

LITERATUR

Karl, Michaela: Therese Giehse. Die Mutter Courage. In: Bayerische Amazonen – 12 Porträts. Regensburg 2004. S. 151-167.

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Sperr, Monika / Giehse, Therese: Ich hab nichts zum Sagen. Gespräche mit Monika Sperr. München 1973. S. 8-49.

BILDNACHWEIS

Therese Giehse, etwa 1919. Von Therese Giehse gibt es zahlreiche Fotos, vor allem in verschiedenen Theaterrollen. Das Porträt entstand in ihrer Jugendzeit. Es ist abgedruckt bei: Sperr, Monika / Giehse, Therese: Ich hab nichts zum Sagen. Gespräche mit Monika Sperr. München 1973. S. 54.

THERESE GIEHSE

* 1898 – MÜNCHEN



My name is Therese Gift but everyone calls me Therese Giehse. I was born on March 6, 1898 in Munich in Herzog-Rudolf-Straße as the daughter of the Jewish merchant Salomon. My mother Gertrude is Jewish as well and comes from an American family of merchants. I have four siblings, who are way older than me. Therefore, my parents were quite old when I was born. Back then, my father was already sick with a heart disease and I learned from early on to behave quietly and considerately. Ultimately, he died when I was 13 years old.

I was raised in a liberal, conservative and wealthy family. Despite that, I am living my life in a modest way and I don't need much. We are not orthodox Jews, but I was brought up in a religious way and my faith is still very important to me.

I attended the primary school at Sankt-Anna-Platz in the old town of Munich. However, I didn't like it and I wasn't very eager to study. The reason might be that I was picked on by a lot of people including my religious education teacher because of my Jewish background. Additionally, I wasn't very slim and I had red hair. People always blame us Jews that we killed Jesus – this was also my fate. No wonder, I was mainly alone by myself, thoughtful and serious. I was reserved and kind of a loner. Other people thought I was awkward and weird. But I didn't care much, I stayed on my own and read a lot of books. I especially liked the ballads of Schiller or Heine. I have never really needed the company of others. After primary school, I went to Kerschensteiner-Schule in Franz-Joseph-Straße.

My brothers served in the German army during the Great War. Although I am not really close to them, I am still happy that they survived. They did everything they could for their home country. During the War I was at home and helped my parents with their business.

Eventually, I dreamed of working at the theatre. My family was trying very hard to get this idea out of my head. They thought I was not the ideal of beauty of that time. I didn't think that this was a reason for giving up my dream. So, I auditioned in front of the theatre and film actor Albert Steinrück. I had nothing left to lose. Fortunately, he recognized my talent and connected me to the well-known acting instructor Tony Wittels-Stury. She also noticed my capability and in the years of 1918 until 1920, she taught me all the typical, nice parts played by girls. I never played any of those roles because I am much more comfortable with playing women who aren't clichéd. Apart from that, my surname Gift was not suitable for an actress. Thanks to my sister Irma my stage name is Giehse because she also disliked the name Gift.

After my acting training, I had my first performance in Munich. In the following, it was hard for me to find employment, which is why I went to Berlin. I was on the road a lot, which is typical for young actors. I spent one season each in Siegen, Gleiwitz¹ and Landshut before I finally made it to the Bavarian state stage in Munich. While playing there, Paul Barany discovered my talent and brought me to Breslau², a city with many great actors. In 1925, I returned to my hometown Munich. The intimate theater production was reopening in 1926 and they had moved from Augustenstraße to Maximilianstraße. Ever since I have been employed there while still having guest performances all over Germany. I really appreciate working with the theater manager Otto Flackenberg. The intimate theater is not only showing classical innocent plays but also fierce ones. Up to now, it has happened three times that plays have been banned from our program because their contents were rebellious, open and uncensored. Since I am very politically interested, I enjoy being engaged with plays like these.

Eventually, I moved to Schumannstraße 4/0, where I live with my dog and stage partner Daisy. I am being praised for my performances by many different people. Although I am very successful and respected, I don't care much about all the prizes.

Even though I am more of a shy, reserved person in everyday life, I love being on stage: the improvisation and the direct contact with the audience. This is the reason why I don't like working in film productions. Adolf Hitler claims that I am his favorite actress. He has visited our theatre a lot recently and he doesn't care that I am Jewish. He asked me to play in his office, but I rather fight against him than please him.

Since the intimate theater productions ran out of money in October 1932, we, Erika and Klaus Mann, Magnus Henning and I, have started our own cabaret in Neuturmstraße called "Peppermill". This is where I am performing if I am not with the intimate theater productions. Erika and Klaus, children of Thomas Mann, and me have been very dear friends for a long time now. We are hosting plays with anti-Nazi content in the "Peppermill". It is quite risky but nevertheless I am fighting publicly against the agenda of the Nazis. I will not give up easily!

¹ heute eine Stadt in Polen

² heute eine Stadt in Polen