

KEY EVENTS IN THE COMPOSER'S LIFE: MEMORIES, TESTIMONIES FROM CONTEMPORARIES, INFLUENCES ON HER MUSIC

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Summary

Reflecting Maija Einfelde's (b. 1939) life story, this paper analyses events and people who directly or indirectly influenced the evolution of the composer's musical style and, in a few cases, the development of a particular work.

In the first section *Family History*, we meet the members of the Einfelde (maiden name Dūrēja) family who have been in some way involved in music. Among them is the composer's father Jānis Dūrējs (1892–1944), who was known as an organ builder in Latvia in the 1920s and 30s, and her mother, the organist Vallija Dūrēja (maiden name Erdmane, 1896–1967). Beginning in the mid-1980s, the organ becomes a significant part of Einfelde's music.

The second section *Childhood Home* is based mainly on the composer's memories. The first 11 years of her life were dramatically divided in two parts by the death of her father in 1944 and, not long after, the destruction of her family home in Valmiera by fire at the end of World War II. The family, who in one moment changed from affluent to poor, were forced to flee from Valmiera to the countryside in Viļķene, and the composer has many bitter memories from this time. Among them are memories of the barely hidden distaste of her mother's *impracticality* by local peasants (her profession – organ playing – was one that, in Soviet times, paid next to nothing), as well as a lengthy separation from her family, as Maija worked as a shepherd at the home of strangers, who “did not interest my spirit at all, and I was terribly lonely” (Einfelde 2016). The composer herself admits that her difficult childhood could explain why there is so much pain in her music.

The next section *1952–1966. From Piano Playing to Composition* characterises the progress of Einfelde's musical education, particularly the teachers that had a strong influence on the composer's development. They include:

- Jānis Līcītis – a solfeggio instructor at the Jāzeps Mediņš College of Music (1958–1961) who, from Einfelde's recollections, was the first to change her preference for Romanticism by encouraging her to become familiar with the works of 20th century composers;
- Jānis Kaijaks – a teacher of composition at the Jāzeps Mediņš Music College. As Einfelde tells it, he was the first to inspire in her a belief in her own abilities. In an interview with Kaijaks, he admits that, from the time of her studies at the Mediņš College,

Einfelde has maintained the overall expressionistic trend and sharp harmonies in her music;

- Jānis Ivanovs – composition professor at the Latvian State Conservatory (today the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, 1961–1966). Einfelde was enthralled with Ivanovs’ sharp, dramatic music, but her composition studies were not as successful as she had hoped, because the professor desired to develop his own preferred music stylistic within his students, however Einfelde, though she quite liked Ivanovs’ music, still preferred to maintain her own *ego* in her works.

This section also mentions the most vivid musical impressions that Einfelde gained during her years of school and study, including the Dmitri Shostakovich opera *Katerina Izmailova*, which she saw at the Riga Opera Theatre, and allowed her to sense that “good music can also torment”, and Benjamin Britten’s *War Requiem*, which revealed many diverse triton possibilities to the young composer (Einfelde 2016).

The following section **1966–1980** has a metaphorical subtitle *In the Squirrel’s Wheel*. It was selected to characterise a very tense period in Einfelde’s life – during this time, she raised a son, the future writer Jānis Einfelds, who was born during her relatively short marriage (1966–1979) to Voldemārs Einfelds, and her primary source of income was her work as a teacher at multiple music schools in Latvia. However, a particularly important field of work was composition, and Einfelde found it personally painful that, for many years, she was not admitted in the Latvian Composers’ Union (she was only accepted in 1978). However, Maija Einfelde still had some active interpreters of her music around her, and the composer is thankful for them – among them were pianist Hermanis Brauns, cellist Maija Prēdele, conductor Ansis Alberings, and, starting at the end of the 1970s, conductor Ausma Derkēvica.

In the section **1980–1985**, an analysis is provided of the period in the composer’s life when, in her music, the central genre was sonatas for string instruments and piano. These quickly found interpreters, including violinist Jānis Bulavs and Indulis Sūna, as well as violist Andrejs Senakols, and are still beloved by performers today. These sonatas express a mood of tragic, and this paper reviews the events that might have influenced them, including the death of former teachers Jānis Līcītis and Jānis Ivanovs (works dedicated to them are, respectively, the First Sonata for violin and piano and the *Sonata-Meditation* for viola and piano) and impressions from literature (the Second Sonata for violin and piano was inspired by *Kļavas lapa* /“The Maple Leaf”/, a sad story by Aleksandrs Čaks).

The section **1986–1995** analyses Einfelde’s life during this unstable period in Latvian history. The Awakening movement in the second half

of the 1980s inspired a hope for a better life. Still, the difficult experiences in this period were the chronic sickness of her son Jānis Einfelds after being injured during his service in the Soviet Army (1986), and the death of her former husband Voldemārs (1993). The work *Pirms saules rieta* (*Before the Sunset*) for clarinet, viola and piano (1994) was dedicated to his memory. Searches for peace are reflected in her turn to sacred genres (starting in 1987) – organ music and ensembles with organ.

The major events in the composer's life at the turn of the 20th/21st centuries are analysed in the section **1996–2000**. The changes in genre priorities in her music are noted (fewer works for chamber ensemble, as compared to choir and orchestra compositions) and the arrival of new performers in Einfelde's field of collaborators. Notable among them is the Latvian Radio Choir, who facilitated the growth of Einfelde's reputation world wide. Members of the choir – *The Latvian Radio Chamber Singers* – commissioned the chamber oratorio *Piezemes tālās...* (*At the Edge of the Earth...*, 1996), a work that led to her triumphant victory at the prestigious Barlow Endowment for Music Composition in 1997. A broadening of international contacts is also reflected in her creative collaboration with diaspora Latvians (such as composer Dace Apeņāne and violist Andra Darzins) and choirs from the USA, Canada, Netherlands, and elsewhere. Both from the results of her successes as well as a simple, gradual change in Einfelde's view of life, a brighter, more harmonic expression appears in her music in the 1990s, though tragic moods are still preserved to a large degree.

In the section **2001–2016**, it is concluded that the composer's music is enriched by new genres (including the Viola Concerto, 2011) and collaborations with choirs continue, though, at the same time, there is a notable trend back to chamber music – works have been composed for both string instrument (cello) and piano, as well as for some in her music previously not explored types of ensemble (for example, saxophone and organ). The composer's life story is also notable with the conclusion of her teaching work (2008) and retirement, which has required a new daily routine and provides the opportunity to read the belletrists, from Latvian classics to foreign writers of the 20th century (Günter Grass, Julio Cortazár, and others) – one of Einfelde's most important hobbies at this time.

Supplementing the article are interviews with some musicians – Einfeldes's colleagues, interpreters of her work and former students, which allows one to better understand the different aspects of her creative work. Interviews were performed by doctoral student Līga Pētersone and Baiba Jaunslaviete, the author of this paper.