

PETER EÖTVÖS

Composer, conductor and professor

Peter Eötvös was born in multi-ethnic Transylvania – just like Kurtág and Ligeti – in 1944, was brought up in Budapest, studied composition at the Liszt Academy, then at the age of twenty-two, he moved to Cologne, where he earned a degree in conducting. Following his graduation there, he acted as piano accompanist at the Cologne Opera, then spent half a year in Japan at the Osaka Expo 1970 accompanying Stockhausen's ensemble, which made a great impact on his attitude towards performance and composition. He lived in Western-Europe (Germany, France and the Netherlands) for several decades before returning to Budapest for good in 2004. In the meantime, he became one of the best-known musicians of the world, and as music educator, he got a series of generations to appreciate and enjoy contemporary classical music.

The most pivotal milestones of his international career path taking him from Transylvania to Japan, to Paris and even to New York were the following:

- He spent his early childhood in Miskolc (Hungary) in a musical family, his mother being a music teacher. He learned to play the piano, the violin, the flute and percussion instruments and would compose pieces already at the age of five. It was in this Northern Hungarian city, where he met the already established composer György Ligeti and remained in contact with him for the rest of the latter's life.
- He began his studies at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest already at the age of 14: It was Zoltán Kodály himself who admitted him to the School of Exceptional Young Talents. During his years at college, Eötvös read composition while working actively in film production and for various theatres in Budapest. He gained a lot of experience in improvisation through his movie and theatre work and learned how to draw a character only with a few tools and what dramatic timing and pace were. These years had a profound effect on his later mindset in composition and enriched him with a network of contacts. He has always remained faithful to the theatre and has written ten successful operas so far.
- After earning his degree in composition at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, he left for Cologne on a DAAD-scholarship to work alongside Karlheinz Stockhausen. At the music college in Cologne, he continued his composition studies under the tutelage of B.A. Zimmermann but also graduated in conducting and would give concerts with Stockhausen's ensemble all over the world. He also held a permanent position at the electronic music studio of Westdeutscher Rundfunk.
- In 1978, Pierre Boulez invited him to Paris to conduct the opening concert of IRCAM (Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music) founded by Boulez himself. Right after the concert, Péter Eötvös was asked to be the artistic director of Ensemble Intercontemporain, a position he held until 1991. Paris opened new horizons before him: the ensemble staged hundreds of new compositions, and he had the opportunity to personally collaborate with the most significant living composers of the time.
- As a conductor, he made his debut at the London PROMS in 1980, and from 1985 until 1988, Péter Eötvös acted as the Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. From then onward, he received more and more invitations from grand orchestras, and his international conducting career was soaring. Since 1985, he has spent longer or shorter periods as principal guest conductor, principal conductor, contemporary music expert at the greatest orchestras of Europe (the Budapest Festival Orchestra, the Hilversum Radio Chamber Orchestra, the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the Stuttgart Radio Symphony

Orchestra, the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra or the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra), and also conducts orchestras overseas (the US, South-Korea, Japan). His unique interest and special talent in contemporary music have made him popular not only with symphony orchestras but virtually with all major contemporary music ensembles. As a guest conductor, Péter Eötvös has collaborated with the Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Ensemble Modern, the Musikfabrik, the Klangforum Wien and the London Sinfonietta.

- His fervent devotion to the theatre led him to the world of the opera. It was him, who first premiered Stockhausen's opera *Donnerstag* at La Scala in Milan, but the audiences of – among others - Covent Garden, La Monnaie, the Châtelet and the Lyon National Opera also have had the chance to enjoy his conducting. He has also taken to the stage at various important festivals, such as Glyndebourne, Aix-en-Provence or Salzburg. Eötvös has cooperated with directors like Luca Ronconi, Robert Altman, Klaus-Michael Grüber, Robert Wilson or Nikolaus Lehnhof.
- In 1992, he returned to the university, but this time, as a professor: first in Karlsruhe, then in Cologne, he taught conducting and contemporary chamber music until 2007. His work with younger generations showed him a new perspective, and in 1991, he founded his own institute for young conductors, then in 2004, he established another foundation for composers and conductors, with a focus on contemporary music: the Peter Eötvös Contemporary Music Foundation. In the last couple of decades, he has shared his expertise with hundreds of young people, and with most of them, he still keeps in touch and helps them with useful advice. From 2018 until 2020, he is in charge of a special mentoring programme, which is in the international limelight thanks to its unique traits.
- His compositions written for the symphony orchestra or smaller ensembles are regularly on the programmes of the greatest concert halls and major festivals. In recent years, he has been commissioned to write orchestral pieces for the Concertgebouw, the Elbphilharmonie, the New York Philharmonic, the Berlin Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic and the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. His oratorio based on Péter Esterházy's text commissioned by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the *Oratorium balbulum* premiered at the Salzburg Festival in 2016. Four Italian symphony orchestras (La Scala, Santa Cecilia, Florence, Turin) jointly commissioned him to write a symphonic composition for them, the *Alle vittime senza nome*.
- His social and political sensitivity has inspired him to pen several of his pieces, for instance, the above-mentioned *Alle vittime senza nome*, which was written in the memory of those African immigrants who lost their lives in the sea before ever arriving at the Italian coast, or the *Oratorium balbulum*, which raises several still topical political issues ranging from the terrorist attacks of 11/09 to the demarcation of boundaries, the isolation of countries and to cultural amalgamation. His opera, *Der goldene Drache* (The Golden Dragon) concentrates on immigrants trying to earn their living without a work permit, while *Angels in America* focusses on the problems of people living with HIV.
- Not only the topics of his operas reflect on today's world, but he also often uses contemporary source texts as librettos. Eötvös has adapted not only works by major canonised literary figures such as Chekhov, Márquez or Genet but also texts by preeminent contemporary writers, like Tony Kushner, Albert Ostermaier, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Jon Fosse or László Krasznahorkai. Between 1997 and 2017, he published ten operas, which are regularly staged in the world's opera houses. Currently, he has been working on two operas commissioned by the Berlin State Opera and the Hungarian State Opera House.

