

Gottfried von Einem, Bertolt Brecht, and Franz Kafka: New Perspectives on Musico-Literary Collaboration from the Einem Archive

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Abstract

Once both globally renowned and tightly enmeshed in Austrian musical culture, Gottfried von Einem has faded into obscurity in the some thirty years since his death. However, his *Nachlass* (estate), left in its entirety to the archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (Society of Friends of Music) in Vienna, paints a fascinating portrait of this complex and contradictory figure. From a musicological standpoint alone, Einem's archive is a goldmine: almost entirely unstudied, it offers a wealth of insights into postwar musical culture in Austria and Germany, of which Einem was once a central figure. But his archive holds even more interest as a resource for interdisciplinary scholarship, relevant to both musicologists and literary scholars in its extensive documentation of the operas Einem adapted from canonical German literary texts, including Georg Büchner's *Dantons Tod* (Danton's death), Franz Kafka's *Der Prozeß* (The trial), Johann Nestroy's *Der Zerrissene* (Torn apart), Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (The visit of the old lady), and Friedrich Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* (Intrigue and love). Crucially, it offers important new insights into the creative partnerships between Einem and his literary collaborators, a group that counted both Bertolt Brecht and Friedrich Dürrenmatt among its numbers. While my focus here will be on the collaboration between Einem and Brecht, Einem's archive is an unexpected and long-undiscovered lodestone for Austro-German musical, literary, and cultural studies that warrants further exploration.

Introduction

Austrian composer Gottfried von Einem (1918–96) was first introduced to Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) in 1948 by their mutual friend, the scenographer Caspar Neher (1897–1962). As a member of the board of directors of the Salzburg Festival, Einem was in search of fresh talent to fill the void left by the deaths of writers previously associated with the festival, a generation that included Karl Kraus, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Robert Musil, and Stefan Zweig. He found it in Brecht. Einem's idea was initially to invite Brecht to direct one of his own plays at the 1949 festival, but in view of the upcoming 200th anniversary of Goethe's birth, the two made plans for Brecht to adapt *Faust* into a one-act, four-hour-long work. In the end, however, it was decided that Brecht should write a new piece to be premiered in Salzburg that would serve as a replacement for Hofmannsthal's iconic *Jedermann* (Everyman). Brecht's *Salzburger Totentanz* (Salzburg Dance of Death) was aptly named: with the birth of Brecht's work came the death of Einem's reputation in Salzburg.

Both globally renowned and tightly enmeshed in Austrian musical culture during his life, Einem has faded into obscurity in the nearly thirty years since his death. However, his estate, left in its entirety to the archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (Society of Friends of Music) in Vienna, paints a fascinating portrait of this complex and contradictory figure, an artist who counted among his friends such luminaries as Karl Böhm, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Herbert von Karajan, Oskar Kokoschka, and Neher, and whose prominent career was plagued by controversy, from his role in Brecht's (so-perceived) defection to East Germany in 1948, to the Catholic Church's protest against his 1971 opera *Jesu Hochzeit* (Jesus's wedding), to his support of figures across the political spectrum during and after the Second World War.^[1] Indeed, his very choice of a conservative (if not downright reactionary) musical idiom was enough to condemn him in the eyes of his contemporaries. Erik Levi describes Einem's musical language as "hardly innovatory," and hears various strains of disparate influences, among them Boris Blacher, Benjamin Britten, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, and Kurt Weill, though he notes that Einem weaves these elements into his own individual style.^[2] However, critics accused Einem of pandering to the public with "culinary"^[3] music masked by occasional elements of the avant-garde: Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich wrote, "If von Einem's music doesn't sound quite as amiable as that of Strauss or Puccini, this serves to prove to the audience that it may be listening to advanced composition; otherwise, listening to this music might well cause a guilty conscience."^[4] Meanwhile, Einem charged full steam ahead into the debate, making his repudiation of the extreme avant-garde and its disciples abundantly clear. He reportedly called Karlheinz Stockhausen the "'most vainglorious brat' he had ever met" and rejected the use of noise as a compositional technique in a piquant statement: "I love a well-sung phrase, or a beautifully-played string movement. Why should one always have to mistreat an orchestra, so that they have to scrape their bows on the ground or in a filled or empty toilet?"^[5]

From a musicological standpoint alone, Einem's archive is a goldmine: almost entirely unstudied, it offers a wealth of insights into postwar musical culture in Austria and Germany, of which Einem was once a central figure. But his archive holds even more interest as a resource for interdisciplinary scholarship, relevant to both musicologists and literary scholars in its extensive documentation of the operas Einem adapted from canonical German literary texts, including Georg Büchner's *Dantons Tod* (Danton's death), Franz Kafka's *Der Prozeß* (The trial), Johann Nestroy's *Der Zerrissene* (Torn apart), Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (The visit of the old lady), and Friedrich Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* (Intrigue and love). Crucially, it

offers important new insights into the creative partnerships between Einem and his literary collaborators, a group that counted both Brecht and Dürrenmatt (1921–90) among its numbers. While my focus here will be on the collaboration between Einem and Brecht, Einem's archive is an unexpected and long-undiscovered lodestone for Austro-German musical, literary, and cultural studies that warrants further exploration.

Gottfried von Einem's Rise to Fame

Born in Bern in 1918, Einem was set in his path towards a musical career from a young age. By the time he was twenty, he had secured the position of rehearsal pianist and assistant to Heinz Tietjen at the Berlin State Opera, and partly due to his family's friendship with the Wagner family, became Tietjen's assistant at the Bayreuth Festival in 1938. It was during this time that Einem's name was first sullied by scandal: while eating breakfast one morning, his hotel room was suddenly stormed by members of the Gestapo, who arrested both Einem and his mother on unspecified grounds. Though he was soon released from custody and cleared of any charges, his 1938 arrest left an indelible mark on Einem, traces of which can be found in his 1953 opera, *Der Prozeß*, based on Kafka's novel of the same name.



Figure 1: Gottfried von Einem in the Vienna State Opera (photograph by Yoichi R. Okamoto, 1954); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#)
In 1941, Einem began formal composition lessons with Boris Blacher, producing the ballet *Prinzessin Turandot*, op. 1, and the *Capriccio for Orchestra*, op. 2, both receiving critical acclaim at their premieres in 1944 at the Dresden State Opera and 1943 in Berlin, respectively. In fact, the success of Einem's *Capriccio* prompted Karajan to commission another work, which became Einem's *Concerto for Orchestra*, op. 4. The jazz influences of this work drew condemnation from the press, bringing both Einem and his *Concerto* to the attention of Propaganda Minister Josef

Goebbels; however, Einem narrowly managed to escape prosecution by retreating to his family home in Styria, where he remained until the end of the war.^[6] But it was Einem's first opera, *Dantons Tod*, based on Büchner's eponymous play, that first brought the young composer global acclaim. The opera premiered at the 1947 Salzburg Festival to unanimous praise, and its subsequent performances in Vienna, Hamburg, Berlin, Paris, Brussels, and New York gained Einem fame on both sides of the Atlantic. At the age of thirty, Einem had become one of the most promising young composers of his time, with a reputation apparently untarnished by Nazi collaboration, and he was granted a coveted seat on the board of directors of the Salzburg Festival as it began a project of postwar rejuvenation. But his early success was about to be clouded by his involvement in what would later be known to Austrians as "The Brecht Affair."

