

Gisela May (1924 - 2016) is the First Lady of the German-language political song, but also, as a student of Hanns Eisler and Helene Weigel, the pre-eminent Brecht performer during the second half of the twentieth century. "Just an actress with a certain dose of musicality" (May on May), she moved from her jobs in Dresden, Leipzig, Halle, and Schwerin to the German Theater (Deutsches Theater) in Berlin in 1951. Here she presented her first song program in 1957. From 1962 on, she was a member of the Berlin Ensemble, where for thirty years she earned attention as an expressive embodiment of various female characters; at the same time she triumphed internationally with her concerts. In a unique symbiosis, the delivery of the "socialist nightingale" (FAZ, 1982) combines the charm of Marlene Dietrich, the dry wit of Lotte Lenya, and the pathos of Ernst Busch. She sings of the "creature man" with incorruptible objectivity and profound empathy.

Gisela May

"She has that cooing tone of crass intelligence; she can whip sonority and make dissonances ring... A singing actress of rare power who sets the standard." (Die Welt, 1965)

