Tod* at the Salzburg Festival of 1947. His last operas, starting with *Jesu Hochzeit*, of 1980, are based on libretti by his wife.

*Jesus' Wedding (Jesu Hochzeit)* created a stir as it was blasphemous. It was composed as a companion piece to Britten's *The Prodigal Son*, Von Einem's work has an encounter between Jesus, representing life and love with a woman who represents death and Mary Magdalene who is a pop singer.

Blasphemy is any disrespect shown to God, the Bible or any holy person ; it is irreverence and a distortion.

It must also be remembered that the Nazis and other left wingers demanded that all the arts conformed to traditional methods and must not be modern and anything that was a discredit to nihilism would not be tolerated. Nihilism objected to Christianity, religion and moral principles. Nonetheless von Einem left Salzburg after the premiere of *The Trial* objecting to the traditionalists.

In 1973, he wrote as a commission of the UN to commemorate the 30th anniversary of its foundation the cantata *An die Nachgeborenen* for mezzo-soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, based on diverse texts. The title is taken from a poem of Bertolt Brecht, translated as *To Those Who Follow in Our Wake* premiered in 1975 in New York with Julia Hamari, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the Chorus of Temple University and the Wiener Symphoniker was conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini.

In England *von Einem* had two of his operas premiered within weeks of each other.

In May 1973 *The Trial* received its premiere at the Bloomsbury Theatre, London, conducted by Leon Lovett, directed by Fuad Kavur. The following month, at Glyndebourne, *The Visit of the Old Lady* (*Der Besuch von Alte Dame*) received its British premiere, conducted by John Pritchard and directed by John Cox.

#### Awards

- 1958 City of Vienna Prize for Music (Preis der Stadt Wien für Musik)
- 1960 Associate Member of the Academy of Arts, West Berlin
- 1965: Grand Austrian State Prize for Music (Großer Österreichischer Staatspreis für Musik)
- 1974 Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art
- 1975 Corresponding member of the Academy of Arts, East Berlin
- 1979 Member of the Academy of Arts, West Berlin
- 1993 Member of the Berlin Academy of Arts
- 2002: posthumously Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem for helping save the life of musician Konrad Latte.

#### Selected operas

- Dantons Tod (1947) after Georg Büchner
- Der Prozeß after Franz Kafka
- Der Zerrissene after Johann Nestroy
- Kabale und Liebe after Friedrich Schiller
- Der Besuch der alten Dame (1971) after Friedrich Dürrenmatt
- Jesu Hochzeit
- Der Tulifant
- Luzifers Lächeln

#### Other works

##### String Quartets

1. Op 45 1976
2. 1977
3. Op 56
4. Op 63
5. Op 87

Werder Trio Clarinet, violin and piano 1976

String Trio Op 74

Violin Sonata Op 11

Violin Sonata Op 49

Two piano sonatinas Op 7

Vier Klaverstücke 1943

4 Piano pieces Op 3

Widmungsblätter for piano Op 109

Lieder

Orchestermusik Op 9  
Orchestral Suite Dantons Tod Op 6a  
Serenade for double string orchestra Op 10  
Hymnus an Goethe for alto, choir and orchestra Op 12  
Pas de Coeur for orchestra Op16  
Alpbacher tanzserenade (Gluck tod and traum) for wind instruments  
Meditation for orchestra Op 18  
Piano Concerto Op 20  
Violin Concerto Op 53  
Capriccio for orchestra Op 2  
Symphonic Scenes Op 22  
Nachtstucke for orchestra Op 29  
Vienna Symphony Op 49  
Ballad for orchestra Op 23  
Bruckner dialogue for orchestra  
Ballet Suite Medusa Op 24  
Serenade, variations for instruments Op 61  
Prinz Chocolat for speaker and chamber orchestra Op 66  
Symphony no 4 Op 80 1986

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