

KONRAD HUGH VERNON HOPKINS

(b. 2 July 1928, Connecticut, USA – d. 13 May 2010, Scotland)

Novelist, Poet, Teacher, Korngold Enthusiast

Let me take the liberty of speaking for Erich Wolfgang Korngold's family in expressing our heartfelt regret at the passing of our good friend, Konrad. I still remember our astonishment at first learning from Brendan Carroll that he and Konrad were forming an Erich Wolfgang Korngold Society, dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Korngold's music, with headquarters in Paisley, Scotland. And I recall being asked the reasonable question, "Why Paisley, Scotland?" with the equally reasonable reply, "Because that is Konrad's home town."

From then on we received a veritable avalanche of mail from Konrad, together with a monthly newsletter bringing us up to date on the fast-growing activities of the Society. Korngold couldn't have had more loyal supporters than Konrad and Brendan.

My husband and I never got to Paisley, but we did meet Konrad in Berlin in 1983 at Goetz Friedrich's very successful production of "Die tote Stadt", which did so much to boost the renaissance of Korngold's music.

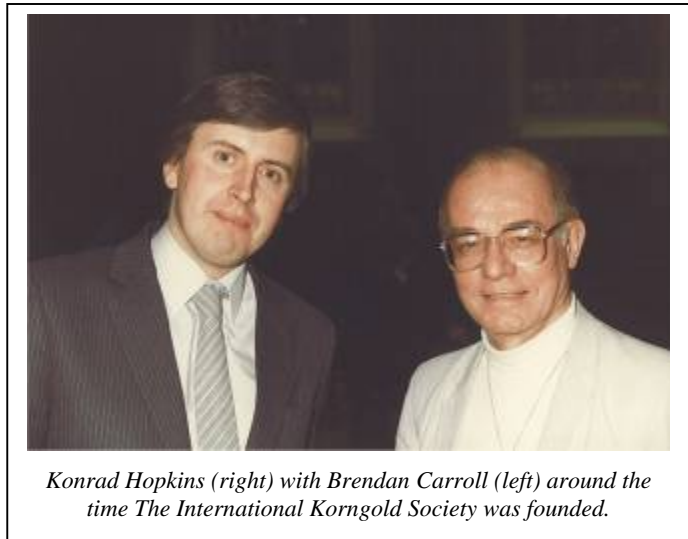
We were already accustomed to Brendan's enthusiasm about his (may I say?) favorite composer, but it was quite clear that these two young men were of like mind in their devotion to Korngold. From Paisley, the torch was carried to Bernd Rachold, who established the Hamburg branch of the Society. And so it is; with such small beginnings, large movements sometimes grow and prosper. We are so grateful to you, Konrad.

Helen (Mrs. Ernst W.) Korngold

*Portland, Oregon
May 2010*

Konrad Hopkins

Konrad Hopkins was born in 1928 in New London, Connecticut to Hugh and Ruth Hopkins. Konrad received his early education in Massachusetts, and graduated from Harvard University in 1950 with a degree in English Literature. His Honors Thesis at Harvard, *James T Farrell: His Tragic Vision of Life*, is based on the American author who, in later life, was to become a close friend.



Konrad Hopkins (right) with Brendan Carroll (left) around the time The International Korngold Society was founded.

Shortly after graduation, Konrad enlisted in the United States Air Force, purportedly to avoid being drafted and sent to Korea. As a Sergeant in 1952, he began a correspondence with the playwright Tennessee Williams. The first letter was a fan letter, but was intelligently and movingly written about the poet Hart Crane, a writer very close to Tennessee's heart. They exchanged many powerful letters and significant gifts between 1952 and 1956, and apparently remained in contact for the duration of Williams' life.