Bertolt Brecht in Exile

Brecht, a vocal critic of the Nazi regime and open communist sympathizer, had been forced to flee his native Germany the day after the Nazi's burning of the Reichstag on February 27, 1933. He would remain in exile for fifteen years. After seven years of refuge in Svendborg, Denmark, he began to face pressure from a newly-occupied Danish government to relocate, moving first to Sweden, then to Finland, and finally to the United States via Moscow in 1941. From 1941 to 1947, Brecht worked in Hollywood, writing both plays and screenplays, but on September 19, 1947, his former ties to communism prompted a summons to appear before the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Suspected of ongoing communist activity, he was tried before the committee on October 30, 1947. After denying any official membership in the Communist Party and pleading mistranslation when leftist passages from his plays were cited, Brecht was released from their custody, leaving for Europe the next day.^[7]

He settled in Zurich, but within a year, the Swiss police had begun discreet investigations into the legality of his immigration. When Brecht applied for a travel pass, he was denied on the grounds that his move had been unauthorized, and his stay in Switzerland was not to be prolonged. Despite his acquittal before HUAC, Brecht's American re-entry permit had also been denied. Facing expulsion from Switzerland and unable to return to the United States, he began to make plans for yet another relocation. Though Brecht proposed the idea of settling in Vienna and taking a troupe of players to perform in Salzburg and Munich,^[8] some believe that Brecht's ultimate goal had always been Berlin. Thomas Eickhoff, for one, argues that Austria, as a neutral place of residence outside Germany, offered Brecht the opportunity to "continue to advocate for his cultural-political concerns under less incriminating circumstances" ("seine kulturpolitischen Anliegen weiterhin—allerdings unter ideologisch weniger belastenden Vorzeichen—zu vertreten")^[9] before heading to his ultimate destination.^[10] Indeed, after securing Austrian passports for himself and his family in 1950, Brecht made one final move to East Berlin, where he remained until his death in 1956.^[11]



Figure 2: Bertolt Brecht (photograph by Robert Sennecke, before 1940); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#)

While the story of Brecht's blacklisting in Hollywood, investigation by HUAC on suspicion of his ties to communism, and his subsequent move to East Berlin in 1949 to found the Berliner

Ensemble is a familiar one, rarely is any mention of Einem included in its telling, particularly in Anglophone accounts. Joachim Lucchesi, in his articles on Brecht's relationship to various composers, merely names Einem as one of Brecht's contacts in Salzburg. Vera Stegmann, in her chapter on Brecht's work with composers, only comments that Einem had been one of the composers to write music for *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (Mother courage and her children) in the 1940s and 1950s. Bruce Cook's account of Brecht's return from exile omits Einem's name entirely from the circumstances surrounding the procurement of Brecht's Austrian passport.^[12] In Anglophone scholarship, only Stephen Gallup in *A History of the Salzburg Festival* (1987) and Stephen Parker in *Bertolt Brecht: A Literary Life* (2014) include Einem in the narrative, mentioning his support in Brecht's pursuit of a passport and the fallout that resulted,^[13] though Günther Berger's monograph *Bertolt Brecht in Wien* (2018) discusses Einem's role at length in German.^[14] In an effort to amend this omission, I will use my own archival research to reconstruct the events of the "Brecht Affair" here for an Anglophone audience, before continuing on to discuss Brecht and Einem's musico-literary collaboration.

A box labeled "Causa Brecht" in Einem's archive reveals the full extent of the central role Einem played in Brecht's relocation. With extensive correspondence between the two regarding Einem's intervention in Brecht's application for Austrian citizenship, as well as fragments of the *Salzburger Totentanz* Brecht promised Einem in exchange, "Causa Brecht" documents every detail of Einem's investment in Brecht's immigration. Yet it also reveals the fallout Einem faced upon Brecht's decision to eschew Austria for East Berlin, including the publicity surrounding Einem's denunciation as a communist and removal from the Salzburg Festival's board of directors, his unsuccessful fight to be reinstated to the board, and the ensuing decade-long boycott of Brecht's works by Viennese theaters.

Brecht, Einem, and the 1949 Salzburg Festival

For Brecht, stateless since 1933, *Salzburger Totentanz* became a bargaining chip in his quest for documentation. Neher, a close friend of both Brecht and Einem, brought Brecht's case to Einem's attention. Given Einem's influence as a member of the board of directors at Salzburg, Neher hoped he might be able to help Brecht secure an Austrian passport; in exchange, Brecht would create a new play for the 1949 festival. In an undated letter, Brecht writes,

Dear von Einem,

I'm sitting here with Cas, we've been talking about the festival, and it looks as if it may come off. Now I can think of an equivalent, worth more to me than any advance; that would be a haven, in other words, a passport. Of course, it should be managed without publicity if at all possible. And perhaps something of this sort would be best: Helli^[15] after all is a native Austrian (Viennese) and like me she has been stateless since 1933. At present there is no German government. Could she get an Austrian passport? And could I get one simply as her husband? You understand, I don't know the legal position. However, a passport would be of the greatest importance to me. I can't settle in one part of Germany and be dead for the other part. Perhaps you can help me.

Yours cordially,

Brecht^[16]

Thus the plan was conceived: Brecht would write a piece for the festival, Einem would help Brecht's Austrian-born wife (Helene Weigel) secure a passport, allowing Brecht, as her husband,

to apply for one as well. As the bureaucratic struggle for documentation unfolds across their correspondence, Brecht leans heavily on the promise of *Totentanz* as motivation:

Dear von Einem,

Curjel^[17] has just been here, and I've written the two letters in all haste. I'm enclosing my birth certificate and proof of my expatriation. We were married in Berlin, and copies of marriage certificates are no longer obtainable, the registry office in Charlottenburg was destroyed. I'll come as soon as I can, I'll travel direct (cutting out Munich) via Salzburg and Prague. We just phoned the Austrians and were told that stateless persons are no longer allowed to stop over in Austria, not even for the two days permitted last year. So unless you find some solution, I won't be able to get out of the train. I'll wire you the date of my arrival, I'll be travelling with my daughter Barbara; but I must first get the Czechoslovakian and Russian visas (for the East Zone) put into my passport; they are allegedly ready. As things stand, I can't just set out, because I have permission for only a single re-entry into Switzerland. But I'm hurrying as much as I can, because of Salzburg and because I must really get to Berlin. Please let me know if there's anything I can do about stopping on the way through. (Here they tell me petitions take at least six weeks to get through and then the answer is negative.) We can attend to everything else when we meet in Salzburg, if we do. Otherwise, I'll write to you about it. (Try and find a news item that appeals to you, then I might help you with the stylisation.)^[18]

Cordially and with sincere thanks,

Yours,

Brecht^[19]

After sending Einem his birth certificate and proof of expatriation, Brecht explains that without citizenship, he cannot even step off the train in Salzburg unless Einem secures some kind of permission on his behalf, then promises to discuss "everything else" in Salzburg if Einem manages to do so. The "everything else" remains unspecified, but likely included *Totentanz*, which could only be discussed if Brecht were able to travel to Salzburg. Indeed, throughout their correspondence, Brecht continues to dangle the promise of an in-person discussion of the play *if* Einem manages to get the necessary travel documents:

I hope we can discuss those literary matters when we meet. I have no choral text at hand; the best would be for you to find a news item that appeals to you and I'll help you reformulate it. But I'll be looking for one too. I would rather not submit a summary of the festival play (Salzburg Dance of Death) in writing, for several reasons.^[20]

Einem finally succeeded, the Salzburg state government officially awarding Brecht citizenship on April 12, 1950. And in June of that same year, Brecht received citizenship in the DDR, relocating permanently to East Berlin. The *Salzburger Totentanz* remained but a whisper in the Brecht-Einem correspondence, a fragmented scenario found in the archives, never performed on the Salzburg stage.

