

## MICHAEL KUNZE



### Biography (extended)

Michael was born on November 9, 1943 in Prague, and grew up in Munich, where he studied law, history and philosophy. In the late 1960s, he started to write popsongs, and soon became one of the best known songwriters of Germany. His recordings dominated the charts of the 1970s in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. When he eventually produced his first international act, he hit the top of both the Billboard and Cashbox charts in the US ("Fly, Robin, Fly"). His group, SILVER CONVENTION, represented by composer Sylvester Levay and Michael Kunze himself, was the first German aggregation ever to win the coveted Grammy Award.

Based on his spectacular success in the U.S. - after "Fly, Robin, Fly" came such hits as "Lady Bump" and "Get up and Boogie" - Michael produced albums with a vast and varied array of internationally known performers, including Julio Iglesias, Nana Mouskouri, Herbie Mann, Lulu, Gilbert Bécaud, Sister Sledge and Caterina Valente.

At the top of his success, he took a breather from show business and wrote a book, "Highroad to the Stake", that not only was awarded the 1981 Faculty Prize by the Munich University Law School, but also was translated into several languages. It was highly praised in a two-page review in the New York Times Book Review Supplement.

In the 1980s, the musical began making its way into the center of Michael Kunze's activities. First, he adapted Andrew Lloyd Webbers musical "Evita" , which was the beginning of his collaboration and friendship with the legendary Broadway director, Harold Prince. The success of his adaptation opened the doors of the German-speaking market for the modern Anglo-American musical. Michael's reputation is in making the German versions sound as if they were the original.

As an adaptor, he has by now been connected to the success of almost all international shows presented in the German-speaking countries, among them FOLLIES, EVITA, CATS, A CHORUS LINE, PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, COMPANY, LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, INTO THE WOODS, KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN, SUNSET BOULEVARD, THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, THE LION KING, Elton John's AIDA, Abba's MAMMA MIA!, and WICKED.

From the 1990s on, Michael started to create original musicals in his own style. His first show was an open air spectacle, HEXEN HEXEN (Witches). It drew an audience of sixty thousand to the historic site where it was performed (Heilbronn, Germany). In September 1992, his musical ELISABETH, about the life of the Empress Elisabeth of Austria, opened at Vienna's prestigious "Theater an der Wien" (music: Sylvester Levay). The show ran in Vienna for almost six years and was regarded as the re-birth of the contemporary continental musical theater in Europe. It was soon exported to other countries, such as Japan, Hungary, Sweden, Holland and Germany.

Collaborating with Roman Polanski (director) and Jim Steinman (composer), Michael wrote his first English libretto and lyrics for the musical, DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES. A German version opened in October 1997 at the Viennese Raimund Theater to raving reviews. The show was transferred to Stuttgart/Germany on March 3, 2000, where it became a cult musical and box office phenomenon. It opened in Hamburg in December 2003 where it ran for another three years before it opened in Berlin in December 2006. The show also reached Broadway, but against Michael's will in a unauthorized version that only ran for three months. It can currently also be seen in Warsaw, Budapest and Tokyo.

Michael's MOZART! (music: Sylvester Levay; director: Harry Kupfer), telling the drama of Mozart's life, premiered in October 1999 in Vienna (Theater an der Wien). It also played or is still running in Hamburg/Germany, Karlstad/Sweden, Tokyo/Japan, Munich/Germany, Budapest/Hungary and Seoul/South Korea. Further productions are planned.

In 2006 two new musicals have been added to Michael's list. REBECCA, based on Daphne Du Maurier's famous novel, premiered on September 28 at Vienna's Raimund Theater. It became a sensational success (97% average attendance, „Best Musical

2007“) and is slated for a West End opening in early 2011. MARIE ANTOINETTE, a musical dramatizing the events of the French Revolution, had a grand opening in Tokyo's most prestigious Imperial Theatre on November 1, 2006. It opened in Europe in early 2009 at the Bremen Musical Hall /Germany.

Michael's musicals are regarded the foundation of a new genre of the contemporary popular musical theatre, called the DramaMusical. It is characterized by an elaborate dramatic structure which integrates elements of the film structure into the classic two act drama form. Michael likes to describe himself as “an architect of the musical drama”.

Lately he wrote an opera, RAOUL, dramatizing the life of Raoul Wallenberg who saved 100 000 Hungarian jews in a direct confrontation with Adolf Eichmann in Budapest (music: Gershon Kingsley). RAOUL opened in 2008 in two cities, at the Szeged Opera House in Hungary and the Bremen State Opera/Germany. In 2010 Michael's Pop Oratorio, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (music by Dieter Falk), was performed by a cast of 2555 singers and actors at the huge Dortmund Westfalen Hall for an audience of 20 000 people.

In addition to his *Grammy*, Michael holds an *Echo Lifetime Award*, 88 Gold and Platinum Records, 3 *Golden Europe Awards*, 2 Best Musicals Awards (*Image*1996 and *Image* 1998), *Musical Of The Year Award* 2000 (Mozart!), 2001 (Elisabeth), 2003 (Dance Of The Vampires), 2007 (Rebecca). Michael is a member of GEMA, Deutsche Dramatiker Union and The Dramatists Guild, Inc. New York. He and his wife, Roswitha, live in Hamburg / Germany.