Konrad left the USAF in 1953, and worked as editor and secretary to the American author and short story writer James T Farrell (1904-1979), with whom he formed a strong friendship. Beginning the 1950s and 1960s Konrad held many teaching posts, among other positions:

- 1958-59 freelance co-producer of plays at Princeton University, developing what was known as *Theatre Intime*
- 1960-66 teacher of Humanities and Liberal Arts at Clarkson College of Technology, New York State
- 1966-67 while traveling extensively around Europe, teacher of English at the Vienna Berlitz School of Languages
- 1967-1993 Lecturer in Communication Studies at the University of the West of Scotland (formerly Paisley Technical College)
- 1974-1980 editor for the literary magazine *Trends*

He also formed his own publishing company, *Wilfion Books*, responsible for the publication of several translations of poetic texts for UNESCO

He retired in 1993

Throughout his life Konrad was a writer of novels, poetry, plays, and literary criticism. He was also an ardent supporter of others who shared his interests and passions, and generously gave of his time and resources. Konrad donated to the University of the West of Scotland several of his personal collections including, the James T Farrell Collection, and the William Sharp/Fiona Macleod Collection. Also on display at the University Library are several fine, original artworks donated by Konrad, including portrait busts by Alexander Stoddart and Benno Schotz, and the painting "Girl Reading" by Pierre Bonnard.

Konrad and Korngold

While also being an avid proponent of the music of Dimitri Shostakovich,¹ Konrad was a tireless champion of the music of Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Konrad was the co-founder, along with Brendan G. Carroll, of The International Korngold Society in 1982, around the time that Götz Friedrich prepared to revive Korngold's opera *Die tote Stadt* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin. His publishing company Wilfion Books also published the first modern biographical monograph of Korngold, Brendan Carroll's *Erich Wolfgang Korngold, 1897-1957: His Life and Works* (pub.1983 nla) which was immensely popular, reaching four impressions.

Because of health concerns in the 1990s, Konrad reluctantly scaled down his activities and the Society changed from



Konrad as a sergeant in the USAF in 1952.



Photo of Konrad shortly before his passing (promotional photo from "U & Me & Tennessee" -- www.u-me-tennessee.co.uk)

¹ Konrad offered financial assistance to the Shostakovich Society who celebrated the Shostakovich Centenary in 2006 with the biggest ever season of the composer's film work 'Shostakovich on Film' shown at the Barbican Film, London. He also funded major research into the opera scores of Leos Janacek.

"active" to "passive", in that it halted publishing newsletters or providing the kind of material other similar societies offer to members. Membership became, and is still, relatively dormant and the Society is really now a repository for archival materials, with a few dedicated individuals continuing research and promotion of Korngold's music.

However, by 2003, Konrad had laid the foundations for creating the International Korngold Foundation, which will eventually establish scholarships, permanent archival repositories, and continue support and promotion of the life and music of Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Also in that year, Konrad made a significant financial contribution to the city of Brno, where the composer was born in 1897, in order to found the world's first Korngold Study Centre and Museum – an ongoing project.

Brendan G Carroll, co-founder of the International Korngold Society with Konrad, remains its President and will assist in a memorial event for Konrad, in Paisley, at the end of June.

He said:

Konrad Hopkins was my dear friend for almost thirty years and one of life's great enthusiasts. His devotion to Korngold was total, and had been a part of his life since boyhood when he first saw the classic films for which Korngold wrote so many wonderful scores. We met entirely by chance, after he heard me being interviewed on the BBC about Korngold's opera VIOLANTA and immediately wrote me a long letter, offering to be my publisher. From our very first meeting shortly afterwards, his zeal and passion for Korngold's music was clear and I knew I had found a kindred spirit.

Over the years, he has helped and supported my endeavours in countless ways, both personal and financial, especially in securing many rare and valuable artifacts to enrich the Korngold Archive, which we began to create in 1983. Without his help, my major biography of Korngold - 'The Last Prodigy' - could not have been completed.

His favourite score by Korngold was always KINGS ROW and it was therefore particularly touching and apt that as he slipped peacefully away from this life after a mercifully short illness, a recording of this beautiful music was gently playing in the background. At his graveside interment, his close friend Bill Kelly read the poem 'Invictus' by William Ernest Henley, the verses of which conclude that classic film:

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**Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.**

**Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.**

**In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.**

**It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.**

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I can think of no better epitaph. Rest in peace, dear Konrad.

BRENDAN CARROLL

Liverpool, England

May 30 2010