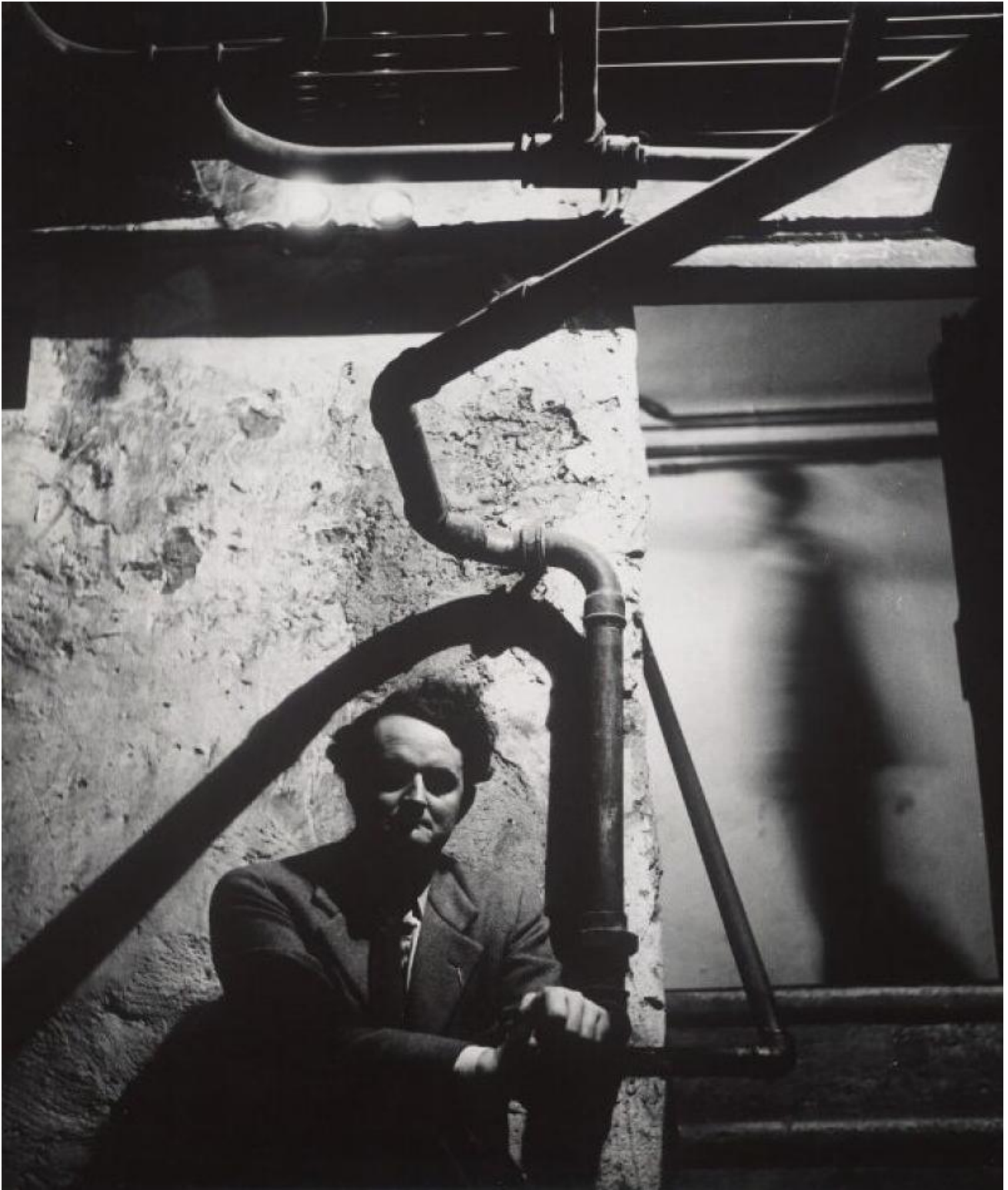


Figure 3: Gottfried von Einem in the context of *Der Prozeß* (photograph by Yoichi R. Okamoto, 1954); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#)
Brecht's flight to East Germany, made possible by his newly-awarded Austrian passport, launched Einem's troubles in Salzburg. On October 31, 1951, Einem was removed from the directorship of the Salzburg Festival, officially because of his "unqualified behavior" ("unqualifizierten Benehmens") towards the chairman and governor.^[21] However, a letter from the governor Josef Klaus, dated November 28, 1951, states the real reason: his involvement with Brecht's citizenship.

You also know that this decision was made in connection with the point of order 'Bert Brecht Citizenship Matter.' This connection was intentionally not mentioned in the minutes because a member of the board of directors who was present spoke out against linking your dismissal to the Bert Brecht affair and because the members of the board of trustees shared this opinion. Therefore, the board of trustees officially has nothing to add to its statement.^[22]

In his autobiography, Einem recalls his denunciation as a communist for his support of Brecht; his emotional reaction to being called "a disgrace for Austria" ("eine Schande für Österreich") by the festival's board of directors was the "unqualified behavior" designated as the official grounds for his removal.^[23] Klaus further expounds on the decision to dismiss Einem in his letter: though sealed by Einem's behavior at this fateful meeting, it was prompted by Einem's refusal to distance himself from Brecht after he had left for East Berlin, which had implications not just for Einem as a private citizen, but also for the festival he represented. Klaus writes,

In my personal reply to your letter, however, I would like to remind you that your dismissal was prompted by the manner in which you recounted your involvement in the conferral of citizenship to Bert Brecht, namely, how intemperately and injuriously you reacted to the concrete questions asked by the members of the board of trustees. You had the courage, not only then, but also now, to acknowledge him after Bert Brecht chose East Berlin. The ramifications of such a commitment could obviously not remain confined to your life as a private citizen as long as you were a member of the board of directors, but also had to affect the reputation and assessment of the festival. Brecht's naturalization, for which you advocated intensively, was intended—as follows from your and Bert Brecht's statements—to prepare for his participation in the Salzburg Festival. How justified the trustees' decision was can also be seen in your subsequent inability to distance yourself from your interest in Bert Brecht's naturalization. It was all the more necessary that a distance be placed between the Salzburg Festival and your person. As a result, you have gained the freedom to champion your opinions as a private citizen, without having to take the festival into account.^[24]

As Stephen Gallup notes in his *History of the Salzburg Festival*, 1951 was the height of the Cold War, and Austria was still an occupied country. While Vienna had been divided among the four Allied powers, Salzburg was under American control, the very same country whose McCarthyism had driven Brecht out a mere four years earlier. Additionally, negotiations for Austrian independence were stalled by the Russians, and a "visceral anti-Communism" was shared by most Austrians.^[25] Feeding into these concerns, the *Salzburger Nachrichten* raised suspicions of a secret communist agenda in the Salzburg Department of Culture and on the Festival Committee, calling for those responsible for Brecht's Salzburg residency to be ferreted out and summarily dismissed.^[26] The witch-hunt soon narrowed its focus to one person: Gottfried von Einem.^[27] As an artist, Einem lacked the political constituency protecting the politicians involved in the affair. Moreover, tensions were high between Einem and Klaus over the future of the Salzburg Festival, with Einem attempting to steer its programming in a more progressive direction and Klaus fearing conservative backlash. The friction came to a head with the controversial performance of *Wozzeck* at the 1951 festival: its *Sprechgesang*, atonality, and explicit subject material incensed patrons, and only forty per cent of the tickets were sold.^[28] Klaus's political standing was closely tied to the festival, and between the financial disaster of *Wozzeck* and the damage done to Salzburg's image by the Brecht scandal, he had to shift the spotlight from himself onto another. Einem proved a ready scapegoat.^[29]



Figure 4: Opening ceremony of the Salzburg Festival, Salzburg Residenz, Carabinierisaal; Josef Klaus, Theodor Körner, and Franz Peyerl walk up to the honorary banquet (photograph, July 26, 1953); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#)

Einem fought hard for his reinstatement to the board of directors,^[30] but despite the letters he wrote to various officials, the signatures of influential colleagues in protest of his removal, and the strong support of figures including Furtwängler, who threatened to step down from his post as musical director of the festival, and Blacher, who actually stepped down from his teaching post at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Einem's dismissal remained final. However, in an attempt to smooth over the uproar (on both sides), the directorship offered Einem the premiere of *Der Prozeß* at the 1953 festival. As seen in a letter to Einem dated December 18, 1951, the premiere was to be Einem's opportunity for rehabilitation:

So I spoke at length with Klaus on Friday. The summary of my one-and-a-half hour meeting is: Klaus would like to receive a letter from you in which you request a consultation on the whole problem in a peaceful atmosphere. He is definitely willing to do his utmost, possibly also in the press, to clear up the wrong impression that has arisen in regard to your person. He is also willing to speak with Brenner^[31] to sort out the matter there. He is willing to do everything in order to ensure the premiere of *Prozeß* at the 1953 Festival.^[32]

Though Einem was not reinstated to the board of directors, a wound from which he (reportedly) never recovered,^[33] the success of his opera at its premiere and its subsequent performances worldwide rehabilitated his image in the eyes of the public. Though the premiere garnered negative reviews from Hans Keller, Claude Rostand, and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, both Rostand and Stuckenschmidt acknowledged Einem's talent, while other critics praised the opera wholeheartedly: Willy Reich declared it to be "one of the most important musical stage works" ("eines der bedeutendsten musikalischen Bühnenerwerke") of the time and Hilde Spiel described it as leaving "the most lasting impression of this Salzburg season alongside *Così fan tutte*" ("den nachhaltigsten Eindruck dieser Salzburger Saison neben *Così fan tutte*").^[34] After its premiere in Salzburg and subsequent performance in Vienna, *Der Prozeß* traveled the globe, receiving approbation from audiences at the Berlin State Opera, Mannheim National Theater, Bern Theatre, and New York City Opera in the same year, at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples and Karamu Theater in Cleveland in 1954, more than twenty radio broadcasts, beginning with the Hessischen Rundfunk's 1956 transmission, and a performance televised by Austrian networks in 1960 for the *Wiener Festwochen* (Vienna Festival).^[35] With *Der Prozeß*, Einem found a way back from his trial.

