



Universal Edition mourns the death of Wolfgang Rihm (1952-2024)

With Wolfgang Rihm, the music world loses not only a gifted composer, but also a universal scholar, who was as concerned with the promotion of young talent as he was with the commitment to fair conditions in the music area.

Born in Karlsruhe in 1952, Wolfgang Rihm became involved with painting, literature and music at an early age. He began to compose at the age of 11 and studied with Eugen Werner Velte at the Karlsruhe Academy of Music from 1968 to 1972 while still at school. Here he intensively studied the music of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern, and at the same time as he graduated from high school, he also completed his studies in composition and music theory. Further studies led him to Karlheinz Stockhausen in Cologne and to the Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, where he studied composition and musicology. This was followed by his own teaching activities in Karlsruhe, at the Munich Academy of Music and at the Darmstadt Summer Courses, which he himself had attended regularly. In 1985 Rihm took over the professorship for composition at the Karlsruhe Academy of Music.

Wolfgang Rihm became known to the general public with the performance of his orchestral work *Morphonie - Sektor IV* at the Donaueschinger Musiktage in 1974. He reached another milestone with the chamber opera *Jakob Lenz* in 1977, which was to mark the beginning of his collaboration with Universal Edition.

Among Wolfgang Rihm's most important works are the operas *Die Eroberung von Mexico*, *Die Hamletmaschine*, *Dionysos*, *Jakob Lenz*, *Proserpina* and *Das Gehege*. In the field of orchestral repertoire, the most notable are *Verwandlung 1-6*, *Nähe fern 1-4*, *Transitus III*, his *Second Piano Concerto*, and the works *Ernster Gesang*, *Gesungene Zeit*, or *Lichtes Spiel*. For smaller ensembles he wrote, among many other works, *Jagden und Formen*, *Séraphin-Sphäre*, *Fetzen* or *Mnemosyne*.

In addition to his musical oeuvre, which numbers more than 400 works, Rihm made a name for himself through his cultural-political commitment. He became a member of the presidium of the German Composers' Association, of the German Music Council, of the board of trustees of the Heinrich Strobel Foundation and he was one of the members of the GEMA supervisory board. 1984-1989 he was also co-editor of the music magazine *Melos* and acted as a musical advisor to the Deutsche Oper Berlin and the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe.

Numerous honours pay tribute to Rihm's musical career. In 1995, the composer portrait of the Rheingau Music Festival was dedicated to him, and in 1998 the Free University of Berlin awarded him an honorary doctorate. In 2001 he received the French order "Officier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres". He was awarded the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, the Golden Bear at the Venice Biennale, and the Order "Pour le Mérite for Sciences and Arts." In the 2013/2014 season, the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden appointed him "Capell-Compositeur", he became "Commandeur dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres", he received the Robert Schumann Prize for Poetry and Music, the Medal of Honour of the Province of Salzburg and he was entrusted with the artistic direction of the Lucerne Festival Academy, and was appointed a member of the "Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique". In 2022, on the occasion of his 70th birthday, he was awarded the Festival Pin with Rubies by Markus Hinterhäuser.

Wolfgang Rihm is one of the most performed contemporary composers in Europe. The exceptional composer has now died at the age of 72 in Karlsruhe.

Astrid Koblanck, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of Universal Edition on Wolfgang Rihm:

"Wolfgang Rihm will be remembered as a creator of musical works with countless levels of meaning. Personally, I was particularly touched by the wonderful and humorous conversations with this eloquent polymath, who showed a deep interest in his fellow human beings to the very end and was always aware of his own exemplary role as well as his cultural and political responsibility. With Wolfgang Rihm, not only Universal Edition but the entire contemporary music world thus loses an important key figure."

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