

1. Origin and Career

As far as can be deduced from available autobiographical sources, Peter Winter was born in Gommern near Magdeburg on 14 August 1940.² As far as his age was concerned, Peter Winter has always made a secret of it or - to be more precise - often embellished it by giving more recent dates (for example 1941). In a 1995 SPIEGEL report he was even presented as a 39-year-old. The picture published at the time may have been a good match, but if you did the arithmetic he would have been born in 1956.³

Similarly "mysterious" was his full name. This was: Peter-Heinz A. Winter, whereby the "A." stood for Albert.⁴ The confirmation can still be found today on Facebook, because Peter Winter had an entry there that could still be viewed when the manuscript of this book was written.⁵ The fact that this is really "our" Peter Winter is documented by the photo shown on this Facebook page.



DR. WINTER KURT-SCHUMACHER-ALLEE 11 28329 BREMEN
THEATER-WISSENSCHAFTLER - OPERNSÄNGER

Nothing is known about his youth, or about his schooling and studies. However, he must have completed his "Abitur", studied and probably also earned a doctorate, because in later years he was introduced as Dr. Peter Winter by various parties, not least by the

British Library in 1988. In a short biography he wrote for Hajo Schwanke, he introduced himself as "Dr. Peter Winter, theatre scholar and opera singer". And on his Facebook page he wrote that he received his education at the University of Leipzig.

In his autobiographical notes he only mentions that he studied singing in the GDR. All the more amazing is a website that shows Peter Winter in a completely different light, for there it says:

"In the 1980s, Winter's dissertation was part of an interdisciplinary project that sought to develop philosophically differentiated views of the 'collecting behaviour of people'. Within the framework of this project, Winter was concerned with the study of the 'philosophical background and specifics' of all branches and characteristics of the 'human possessive and collecting instinct' and produced within this project for study purposes various new so-called rarities from the most diverse areas of collecting."⁶

The author considers the entry on this website - at least until proven otherwise - to be a "fake", especially as the further explanations of Winter's philatelic work in both word choice and content betray the "master" himself. It remains to be seen whether Winter himself made the entry (technically, he could be trusted to do so) or a third party who knew his texts or even took them over. However, the fact that Winter is said to have completed his doctorate in the 1980s does not seem plausible in view of the diversity of his other engagements. He was already based in Bremen at that time.

2 The date is found in the book "Schwanengesang" in the part without pagination and in the Epicurean Caribbean Reflections, p. 43

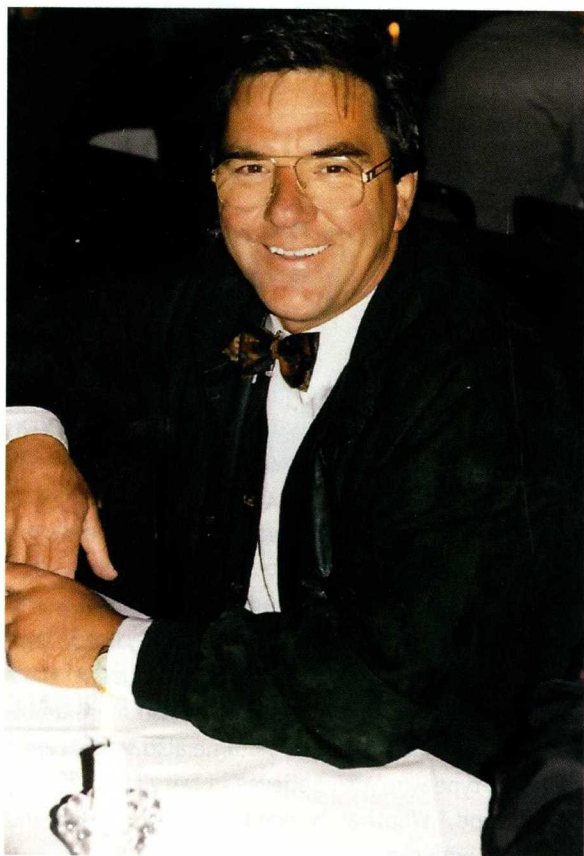
3 DER SPIEGEL, No. 22/1995, page 136: "Karte aus der Kälte"

4 The first reference to this full name was received by the author from Carsten Benende by email on 15 May 2020.

5 See: <https://de-de.facebook.com/peterheinzalbert.winter> (retrieval: 15.5.2020)

6 Source: <https://deacademic.com/dic.nsf/dewiki/1097691> (retrieval: 9.5.2020)

One may assume that he actually received vocal training in Leipzig, for example at the Mendelssohn Academy of Music, especially as he was later in great demand as a tenor and, as can still be shown, he travelled all over the world.



Peter Winter 1999. Original: Leonard Hartmann, USA

At the age of 24 he made an attempt to leave the GDR and put the Ulbricht regime behind him. For this he had printed papers for himself with which he intended to cross the customs border. But he was found out and years later commented on this with the words: "Although the quality was good, I did 30 months."⁷

About himself he said that he already had a desire to become an actor at the age of 17. He even took part in a talent competition with a monologue from Schiller's "Räuber", but failed with kettledrums and trum-

pets. With beautiful sarcasm, the actor Charles Regnier of the time attested to his "absolute freedom of talent and the complete absence of even the slightest theatrical glimmer".⁸

Around 1967, when he had finished his prison sentence, others became aware of him when they heard him sing. Winter had always had a preference for opera but had never seriously considered developing his existing talent or perhaps even going on stage as a singer. A year later he applied to the "Musikhochschule" (probably in Leipzig), was invited to an audition, but was almost disinvited again when it became clear that he was 28 years old (the normal entrance age for singing students was 18!). At the last moment, the wife of the principal - as he reports in his memoirs - became aware of him, because his voice was already at a stage which students - if they reached it at all - only did so at the end of their studies. All that was missing from him was all the theoretical tools, all the music and theatre studies needed for his profession.