And what of Brecht during Einem's ordeal? His only communiqué was a single letter, written October 18, 1951, in which he apologized for Einem's difficulties, expressed outrage that he should be so maligned for helping a stateless fellow artist, and offered to send fragments of *Totentanz*:

Dear von Einem,

Cas tells me, and I'm sorry to say I see it in the papers as well, that you've got into trouble over your helpfulness to me. Do write at once and tell me if you need any sort of statement or letter from me. Should I send you a few pages of the "Salzburger Totentanz," the synopsis is finished? I don't see how they can find fault with you as an artist for helping a fellow artist—why, I had no papers whatever at the time.^[36]

Did Brecht always intend to use the empty promise of *Salzburger Totentanz* as a stepping stone to East German citizenship, leaving a play-less Einem stranded in Salzburg to pick up the pieces of his shattered reputation? From an outraged Austrian perspective, the answer was resoundingly "Yes." However, Einem himself did not see it this way: he writes of Brecht's motives, "It was not true that he had toyed with the idea of moving to East Berlin and thereby the DDR from the outset,"^[37] and even suggests that if his application for citizenship had gone more smoothly, perhaps Brecht would have been more inclined to remain in Salzburg.^[38] Likewise, his response to Brecht's letter was congenial, thanking him for his concern without any trace of hostility. Whether through naïveté, idealism, or a simple refusal to admit he might have been deceived, Einem's support of Brecht remained steadfast, surviving even Brecht's death. Indeed, Einem continued to set Brecht's texts in later compositions, which included *Das Stundenlied*, op. 26, for mixed choir and orchestra (premiered 1959), the second and third songs in *Von der Liebe*, op. 30, a "lyrical fantasy" for high voice and orchestra (premiered 1961), and the fourth movement of *An die Nachgeborenen*, op. 42, a cantata for mezzosoprano, baritone, choir, and orchestra (premiered

1975). He even dedicated the second song of *Japanische Blätter*, op. 15 (premiered 1951), to Brecht and wrote a “portrait” of Brecht for piano, the fourth movement of *Sieben Portraits*, op. 109 (premiered 1998).

A Brechtian Opera in Einem’s Archive?

Einem and Brecht’s tale of collaboration and repudiation likewise unfolds in the archival documents pertaining to the adaptation of *Der Prozeß* from Kafka’s novel. In pages of brainstorming from 1948 for an unnamed opera, written correspondence between Brecht and Einem from 1949, and marginalia recording Brecht’s critiques found in the second libretto draft written from 1949 to 1950, the earliest stages of *Der Prozeß*’s conception are dotted with traces of Brecht’s influence that vanish from the final version, completed in 1952.

The first indication of a potentially Brechtian bent to Einem’s ideas for the new opera that would eventually become *Der Prozeß* can be found in a mysterious set of four pages dating from 1948,^[39] the year Brecht began his involvement with the Salzburg Festival. Entitled “Oper,” they seem to be ideas handwritten by Einem for an opera incorporating texts by Kafka and elements of Brechtian epic theater. The first page presents a scene taking place in a court of law, with the note “See Kafka: ‘Die Abweisung’” (“Siehe Kafka: ‘Die Abweisung’”) though none of the stage directions come directly from the Kafka short story; instead, Einem describes an angry mob launching accusations at and demanding human rights from a giant judge made of papier-mâché, who stands silently at his pulpit while the masses shout at him through a megaphone. Einem noted in the margin, “No cheap socialism. ‘That’ is the ‘History.’ [So goes Roosevelt-Churchill as Stalin!]” (“Keine billige sozialisterei. ‘Jener’ ist die ‘Geschichte.’ [So geht Roosevelt-Churchill als Stalin!]”). At the bottom of the page are notes for its musical form, which includes a soloist, choir, ensemble, dance, dance with choir, dance with choir and soloist, and a solo for the judge. On the back of the page, Einem noted other Kafka texts to be included, beginning with the final sentence of the short story “The Knock at the Manor Gate” (“Der Schlag ans Hoftor”), “Could I still sense any other air than that of a prison? That is the great question—or rather, it would be the question if I had any prospect of being released”^[40] and followed by “The Helmsman (p. 119)” and “At Night (p. 118)” (“Dann ‘Steuermann,’ [s. 119], “Dann ‘Nachts’ [s. 118]”). Under a line grouping these three texts together, Einem wrote “*Investigations of a Dog*: p. 235+6 for Puthon” (“Forschungen eines Hundes: s. 235+6 für Puthon”),^[41] then drew another line under which he wrote “Mayakovsky for the text use [together?] with Kafka!!!” (“Majakowsky für den Text zus. mit Kafka verwenden!!!”).^[42] The remaining three pages appear to be a draft for a play involving a composer, poet, conductor, choreographer, critic, and censor that breaks the fourth wall, addressing the audience as the actors draw attention to the play developing onstage through a series of scenes Einem calls “prologs” (one of which has Karajan and Furtwängler dancing across the stage after the characters crown themselves kings of the “prolog”), ending abruptly with the statement “Theater is unreal. Neither the audience” (“Theater ist unreal. Weder Publikum”) followed by a final *pas de quatre*.



Figure 5: Gottfried von Einem in the context of *Der Prozeß* (photograph by Yoichi R. Okamoto, 1954); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#)

Despite extensive searching on my part, I have not found any extant work (by Einem, Brecht, or anyone else) that includes the “prologs” imagined in these three pages. In the six years I have spent studying Einem’s early operas, this is the only document I have discovered that appears to be created ex-nihilo. Generally, Einem draws from existing material rather than creating his own (e.g. *Dantons Tod* after Büchner’s play, *Der Prozeß* after Kafka’s novel, *Der Zerrissene* after Nestroy’s play, *Der Besuch der alten Dame* after Dürrenmatt’s play, *Kabale und Liebe* after

Schiller's play). Even when he decides to substitute passages from the original, his substitution is either a pre-existing text or a commission from another author (for example, Ernst Roth and Carl Merz in *Der Zerrissene*). Indeed, the first page of ideas for his Kafka opera is just this: a list of short stories by Kafka that might be pieced together and interspersed with texts by Mayakovsky. This leads me to surmise that the other three pages might have been written collaboratively rather than by Einem himself.

Though determining the provenance of these pages is outside the scope of this article (and perhaps outside even the realm of possibility), I will briefly put forth a hypothesis better verified by a Brecht scholar than an Einem scholar such as myself. These pages seem to incorporate elements of Brechtian epic theater: in particular, certain *Verfremdung* effects Brecht outlined upon seeing a performance by the Chinese actor Mei Lan-fang in 1935.^[43] In his essay, "Verfremdung Effects in Chinese Acting," Brecht defines *Verfremdung* (translated variously as alienation, estrangement, distancing; due to the lack of consensus among translators, I maintain the original German term) as acting in such a way that "the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious."^[44] The events occurring onstage were meant to appear strange to the audience, which the actor achieved by the following techniques: breaking the fourth wall by "express[ing] that he knows he is being watched,"^[45] "observ[ing] himself" acting,^[46] "distancing himself from the character portrayed,"^[47] and "reject[ing] complete transformation" by "simply quoting the character played."^[48] In this way, the spectator is to be prevented from identifying with the character onstage because the actor himself does not identify with the character he portrays. Rather, through *Verfremdung*, the audience and actor are given the same task: that of critical observation. Brecht argues that "the actress must not make the sentence her own affair, she must hand it over for criticism, she must make it possible to understand its causes and to protest;" this allows her to "highlight the historical aspect of a social condition."^[49]

The pages found in Einem's archive contain each of these effects. The manuscript for a series of "prologs" includes the breaking of the fourth wall as the actors address the audience, the play beginning with dialogue telling the audience that the actors will be portraying them that evening. The play itself appears to be the enactment of a concert that draws attention to the musical performance as performance, with the actors playing the characters of composer, poet, conductor, choreographer, critic, and censor. In fact, the stage directions and dialogue in these three pages echo the tips for actors Brecht includes in the "Notes to *Threepenny Opera*." In *Brecht at the Opera*, Joy H. Calico argues that "aspects of Brecht's performance practice mark a return to [the baroque opera seria] aesthetic of staging and acting, as [Kim] Kowalke notes: 'The singer was expected to bow to the spectators in loges, smile at the orchestra and the other players, walk about the stage, complain to his friends that he was not in voice.'"^[50] Similarly, Calico observes, "Brecht wrote that a performer getting ready to deliver a song is helped 'if he is allowed to make visual preparation for it (by straightening a chair perhaps or making himself up, etc.).'"^[51] Though its handwritten form renders many words illegible, it seems the actors in Einem's manuscript are likewise to enact characters in the middle of their concert preparations, looking at their reflections in the mirror, asking for the proper music, and costuming themselves. In each of these actions, the actors make the gestures that belong to the process of readying oneself for a concert, and, as Astrid Oesmann discusses in her essay on Brecht's encounter with Mei Lan-fan, the gesture is at the core of the *Verfremdung* effect. Oesmann argues that as "a repeatable position or movement of the human body," the gesture can be cited and displaced in

order to reveal its socio-cultural embeddedness.^[52] Basic physical gestures, such as “standing, walking, sitting, eating, or drinking” can be foregrounded to expose the fact that they “vary not just from society to society or culture to culture but also from class to class ... Gesture is thus extremely revealing and can expose the most intimate matters to public view while signifying the complex fabric from which it emerges.”^[53]