AWARDS, DECORATIONS:

- Officier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres (1988), France
- Bartók-Pásztory-Prize (1997), Hungary
- Christoph und Stephan Kaske Stiftung Jubilee Award (2000), Germany
- Gundel-Prize (2001), Hungary
- Classical Music Award of Hungary (2001)
- Kossuth Prize (2002), Hungary
- Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award (2002), Great Britain
- Prize SACD Palmarès in the category „Prix Musique” (2002), France
- Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (2003), France
- Freeman of Budapest (2003), Hungary
- Pro Europa Composition Prize (2004), Switzerland
- Cannes Classical Award for Living Composer (2004), France
- Béla Bartók Memorial Prize (2006), Hungary
- Grand Prix de la PMI – Prix Antoine Livio (2006), France
- Frankfurter Musikpreis (2007), Germany
- Ambassador of Hungarian Culture (2008), Hungary
- Golden Lion Award for Lifetime Achievement (2011), Italy
- Order of Saint Stephen (2015), Hungary
- Prima Primissima (2017), Hungary
- Goethe Medal (2018), Germany
- Terras sem Sombra International Award (2018), Portugal
- Hazám (My Homeland)-Award (2018), Hungary
- BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award (2021), Spain

AWARDS FOR RECORDS AND COMPOSITIONS:

- Claude-Rostand Prize (1998 – for the opera *Three Sisters*), France
- Grand prix de la Critique (1998 – for the opera *Three Sisters*), France
- Victoires de la Musique Classique et du Jazz Prize (1999– for the opera *Three Sisters*), France
- Grand Prix of the Academy Charles Cros (1999 – for the opera *Three Sisters*), France
- Diapason d'or de l'année (2000 – for the opera *Three Sisters*), France
- ECHO Preis (2000 – for the opera *Three Sisters*), Germany
- Prix Caecilia (2000 – for the opera *Three Sisters*), Belgium
- Golden Prague – Grand Prize (2003 – for the film based on the opera *Le Balcon*), Czech Republic
- Prix de Composition Musicale (2008 – for the violin concerto *Seven*), Monaco
- German Record Critics' Award for Ligeti: *Requiem* (2011), Germany
- Fonogram (CD prize – 2011), Hungary
- Echo Klassik Musikpreis for Ligeti: *Requiem* (2012), Germany
- Grammy Award nomination (2012), USA
- Echo Klassik Musikpreis for Concerto recording of the year (2013), Germany
- Gramophone Award (2013), Germany
- Grammy Award nomination (2013), USA
- ICMA Award for Bartók-Eötvös-Ligeti – CD Naïve (2014)
- Gejutsu's Record Academy Award (2015), Japan
- Grand prix de la Fondation Simone et Cino del DUCA (2016), France

ACADEMY MEMBERSHIPS:

- Akademie der Künste Berlin
- Széchenyi Akadémia Budapest
- Sächsische Akademie der Künste Dresden
- Royal Swedish Academy of Music Stockholm
- Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium
- Honorary Academician Santa Cecilia Roma

PUBLISHERS:

- Editio Musica Budapest (Universal Music Publishing), Hungary
- Ricordi (Universal Music Publishing), Italy
- Salabert Editions Paris (Universal Music Publishing), France
- Schott Music International GmbH, Germany

RECORD LABELS:

- BIS AG
- BMC
- DGG
- ECM
- KAIROS
- col legno
- Naive
- Alpha-Classics
- Wergo