He now acquired these - thanks to the support of the principal's wife. Early in 1975 Winter was already first tenor at the German National Theatre in Weimar. But like many others in the art and theatre scene, he only wanted to get away, away to the West. Winter never talked about how he did it. "I want to get away, otherwise I'll provoke another scandal," as he described his aspirations at the time in an interview with the author in 2005. Somehow he must have succeeded, because six weeks later he was summoned to appear, and he and his wife - he had by then been married for some time and they had a son together named Markus, who was born in 1971 - had to hand in their passports and on 15 March 1975 he was able to leave for the West with his family.

There, the new beginning on stage as an opera singer must not have been easy. He found a place to live in Bremen and some frequently changing engagements worldwide. In 70 different leading roles he appeared on international stages in operas and oper-

⁷ Kurier am Sonntag (Bremer Tageszeitung AG), 23.3.1997

⁸ The following information on the further career of the artist is also based on information in "Schwanengesang".

ettas, including in almost all the countries of Western, Northern and Southern Europe, but also on almost all continents. Altogether he sang on about 150 different stages all over the world and he estimated that he made about 2,000 to 3,000 performances by the early 2000s. Even two concerts on the cruise ship "Europa" were among these. He has sung in Moscow, New York, the Dominican Republic, Florida, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala, in Colombia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil, but also in Bali, Jakarta, Singapore, Manila and Kuala Lumpur, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, which by no means exhausts the list.



"To the lasting memory of my highly esteemed friend Wolfgang Jakubek", wrote Peter Winter when giving a sample of his musical talent.

Original: W. Jakubek/BMS 8/2017

It remains to be seen whether it was due to this wandering and travelling destiny, which is not untypical for artists in this kind of business, that he also settled privately in frequently changing places. It is a fact that he settled in the Dominican Republic from 2006/2007 to 2013, in each case for longer periods of time, where he lived at the address Playa Chiquita 2 in Sosúa. Very comfortable in a 120 m² flat with a large balcony, for which he paid around 350 euros a month in rent.⁹ On his Facebook page he listed Cabarete as

his place of residence, a small town on the north coast of the Dominican Republic, not too far from Sosúa.



In 2008 Winter honoured the author with this CD with four of his best arias.

In a later review of his professional life, he told the author:¹⁰ "I had no particular ambition. I could have been one of the best singers if I had had more ambition and been more diligent". But he also said: "I am a romantic type who also believes in fairy tales, if they sound good." Whether he wanted to kid himself and his career with this is open to question.

His eventful life is also reflected in his company and home addresses. In 1985, he founded ProPhilForum, at Neustädter Hohentorstrasse 77 in Bremen. In 1988, Peter Winter's address was Kurt-Schumacher-Allee 1E, 2800 Bremen 41; an address he gave in February 1997 for the headquarters of ProPhilForum was Bremer Str. 23, in 28832 Achim. Achim is the largest town and an independent municipality in the district of Verden in Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony). Located south-east of Bremen, it is often referred to as "Achim bei Bremen".

Two years later, he wrote to an American and now traded under the name of Q-S-Trading GmbH (Quick

9 eBook of 2017: Peter Winter. Thoughts and memories, page 7

10 Interview from 2005

Stamp Trading) with its registered office in 28335 Bremen, Auf der Heide 25 B. Again four years later, at the end of 2003, he once again gave Kurt-Schumacher-Allee 1E in 28329 Bremen, an address (possibly his private residence?) which he had already given in a promotional letter on 11 March 1988. From 2005 at the latest, and until the end, he lived at the address Butenlake 16a, Ellenerbrok-Schevemoor, 28329 Bremen, Tel. 04 21 40 97 079.

Winter returned from the Dominican Republic in 2012 or 2013 at the latest. The reason was certainly not that he did not enjoy his life there anymore, but a completely different event, which he described to the author on 22 March 2017:

“It is true that about four years ago I fell ill with an incurable peritoneal carcinomatosis, and at that time I was granted a survival time of only 3-4 months if untreated. However, if I was treated with chemotherapy - and of course if this were also continued - I should be able to survive for, well, one to one and a half years. I have also tried chemotherapy - one session, a round, so to speak. But afterwards I was so miserable; I was so more dead than alive that I completely forbade any medical intervention. And since then I have been living like this; I am getting a little weaker every day;

more emaciated ... Thank God, however, I have not suffered anything worth mentioning to this day; no pain at all!”

Nevertheless, he seemed to believe that 2017 would see the end of his life. Therefore he arranged the production of the eBook and the printed “Schwanengesang” book. He crossed out the probable date of death “___.2016” originally stated in it and replaced it by 2017 in handwriting. But he survived that year as well. The last email exchange with him - in recent years to his original email address “info@schweizerische-karibik-residenz.com” - is dated April 2018. On the last day of March 2018 he let the author know:

“For my vain, personal pleasure, I will commission a very last splendid binding gilt-edged on three sides, just two copies, which I will certainly look at with joy and wonder, and then - God, who knows! I can’t even believe that my son will ever take a look at it. But I’ll probably survive this one too - somehow, at least.”

He probably did not survive for long. On 2 April 2018 the contacts ceased. He is said to have died in Bremen in the summer of 2018. His flat was cleared in October 2018 by the Bremer Clean-team company on behalf of Gewoba AG, Bremen (rental agent).¹¹

¹¹ The author does not have a more precise date of death, as the authorities where enquiries were made were of the opinion that such information could not be provided due to data protection. The Bremen City Office was asked three times by the author to provide this information, but there was no reply. In the Epicurean Caribbean Reflections, p. 43, Winter himself set the date “2018”.