Indeed, one of the lines included in the manuscript reads “theater reflection of life” (“Theater Spiegelbild des Lebens”). The play draws attention to the act of musical performance, turning the actors into performers playing performers and the audience into spectators playing spectators. The performance, rather than being taken for granted, is made strange as both actors and spectators are distanced from its usual mode of execution and absorption. This is one of the aspects Tom Kuhn sees in Brecht’s concept of *Verfremdung*: the idea that “amazement (*staunen*) at something strange may enable us to ‘see through’ it, the better to understand it.”^[54] Einem’s play makes the act of musical performance into something strange (Karajan and Furtwangler dancing across the stage perhaps the strangest moment of all), all the better for the audience to critique the social and cultural conditions of its production. Given both the date of the manuscript’s creation and the epic-theatrical elements it incorporates, I posit that Einem’s collaborator might have been Brecht. Moreover, in a short reflection on his work with both Brecht and Dürrenmatt, Einem mentions that he intended to work on an opera with Brecht in “the summer of 1948—or was it ‘49?,” the plot of which he had since forgotten.^[55] Calico’s introduction to *Brecht at the Opera* corroborates Einem’s recollection, noting that Brecht and Einem had planned an opera for 1948–49 called *Von den Freuden und Leiden der größeren und kleineren Seeräuber* (Of the joys and sorrows of the larger and smaller pirates).^[56] Without additional context, it is impossible to verify this hypothesis; these four pages must remain, for the time being, a tantalizing mystery of the archive that hint at a Brecht-Einem collaboration in the earliest stage of the Kafka opera that was to become *Der Prozeß*.

Einem and Brecht on *Der Prozeß*

One year later, Brecht’s interventions into the beginning drafts of *Der Prozeß* become explicit. In 1949, Einem had worked with Blacher to create a six-part libretto from Kafka’s text, which he expanded in 1950 with the help of Blacher’s student, Heinz von Cramer.^[57] In a letter dated April 1949, Brecht responds to Einem’s request for feedback on Einem and Blacher’s libretto: “About *The Trial*: I’m just glad I was able to get my little ideas in (after being so annoyed at the Gide adaptation in Paris).”^[58] When Einem visited Brecht in Zürich,^[59] he remembers Brecht returning the manuscript to him, heavily edited and severely alienated in a way that Einem found antithetical to his own reading (“Es war alles sehr merkwürdig verändert, stark verfremdet. Ich hätte das Stück so nie komponiert.”).^[60] Though Brecht found their adaptation very skillful and excellent from a dramaturgic standpoint (“sehr geschickt, dramaturgisch exzellent gemacht”),^[61] he critiqued its overly Christian themes (“wir würden da offensichtlich eine christliche Maxime herauslesen”)^[62] and suggested they find a different angle; namely, by setting the work in Sing Sing, not as it might have looked in their time, but as it might have been rendered in Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s *Vedute di Roma* (“nicht so, wie es heute vielleicht ausschaut, sondern gebrochen durch die Sicht in den Veduten des Giovanni Battista Piranesi”).^[63] He offered no comments on possible musical renderings.^[64] Brecht’s suggestion that the work be set in Sing Sing actually finds its way into the second draft of the libretto, his note transcribed by Einem at

the end of the final scene:

Relocate the entire cathedral scene to a giant prison. A steel staircase on which the cleric climbs up and down, slopes down toward K., at times used as a pulpit. In the background the prison maquette. The entire thing is a huge, reinforced concrete prison [illegible]. (Brecht).^[65]

In this same libretto, another of Brecht's commentaries appears in the fourth scene, "First Hearing: Show the stages of the search for the court in short scenes. By making the case his own, he makes himself guilty (Brecht)" ("Erste Untersuchung: Die Stationen der Suche nach dem Gericht in kurzen Szenen zeigen. Dadurch dass er die Rechtssache zu seiner eigenen macht, macht er sich schuldig [Brecht]"). Next to his annotation, Einem writes "No!" ("Nein!"). Nor does he choose to set the cathedral scene in a prison; he found these choices too alienating and explicitly warns Oskar Fritz Schuh, the director, against an epic-theatrical staging:

I advise you not to yield to Caspar's hobbyhorse of Brechtian provenance from the epic theater. It is wrong. We must bring a humanistic, completely concrete denominator, then we have won. Warmth versus V-effect. Understand me correctly. Not sentimentality, but rather Eros, your name, and above all dramatic authenticity.^[66]

Einem's repudiation of Brechtian elements in the final version of *Der Prozeß* is unsurprising: a project begun in the halcyon days of Einem and Brecht's collaboration at Salzburg, the opera became Einem's chance to erase the streak of red staining his reputation only by distancing himself from Brecht and Brechtian ideology. Indeed, his detractors would have found fodder for the accusations of communism they launched at Einem not only in Brecht's commentary, but in the second draft of his *Prozeß* libretto. On the very first page, Einem compiled a list of works on Marxism, which reads:

Engels: Von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft,
Antifeuerbach,
Grabrede auf Marx,
Plekhanov: Marx,
Marx: Das Elend der Philosophie,
Lenin: Staat als Revolution, Der Marxartikel,
Mahering: Lessing Legende^[67]

Einem does not provide any context for this list, so it is impossible to say whether it was created by him or suggested by someone else (Brecht?), whether he intended these works as an intellectual framework for the opera, or whether their appearance in the libretto is pure coincidence (a handy scrap of paper to jot down a reading list?); however, the pinkish hue with which they tinge Einem's reputation would make it all the more critical that Einem renounce any hint of leftist leanings in the final stage of *Der Prozeß*. Einem strategically renounces the *Verfremdung* effect, a choice which both divests himself and his opera of any association with Brecht, and allows him to reconnect with his public, rather than distance himself from them. Einem clearly saw his own trials mirrored in those of Josef K.—both his unjust treatment in the wake of the Brecht affair and his inexplicable arrest by the Gestapo a decade earlier, at least as

he perceived them. The *Verfremdung* effect, however, demands a critical eye: inviting the audience to judge K.'s, and by extension, Einem's, uncertain innocence brings the danger of condemnation alongside the possibility of exoneration. In leveraging *Der Prozeß* to recuperate his damaged reputation, Einem would hardly have wanted to leave any room for the condemnation of his doppelgänger. Instead, Einem attempts to draw the audience into K.'s world, where they view the trial through his eyes rather than as a jury judging the trial at a remove.

A New Source for Brecht's Kafka Interpretation

Despite Einem's decision to excise Brecht's reading of Kafka from the final opera, his archive preserves the evidence of their collaboration, a collaboration that not only reveals Einem's role in Brecht's successful establishment in East Berlin, but also provides a new source for Brecht's reading of Kafka outside of his conversations with Walter Benjamin, who visited him in Svendborg in 1934. According to Benjamin, Brecht saw Kafka as a failure despite his earlier praise of Kafka as "the only genuine Bolshevik writer;"^[68] neither entirely a visionary nor entirely a reflective man, "as a visionary, Brecht says, Kafka saw what was to come without seeing what it was."^[69] When discussion turned to Benjamin's recently-completed Kafka essay, on which he was eager to receive Brecht's feedback, Brecht accused Benjamin's essay of "advanc[ing] Jewish fascism" by "increas[ing] and propagat[ing] the obscurity surrounding this author instead of dispersing it."^[70] Rather than losing oneself in Kafka's depths, Brecht advocates for the formulation of "practicable proposals that can be derived from his stories"^[71] that are inextricable, like Kafka and his writings, from the social, political, and cultural contexts out of which they arise and in which they are employed.^[72]

