

Avner Dorman

Wahnfried

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Avner Dorman writes music of intricate craftsmanship and rigorous technique, expressed with a soulful and singular voice. A native of Israel now living in the United States, Dorman draws on a variety of cultural and historical influences in composing, resulting in music that affects an emotional impact while exploring new territories. His works utilize an exciting and complex rhythmic

vocabulary, as well as unique timbres and colors in orchestral, chamber, and solo settings. The world's finest orchestras, conductors, and soloists have performed Dorman's music, and many of his compositions have become contemporary staples in the repertoire.

Cover photo by Schubbay

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Avner Dorman

Wahnfried



Wahnfried

A new opera in two acts

Score by Avner Dorman
Libretto (English and German) by
Lutz Hübner and Sarah Nemitz

DURATION: 100 minutes

PREMIERE:

January 2017
Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe
Germany



Avner Dorman



Lutz Hübner



Sarah Nemitz

SYNOPSIS

Houston Stewart Chamberlain is a failed entomologist, a Darwin enthusiast that cannot bring himself to kill a single bug. Unable to come up with his own grand theory, Chamberlain is looking for a different cause, a calling that would give meaning to his life. He finds his calling in the music of Richard Wagner, and in German nationalism.

Wagner's widow, Cosima, enlists Chamberlain to lead the effort to immortalize Wagner's music and link it forever with German nationalism. Chamberlain leaves his first wife and marries Wagner's daughter Eva. He proceeds to write his magnum opus *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, a book that becomes a seminal work in German nationalism. It is the first major work that advocates Aryan supremacy and promotes fighting Jewish influence.

Wahnfried tells the story of how Wagner's music became associated with Nazism and how Cosima Wagner, Houston Chamberlain, and other members of the Wagner circle, became a central part of nationalism in Germany. With an element of black humor coloring the narrative, *Wahnfried* emphasizes the grotesque nature of the pseudo-science and hatred underlying Chamberlain's theories and the horrific consequences they had. The spirits of Wagner, Hermann Levi, and Mikhail Bakunin haunt Chamberlain through his rise and fall. Chamberlain has a final moment of hope after meeting his great admirer Adolf Hitler in 1924, but Wagner's ghost continues to haunt him proclaiming: "Chamberlain, you didn't understand anything: not me, not life, you're just a marginal note, a wrong turn. Didn't you know, that all my heroes fail?"

SETTINGS

Meadow near Bayreuth
Garden Wahnfried
Salon Wahnfried

ORCHESTRA

2.2.2.2/4.3.3.1/timp.3perc/str

CAST

Principal Rôles

HOUSTON CHAMBERLAIN: Tenor (character tenor)
COSIMA WAGNER: Alto (dramatic mezzo-soprano/alto)
ANNA CHAMBERLAIN: Lyric dramatic soprano (youthful dramatic soprano)

Secondary Rôles

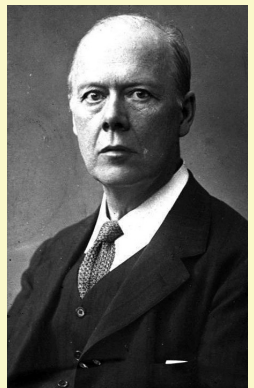
SIEGFRIED (FIDI): Countertenor
WINIFRED: Lyric coloratura soprano
EVA CHAMBERLAIN: Lyric soprano
WAGNER-DEMON: Lyric baritone
THE MASTER DISCIPLE (HITLER): Lyric tenor
HERMANN LEVI: Dramatic bass (dramatic bass-baritone)
THE KAISER: Low alto
BAKUNIN: Bass (lyrical serious bass)
ISOLDE: Soprano/mezzo-soprano
THE DAUGHTERS (BLANDINE, DANIELA): female voices

Chorus SATB

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THE PROCESSION FROM HELL

"Mr. Chamberlain's thesis is that the nineteenth century, and therefore the twentieth and all future centuries, depend for everything in them worth mentioning and preserving upon the Teutonic branch of the Aryan race. He holds that there is no such thing as a general progress of mankind, that progress is only for those whom he calls the Teutons, and that when they mix with or are intruded upon by alien and, as he regards them, lower races, the result is fatal."

— Theodore Roosevelt on *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*



Chamberlain