

“Something is created only where it does not yet exist.” Wolfgang Rihm

ON THE DEATH OF WOLFGANG RIHM

It is with sadness and at the same time with deep gratitude that we take leave of one of the greatest artists of our time and of one of Lucerne Festival's closest companions. Wolfgang Rihm was closely associated with Lucerne Festival not only as a composer but, since 2016, as Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Academy as well.

Wolfgang Rihm's association with Lucerne began in 1992, when Paul Sacher, Anne-Sophie Mutter, and the Collegium Musicum Zurich performed *Gesungene Zeit* for violin and orchestra. In 1997, he had the honor of being featured as composer-in-residence at the Festival, which presented a major retrospective of his works. Along with Heinz Holliger and Pierre Boulez, co-founder of the Lucerne Festival Academy, Wolfgang Rihm was one of the most important champions of contemporary music at Lucerne Festival. As the successor to Pierre Boulez, he decisively shaped and further developed the Lucerne Festival Academy. Through the Composer Seminar for young composers from all over the world, which he and his friend the composer Dieter Ammann both led, he established a new central pillar of the Lucerne Festival Academy.

More than 50 works by Wolfgang Rihm have been performed at Lucerne Festival over the past three decades, including numerous commissioned works and world premieres. The performance of his composition *IN-SCHRIFT*, of which Claudio Abbado and the Berlin Philharmonic gave a brilliant interpretation at the opening of the KKL Luzern in 1998, remains an unforgettable memory. During his Berlin years, Claudio Abbado in particular established a very special relationship, internalizing Wolfgang Rihm's work. The same is true of Riccardo Chailly, who performed two works here commissioned by Lucerne: *Untitled IV* for orchestra and organ in the summer of 2003 (with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra) and, in the summer of 2008 (with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra), *Coll'Arco: Fourth Music for violin and orchestra*, which he wrote for Carolin Widmann. Other unforgettable experiences of the music of Wolfgang Rihm during concerts in Lucerne include the brilliant performance of *Dis-Kontur* by Riccardo Chailly and the orchestra of Lucerne Festival Alumni in 2019 as well as Marist Jansons's performance of *Requiem-Strophen* with the Bavarian Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra as part of the Easter Festival in 2017.

Wolfgang Rihm's presence in Lucerne as a composer, musical thinker, and musical educator, as well as the intensive exchanges with him: all this was invaluable and greatly meaningful to all of us. In addition to his encyclopedic knowledge, he was a person of great kindness of heart and much humor, always curious and open. The positive way in which he dealt with his illness was an important example to us all. Encountering or working together with him was a tremendously inspiring experience.

We will forever be deeply committed to the legacy of Wolfgang Rihm's artistic work and his strong personality. Our thoughts are with his wife Verena and with his son Sebastian and daughter Katja.

Michael Haefliger

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