Indeed, Brecht's suggestion that Einem ground Kafka in a real-world setting (that is, Sing Sing) and his distillation of Josef K.'s struggles to a single, accessible moral—that by taking on the law, Josef K. makes himself guilty—complement his conversations with Benjamin. In *Der Prozeß*, Brecht sees the fear of ever-expanding cities that express the "inexplicable mediations, dependencies, entanglements besetting men as a result of their present form of existence," the same struggles that create man's desire for someone "whom—in a world where blame can be passed from one person to the next so that everyone escapes it—he can hold accountable for all his misfortunes."^[73] Einem's opera gave Brecht the opportunity to stage his reading of Kafka in one of the monstrosities of a real-life city—the overflowing prisons that crush the humanity out of their inhabitants—in a series of episodes that perform the search for blame and the flight from guilt. In recommending that Einem set a work centering around a broken legal system in a famous prison, Brecht's suggestions echo his earlier choice to place the courtroom in scene 14 of *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* (Round heads and pointed heads; 1938) in a jail. As K. Scott Baker argues in "Brecht's Courtrooms," "the ironies of prisoners as prosecutors and a jail as a courtroom ... draw attention to the staging of a performance."^[74] In their performativity, the courtroom proceedings demonstrate the "inextricably ideological character of the legal system," which "compels working-class and socially-alienated audiences to question any position advocated by the ... attorney as a subjective interpretation of legal code in the interests of the ruling elites, and to sympathize with the plaintiff as an advocate for their own interests."^[75] Though never brought onstage, Brecht's reading of Kafka as a mirror that reflects the injustices of modernity leaves its indelible trace in the margins of Einem's early libretto.

Einem's Archive as Musico-Literary Lodestone

The tale of the “Brecht Affair” and the new light shed on Brecht’s engagement with Kafka as reconstructed through documents buried in the Einem archive is but one of the many avenues for interdisciplinary research this collection offers. Enticing insights into operatic adaptation of literary texts writ large, as well as the attitudes of specific authors, including those of Dürrenmatt and Lotte Ingrisch (1930–2022), the Austrian author and librettist who became Einem’s second wife, towards the modification (or perhaps, mutilation) of their works, and undiscovered literary criticism by theorists such as Brecht lie in wait for any scholar able to approach Einem’s archive from perspectives other than the musicological. Indeed, the example of Einem’s archive proffers the tantalizing possibility that there is much to be unearthed in other archives by the critically interdisciplinary eye.



Figure 6: Gottfried von Einem (photograph by Charlotte Till-Borchardt, January 25, 1957); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#)

References

1. Erhard Busek, Bruno Kreisky, and Alois Mock, to name a few. See [Thomas Leibnitz, "Lebenslauf," website of Gottfried von Einem Music-Foundation, sec. xiii](#). There are also passages praising Hitler in Einem's diary that date from 1937 to 1941, as well as a picture of Einem standing next to Hitler at the 1938 *Führergala* in Bayreuth. See Gottfried von Einem, *Ich hab' unendlich viel erlebt* (Vienna: Ibra & Molden, 1995), 59. ↑
2. Erik Levi, "Einem, Gottfried von," *Grove Music Online*, January 6, 1999, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O901433>. ↑
3. The term was introduced by Theodor Adorno, *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 231. ↑
4. Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich, "Altbackene Knusperoper," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 27, 1971. Quoted in [Thomas Leibnitz, "Biography," website of Gottfried von Einem Music-Foundation, sec. xiii](#). Original wording: "Wenn von Einems Musik nicht ganz so schön klingt wie die von Strauss oder Puccini, so dient gerade das dem Publikum als Nachweis, daß es sich um avancierte Tonkunst handeln könnte; andernfalls gäbe es beim Hören womöglich schlechtes Gewissen." ↑
5. [Leibnitz, "Biography," sec. xiii](#). Original wording: "Ich liebe eine schön gesungene Phrase, einen schön gespielten Streichersatz, warum soll man ein Orchester immer malträtiert, daß die mit ihren Bögen auf dem Boden oder in einem gefüllten oder leeren Klosett scharren?" [Leibnitz, "Lebenslauf," sec. xiii](#). ↑
6. Paul M. Malone, "'Mit dem Prozeß beginnt die Musik': Gottfried von Einem's 1953 Operatic Adaptation of Franz Kafka's *Der Prozeß*," *seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 41, no. 4 (2005): 424. ↑
7. Bruce Cook, *Brecht in Exile* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), provides the details of Brecht's FBI file and his questioning before the HUAC. See [U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry, 80th congress, 1st session, October 30, 1947](#) (Washington: U.S. Government printing office, 1947), 491-504. ↑
8. Stephen Gallup, *A History of the Salzburg Festival* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 145. ↑
9. Thomas Eickhoff, "Keuner und Karajan im 'Kalten Krieg': Die Versuche des Komponisten Gottfried von Einem, Bertolt Brecht für die Salzburger Festspiele zu gewinnen," *Monatshefte* 90, no. 3 (1998): 319. ↑
10. It is unlikely Vienna would have been the ideal arena for Brecht to pursue his progressive theatrical goals. One of his closest musical collaborators at the time, Hanns Eisler, had also been forced out of the United States by the HUAC. Though he intended to stay in Vienna, he faced conservative opposition to his professorship, settling instead in East Berlin at the beginning of 1950, two months after Brecht. On Eisler's exile and emigration, see Albrecht Betz, *Hans Eisler: Political Musician*, trans. Bill Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). ↑
11. Further context on Brecht's exile from Germany and return to Europe can be found in Johannes F. Evelein, "Brecht and Exile," in *Bertolt Brecht in Context*, ed. Stephen Brockmann, Literature in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Stephen Parker, *Bertolt Brecht: A Literary Life* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014); and Cook, *Brecht in Exile*. ↑
12. Joachim Lucchesi, "Brecht and Music: The Fly in the Amber," in Brockmann, *Brecht in Context*, 49; Joachim Lucchesi, "Bertolt Brecht und die Musik," in *Handbuch Literatur und Musik*, ed. Nicola Gess and Alexander Honold, Handbücher zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Philologie 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 482; Vera Stegmann, "Brecht's Work with Musical Composers," in Brockmann, *Brecht in Context*, 192; and Cook, *Brecht in Exile*. ↑
13. Gallup, *Salzburg Festival*, 144-49 and Stephen Parker, "Hydratopyranthropos Surveys the Wreckage," in

Bertolt Brecht: A Literary Life (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 503–30. ↑

