



Manfred Eigen



Stefan Hell



Erwin Neher



Bert Sakmann

“Capital City of Nobel Laureates”

With a grand total of 46 awards, Göttingen can boast of more winners of the prestigious Nobel Prize than any other city in Germany - according to the newspaper *Die Welt*, this makes it the “capital city of Nobel laureates.” One of them, Maria Göppert-Mayer, obtained her doctorate here with Max Born, who later won the Nobel Prize in Physics (1954). In 1930 she immigrated with her husband to the United States, and in 1963 she became the second woman in the world to win the Nobel Prize in Physics, the first being Marie Curie. Another winner, Enrico Fermi (Physics, 1938), did research with Max Born for only a few months during his studies here in 1923. Fourteen scientists were awarded the prize for the results of research conducted in Göttingen, nine of them before 1940: Otto Wallach (Chemistry, 1910), Johannes Stark (Physics, 1919), Walther Hermann Nernst (Chemistry, 1920), James Franck, (Physics, 1925), Richard Zsigmondy (Chemistry, 1925), Werner Heisenberg (Physics, 1932), Peter Debye (Chemistry, 1936), Adolf Otto Reinhold Windaus (Chemistry, 1938) and Adolf Butenandt (Chemistry, 1939).

Especially during the 1920s and early 1930s, Göttingen was considered a stronghold of the natural sciences. This period of success ended with the takeover of power by the National Socialists. Many Jewish scientists, including Max Born and James Franck (page 104), gave up in the face of the brown-shirted holders of power and the members of the university community who were integrated into the Nazi apparatus. Emigration, they decided, was their only option.

During the post-war years, other Nobel Prize winners – Otto Hahn (Chemistry, 1944), Max Planck (1918), Werner Heisenberg and Max von Laue (Physics, 1914) - came to Göttingen, where the Max Planck Society was founded in 1948 (page 54). But a great many top scientists, courted by the USA, chose to cross the Atlantic.

Nuclear physicists who stayed in Germany learned from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, at the latest. When German politicians, with Federal Chancellor Adenauer and Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauß leading the way, planned to equip the German armed forces with nuclear weapons only two years after the

A solemn moment in the summer of 2019: In the “Nobel-Rondell,” an open-air structure in the Old City Cemetery, Mayor Rolf Georg Köhler, together with Dr. Ruthild Os-

watitsch-Eigen, the widow of the biophysical chemist Manfred Eigen (Chemistry, 1967), unveils the plaque honoring her husband, who had died the previous February. In the background, the Göttingen heraldist and designer Hans Otto Arnold, creator of the Rondell. Arnold is the deputy chairman of the Göttingen City Council.



establishment of the Bundeswehr, a protest was lodged: the 1957 “Göttingen Manifesto,” in which 18 physicists declared their opposition to this Cold War lunacy, including Nobel laureates Max Born, Otto Hahn, Werner Heisenberg, Max von Laue and Wolfgang Paul, who would receive his Nobel Prize in 1989. However, they did endorse the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In 1967 another scientist associated with Göttingen, Manfred Eigen (Chemistry), was honored in Stockholm. He was followed in 1991 by Erwin Neher and Bert Sakmann (Physiology or Medicine) and in 2014 by Stefan Hell, the fourth scientist at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry to receive a Nobel Prize (page 55).

One year earlier, in 2013, the first “real Göttinger” finally won the coveted award: Thomas Südhof, born in Göttingen in 1955, received the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine - for the results of research he had performed at Stanford University.

Nobel Prizes are wonderful. But over the almost 300-year history of the Georgia Augusta University, many brilliant minds have been at work in Göttingen: countless natural scientists and humanities scholars who have also excelled as scholars and teachers and in this way contributed to the renown of the “City of Science” (“Stadt die Wissen schafft”) - and who continue to do so to this day.