

## Press Release of the Salzburg Festival, 27 July 2024

### Obituary for Wolfgang Rihm



Wolfgang Rihm at the Salzburg Festival

(SF, 27 July 2024) “The Salzburg Festival bows before the artistic lifetime achievement of Wolfgang Rihm. He was a great pioneer and philosopher of music – a composer I have always admired. The Salzburg Festival, and I personally, owe Wolfgang Rihm an infinite debt of gratitude; I felt enriched and fulfilled by each encounter with him. Wolfgang Rihm’s works had a lasting influence on the history of the Salzburg Festival for decades. With the deepest respect and gratitude, we look back on the many stellar hours we owed to Wolfgang Rihm’s incomparable oeuvre in Salzburg. We have lost a friend, a wonderful person and one of the most essential composers of our times,” thus Markus Hinterhäuser’s sorrowful reaction at Rihm’s death.

For more than 40 years, Wolfgang Rihm was an intrinsic part of the Salzburg Festival. In 1982, the world premiere of *Fremde Szene* was the first work by the composer, who was born in Karlsruhe in 1952, to be performed at the Salzburg Festival. Further world premieres followed: *Mein Tod. Requiem in memoriam Jane S.* in 1990, *Lavant-Gesänge* in 2003, the Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in 2006 and the Piano Concerto No. 2 in 2014 – all commissioned by the Salzburg Festival.

In 2000, the Festival dedicated a series of seven concerts to him (“Portrait Wolfgang Rihm”); this was followed by the series “Continent Rihm” (ten concerts) in 2022 and “Homage Wolfgang Rihm” in 2022.

In 2010, his opera fantasy *Dionysos* was given its world premiere in Salzburg, proving a great success with audiences and critics; most recently, his musical theatre work *Die Eroberung von Mexico* was presented in a new production in 2015.

His keynote address “What does music say?” which opened the 1991 Salzburg Festival has lost none of its validity today. In 2021, Wolfgang Rihm gave an acclaimed “Speech on the Century” in Salzburg.

On his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Salzburg Festival chose him as the first composer to receive its Festival Brooch with Rubies.



Wolfgang Rihm (right) with Artistic Director Markus Hinterhäuser, who presented him with the Festival Brooch with Rubies in 2022 © SF/Birgit Probst

Drawing upon limitless imagination, a vibrant urge to create and acute self-reflection, Wolfgang Rihm created an immense oeuvre, including more than 400 compositions in all the musical genres. The titles of his works, for example *Jagden und Formen*, the *Chiffre Cycle* or *Pol – Kolchis – Nucleus*, have become symbols of music history of the past decades.

“To me, art is another form of breathing, of devotion, of fright and embrace and beauty and fear, of the sublime and the base in an inseparable mix,” – that was Wolfgang Rihm’s conviction. This conviction lives on in Rihm’s art.

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