14. Günther Berger, *Bertolt Brecht in Wien* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 135–48. ↑
15. Brecht's wife, Helene Weigel (1900–71), actress and theater director. ↑
16. Bertolt Brecht, "Letter No. 597," in *Bertolt Brecht Letters*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Routledge, 1990), 473–74. Original wording: "Lieber von Einem, ich sitze hier mit Cas [Caspar Neher] und wir haben über das Festspiel gesprochen, und es sieht so aus, als ob das ginge. Ich weiss jetzt auch ein Äquivalent, mehr für mich wert als Vorschuss irgendwelcher Art; das wäre ein Asyl, also ein Pass. Wenn das überhaupt möglich wäre, so sollte es natürlich ohne jede Publizität gemacht werden. Und vielleicht wäre ein Weg wie der folgende der beste: Helli ist ja gebürtige Österreicherin (Wienerin) und wie ich seit 1933 staatenlos und jetzt existiert keine deutsche Regierung. Könnte sie wieder einen Österreichischen Pass bekommen? Und könnte dann ich, einfach als ihr Mann, einen bekommen? Sie verstehen, ich kenne nicht den legalen Weg. Jedoch wäre für mich tatsächlich ein Pass von enormer Wichtigkeit. Ich kann mich ja nicht an eigendeinen Teil Deutschlands setzen und damit für den andern Teil tot sein. Vielleicht können Sie mir da *wirklich* (Cas) [Neher's emphasis] helfen? Herzlich[,] Ihr Brecht." Bertolt Brecht to Gottfried von Einem, undated, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Bertolt Brecht 5. Also found as "Letter No. 591" in Bertolt Brecht, *Briefe 1913–1956* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 1:566–67. ↑
17. Hans Curjel (1896–1974), Swiss theater director. ↑
18. It is unclear what Brecht means by this. I assume the "everything else" relates to plans for *Totentanz*, in which case Brecht might be suggesting Einem find a news article to incorporate into the play; however, given the lack of context and the absence of any "news item" from the fragments of the play I have examined, I am unable to provide a definitive explanation. ↑
19. Brecht, "Letter No. 599," Manheim, *Bertolt Brecht Letters*, 474–75. Original wording: "Lieber von Einem, eben war Curjel da und ich beeilte mich, die beiden Schreiben zu verfassen. Geburtsbescheinigung und Ausbürgerungsbeweiss lege ich bei, geheiratet haben wir in Berlin und da gibt es keine Belege für Trauscheine mehr, die betreffenden Ämter in Charlottenburg sind zerstört. – Ich komme nun so schnell wie möglich, fahre sogleich (ohne München) über Salzburg, Prag. Eben reisen wir an bei den Österreichern und erfuhren, dass Staatenlose keinen Aufenthalt in Österreich mehr bekommen, auch nicht mehr die 2 Tag des Vorjahres. Ich könnte also gar nicht aussteigen wenn Sie nicht einen Ausweg fänden. Das Datum meines Kommens teile ich Ihnen telegrafisch mit, ich fahre mit meiner Tochter Barbara; muss aber erst das tschechische und russische Visum (für die Ostzone) in den Pass bekommen: sie liegen angeblich vor. So kann ich nicht einfach lossegeln, denn ich habe auch nur Erlaubnis für eine einzige Rückreise nach der Schweiz. Ich beeile mich aber sehr, wegen Salzburg, und weil ich ja nach Berlin muss. Bitte, teilen Sie mir mit, ob ich in der Frage des Aufenthalts bei [sic] Durchreise was tun kann (Sie sagen hier, Ansuchen werden nicht vor 6 Wochen erledigt und dann negativ). Alles andere können wir in Salzburg mündlich durchgehen, falls das klappt. Sonst schreibe ich Ihnen darüber. (Sehen Sie sich doch auch um nach einer Zeitungsnotiz die Ihnen gefiele, dann könnte ich Ihnen bei der Stilisierung behilflich sein). Herzlich und mit wirklichem Dank, Ihr Brecht." Bertolt Brecht to Gottfried von Einem, undated, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Bertolt Brecht 7. Also found as "Letter No. 599" in Brecht, *Briefe 1913–1956*, 574. ↑
20. Brecht, "Letter No. 600," Manheim, *Bertolt Brecht Letters*, 475–76. Original wording: "Die literarischen Dinge würde ich gern mündlich besprechen. Ich habe keinen Chortext vorliegen, am besten Sie suchten sich eine Ihnen gefallende Zeitungsnotiz aus und ich hülfe Ihnen beim Neuformulieren! Werde aber auch selber nach sowas suchen. Ein Festspielexpose (Salzburger Totentanz) möchte ich lieber nicht schriftlich einreichen, aus mannigfachsten Gründen." Bertolt Brecht to Gottfried von Einem, May 1949, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Bertolt Brecht 8. Unless indicated otherwise, translations are my own. ↑
21. Joachim Reiber, *Gottfried von Einem: Komponist der Stunde null* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 2017), 69.

↑

22. Original wording: “Sie wissen auch, dass dieser Beschluss im Zusammenhang mit dem Tagesordnungspunkt ‘Staatsbürgerschaftsangelegenheit Bert Brecht’ zustande kam. Dieser Zusammenhang wurde im Protokoll absichtlich nicht erwähnt, weil ein anwesendes Direktoriumsmitglied sich dagegen ausgesprochen hatte, Ihre Enthebung mit der Angelegenheit Bert Brecht zu verbinden und weil sich dieser Meinung auch die Kuratoriumsmitglieder anschlossen. Das Kuratorium hat somit offiziell seiner Begründung nichts hinzuzufügen.“ Josef Klaus to Gottfried von Einem, November 28, 1951, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Causa Brecht, Josef Klaus 1. ↑
23. Einem, *Unendlich viel erlebt*, 189. ↑
24. Original wording: “In meiner persönlichen Erwiderung auf Ihr Schreiben möchte ich Sie jedoch daran erinnern, dass Ihre Abberufung durch die Art und Weise, wie Sie über Ihre Mitwirkung bei der Staatsbürgerschaftsverleihung an Bert Brecht berichteten, bzw. wie unbeherrscht und verletzend Sie auf die gegenständlichen Fragen der Kuratoriumsmitglieder reagierten, veranlasst wurde. Sie haben den Mut gehabt, nicht nur damals, sondern auch jetzt, nachdem sich Bert Brecht für Ostberlin entschieden hatte, sich zu ihm zu bekennen. Ein solches Bekenntnis konnte selbstverständlich in seiner Auswirkung nicht auf Sie als Privatmann beschränkt bleiben, solange Sie Direktoriumsmitglied waren, sondern musste auch Ansehen und Einschätzung der Festspiele berühren. Brechts Einbürgerung, für die Sie sich intensiv einsetzten, sollte—wie aus Ihren und Bert Brechts Äußerungen hervorgeht—seine Mitwirkung an den Salzburger Festspielen vorbereiten. Wie begründet der Beschluss des Kuratoriums war, geht auch daraus hervor, dass Sie sich nachträglich nicht von Ihrer Interessenahme für die Einbürgerung Bert Brechts distanzieren konnten. Umso notwendiger war, dass eine Distanzierung zwischen den Salzburger Festspielen und Ihrer Person erfolgte. Dadurch haben Sie die Freiheit gewonnen, als Privatmann Ihre Ansichten zu vertreten, ohne auf die Festspiele Rücksicht nehmen zu müssen.“ Josef Klaus to Gottfried von Einem, November 28, 1951, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Causa Brecht, Josef Klaus 1. ↑
25. Gallup, *Salzburg Festival*, 144. ↑
26. *Salzburger Nachrichten*, [October 2, 1951](#) and [October 13, 1951](#). See Gallup, *Salzburg Festival*, 145. ↑
27. The *Salzburger Nachrichten*, dated [October 13, 1951](#), indicted Einem through a clever wordplay, writing, “Laßt uns drum gleich von einem reden (oder hätte unser Setzer hier ein großes ‘E’ nehmen sollen?),” that is “Let us talk about one now (or should our typesetter have used a capital ‘E’ here?),” implying the one responsible (“von einem”) was, in fact, von Einem. ↑
28. Gallup, *Salzburg Festival*, 142. ↑
29. For more on the clash of personalities involved in the festival, see Eickhoff, “Keuner und Karajan” and Gallup, *Salzburg Festival*, 148–49. ↑
30. Extensively documented in “Causa Brecht,” Einem-Archiv, WGM, Vienna. ↑
31. Given the lack of context, I have not been able to clarify Brenner’s identity. ↑
32. Original wording: “Ich habe also mit Klaus am Freitag lange gesprochen. Das Resume meiner eineinhalbstündigen Besprechung lautet: Klaus würde von Dir gerne einen Brief bekommen, wo Du um eine Rücksprache über das ganze Problem in friedlicher Atmosphäre ersuchtest. Er ist auf jeden Fall bereit alles zu tun, eventuell auch in der Presse, um den falschen Eindruck der bezüglich Deiner Person entstanden ist, aus der Welt zu schaffen. Er ist auch bereit mit Brenner zu sprechen, um die Angelegenheit dort in Ordnung zu bringen. Er ist bereit alles zu unternehmen, um die Uraufführung des ‘Prozesses’ bei den Festspielen 1953 sicherzustellen.”. Egon Seefehlner to Gottfried von Einem, December 18, 1951, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Causa Brecht, Kuratorium Salzburger Festspiele 2. ↑

33. Reiber, *Gottfried von Einem*, 72. [↑](#)
34. Friedrich Saathen, *Einem-Chronik: Dokumentation und Deutung* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1982), 189. [↑](#)
35. Konrad Lezak, *Das Operschaffen Gottfried von Einems*, Dissertationen der Universität Wien 210 (Vienna: VWGÖ, 1990); Saathen, *Einem-Chronik*; and Einem, *Unendlich viel erlebt*. [↑](#)
36. Brecht, "Letter No. 672," Manheim, *Bertolt Brecht Letters*, 505. Original wording: "Lieber von Einem, Cas sagt mir und aus den Zeitungen ersehe ich leider auch, dass Sie durch Ihre Hilfsbereitschaft mir gegenüber jetzt in Schwierigkeiten geraten sind. Schreiben Sie mir doch gleich, ob Sie irgendwelche Aussagen oder Briefe von mir benötigen. Soll ich Ihnen einige Seiten des 'Salzburger Totentanzes' schicken, dessen Konzeption fertig ist? Ich verstehe nicht, wie man Ihnen als Künstler übelnehmen kann, dass Sie einen anderen Künstler geholfen haben—ich hatte zu damals überhaupt keine Papiere!" Bertolt Brecht to Gottfried von Einem, October 18, 1951, Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, Briefe an Gottfried von Einem, Bertolt Brecht 18. Also found as "Letter No. 672" in Brecht, *Briefe 1913-1956*, 629. [↑](#)
37. Einem, *Unendlich viel erlebt*, 187. Original wording: "Es stimmt nicht, daß er von vornherein fix mit der Übersiedlung nach Ostberlin und damit in die DDR geliebäugelt hatte." [↑](#)
38. *Ibid.*, 189. Original wording: "Wer weiß, ob Brecht seine Meinung nicht geändert hätte, wenn die Sache mit seiner Bewerbung schneller und problemloser erledigt worden wäre, denn schließlich hatte er so einen sehr guten Einblick in den Salzburger Filz bekommen." [↑](#)
39. Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, op. 14 Libretti/6, September 23, 1948. [↑](#)
40. Franz Kafka, *Kafka's Selected Stories: New Translations, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, ed. and trans. Stanley Corngold, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 125. Original wording: "Könnte ich noch andere Luft schmecken als die des Gefängnisses? Das ist die große Frage, oder vielmehr, sie wäre es, wenn ich noch Aussicht auf Entlassung hätte." [↑](#)
41. Heinrich Freiherr von Puthon (1872-1961), president of the Salzburg Festival from 1926-38 and 1945-60. [↑](#)
42. Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), Russian and Soviet playwright. [↑](#)
43. Astrid Oesmann, "From Aesthetics to History: Brecht's Encounter with Mei Lanfang and Gestural Theater," *The Brecht Yearbook* 45 (2020): 116-30. [↑](#)
44. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. Marc Silberman, Tom Kuhn, and Steve Giles, 3rd. ed. (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 151. [↑](#)
45. *Ibid.*, 151. [↑](#)
46. *Ibid.*, 152. [↑](#)
47. *Ibid.*, 153. [↑](#)
48. *Ibid.* [↑](#)
49. *Ibid.*, 157-8. [↑](#)
50. Kim H. Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, Studies in Musicology 14 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979). Calico names Kowalke, along with Stephen Hinton, Christoph Nieder, and Mário Viera de Carvalho as scholars who have drawn parallels between Brecht's anti-music drama innovations and pre-Wagnerian opera. [↑](#)
51. Joy H. Calico, *Brecht at the Opera*, California Studies in 20th-Century Music 9 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 39. [↑](#)
52. Oesmann, "From Aesthetics to History," 119. [↑](#)

53. Ibid., 123. ↑
54. Tom Kuhn, "Brecht Reads Breugel: *Verfremdung*, Gestic Realism and the Second Phase of Brechtian Theory," *Monatshefte* 105, no. 1 (2013): 110. ↑
55. Gottfried von Einem, "Conversations with Brecht and Dürrenmatt," *Tempo* 104 (1973): 20-21. ↑
56. Calico, *Brecht at the Opera*, 12. ↑
57. After the first cuts were made to Kafka's novel, I do not see evidence of Blacher's further involvement in the creation of the libretto. All the marginalia are in Einem's hand, except for the interventions Cramer makes to the second draft of the libretto. These include cuts and minor edits, though Cramer did suggest two additional short stories by Kafka to be incorporated into the libretto ("Fürsprecher" and "Der Aufbruch"), which Einem chose to omit from the final version. Nor is there evidence of any correspondence between Blacher and Brecht regarding *Der Prozeß*, though both were living in Berlin at that time. In general, it seems Blacher took a hands-off approach to the libretti he created for Einem's operas. In a 1967 interview regarding *Dantons Tod*, for which he prepared the libretto, Blacher regards his libretti as scaffolding upon which Einem built: "In most cases, I only cut the libretto from a dramaturgical standpoint. As soon as the scaffolding was complete, Einem made some changes. These were more from a musical standpoint." Quoted in Stephan Mösch, *Der gebrauchte Text* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 80. Original wording: "In den meisten Fällen habe ich das Libretto nur nach dramaturgischen Gesichtspunkten zusammengestrichen. Sobald das Gerüst fertig war, hat Einem daran einige Änderungen vorgenommen. Diese mehr nach musikalischen Gesichtspunkten." ↑
58. Brecht, "Letter No. 598," Manheim, *Bertolt Brecht Letters*, 474. Original wording: "Zum 'Prozeß': ich freue mich einfach, dass ich meine Werke anbringen konnte (nachdem ich mich über die Gide-Bearbeitung in Paris geärgert hatte)." Bertolt Brecht an Gottfried von Einem, undated, Einem-Archiv, WGM, Vienna. ↑
59. In his autobiography, Einem remembers this encounter taking place around 1951-52, but given the many discrepancies between the book's dates and those found on letters in the archive, this is not necessarily a reliable timeline. The letter referencing a forthcoming discussion is dated 1949, and by 1951-52, Brecht was already in East Germany; plus, the libretto was already in its final form in 1951. It is therefore more likely that the discussion took place around 1949, when the opera was still in its early stages. ↑
60. Einem, *Unendlich viel erlebt*, 197. ↑
61. Ibid., 197. ↑
62. Ibid. ↑
63. Ibid., 204. ↑
64. Because Brecht focused on the staging of Einem's opera, rather than its musical setting, I have chosen not to discuss his conception of "epic opera" or the relationship between opera and Brecht's music theater. However, a sampling of such discussions can be found in: Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Calico, *Brecht at the Opera*; Vera Stegmann, "Brecht contra Wagner: The Evolution of the Epic Music Theater," in *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, ed. Siegfried Mews (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 238-60; Christoph Nieder, "Bertolt Brecht und die Oper: Zur Verwandtschaft von epischem Theater und Musiktheater," *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 111, no. 3 (1992): 262-83; Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*. ↑
65. Original wording: "Die ganze Domszene in ein riesiges Gefängnis verlegen. Eine Stahltreppe auf der der Geistliche herauf und hinunter steigt, sich zu K. hinunter neigt, bald sie als Kanzel verwendet. Im Hintergrund die Gefängnis Maquette. Das ganze ist ein riesiges Stahlbeton Gefängnis [illegible]. (Brecht)." Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, op. 14 Libretti/1, September 27, 1949 to September 1950. ↑

66. Original wording: "Ich rate Dir, nicht auf Caspars Steckenpferd Brechtscher Provenienz vom epischen Theater einzugehen. Es stimmt nicht. Wir müssen einen humanistischen, völlig konkreten Nenner bringen, dann haben wir gesiegt. Wärme gegen V-Effekt. Verstehe mich recht. Nicht Rührseligkeit, wohl aber Eros, Dein Name und vor allem dramatische Wahrhaftigkeit." Einem, *Unendlich viel erlebt*, 204. ↑
67. Archiv der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, NL Gottfried von Einem, op. 14 Libretti/1, September 27, 1949 to September 1950. ↑
68. Quoted in Marcus Bullock, "Franz Kafka: The Politics of Disappointment in a Poetics of Patience (Benjamin—Brecht—Kafka)," *Journal of the Kafka Society of America* 16, no. 1 (1992): 25. ↑
69. Walter Benjamin, "Conversations with Brecht," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 205. ↑
70. *Ibid.*, 208. ↑
71. *Ibid.* ↑
72. Discussions of Benjamin and Brecht's conflicting readings of Kafka generally highlight Benjamin's mysticism and Brecht's pragmatism. See Freddie Rokem, "Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht Discuss Franz Kafka: Exilic Journeys," in *Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 118–37; Sean Carney, "Kafka's Gestus," in *Brecht and Critical Theory: Dialectics and Contemporary Aesthetics*, Routledge Advances in Theatre and Performance Studies 2 (New York: Routledge, 2005), 62–66; Patricia Anne Simpson, "In Citing Violence: Gestus in Benjamin, Brecht, and Kafka," in *Jewish Writers, German Literature: The Uneasy Examples of Nelly Sachs and Walter Benjamin*, ed. Timothy Bahti and Marilyn Sibley Fries (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 175–203; and Bullock, "Politics of Disappointment." ↑
73. Benjamin, "Conversations with Brecht," 208–9. ↑
74. K. Scott Baker, "Brecht's Courtrooms and the Epic Theater," *The Brecht Yearbook* 37 (2012): 13. ↑
75. *Ibid.*, 10. ↑

Cover picture: Gottfried von Einem in the context of *Der Prozeß* (photograph by Yoichi R. Okamoto, 1954); by courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, [Bildarchiv Austria](#).