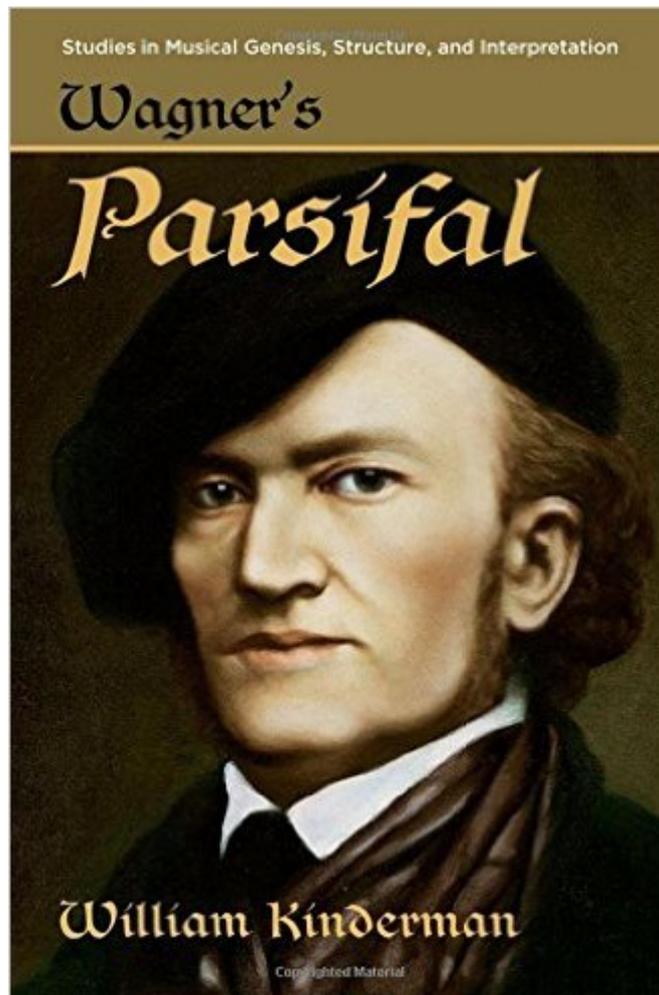


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Wagner's Parsifal (Studies In Musical Genesis, Structure, And Interpretation)



Synopsis

William Kinderman's detailed study of Parsifal, described by the composer as his "last card," explores the evolution of the text and music of this inexhaustible yet highly controversial music drama across Wagner's entire career, and offers a reassessment of the ideological and political history of Parsifal, shedding new light on the connection of Wagner's legacy to the rise of National Socialism in Germany. The compositional genesis is traced through many unfamiliar manuscript sources, revealing unsuspected models and veiled connections to Wagner's earlier works. Fresh analytic perspectives are revealed, casting the dramatic meaning of Parsifal in a new light. Much debated aspects of the work, such as Kundry's death at the conclusion, are discussed in the context of its stage history. Path-breaking as well is Kinderman's analysis of the religious and ideological context of Parsifal. During the half-century after the composer's death, the Wagner family and the so-called Bayreuth circle sought to exploit Wagner's work for political purposes, thereby promoting racial nationalism and anti-Semitism. Hitherto unnoticed connections between Hitler and Wagner's legacy at Bayreuth are explored here, while differences between the composer's politics as an 1849 revolutionary and the later response of his family to National Socialism are weighed in a nuanced account. Kinderman combines new historical research, sensitive aesthetic criticism, and probing philosophical reflection in this most intensive examination of Wagner's culminating music drama.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Plácido Domingo summarizes well the quintessence of "Parsifal" with these words: "Through suffering, understanding. Through understanding, compassion. Through compassion, love" (Parsifal, documentary film directed by Tony Palmer), a core idea that was unknown by National Socialism. Alfred Brendel called Professor Kinderman a "very rare bird" to signal his impressive versatility in philosophy, musicology and performance. Inspired by Schiller, Beethoven, and certainly, Wagner, Kinderman believes that "art brings together the thinking and the feeling sides of human experience, creating a synthesis of the rational and the sensuous." The author is the head of the Music Education Division at the University of Illinois and is also a pianist. In 2005, he and his wife Katherine R. Syer, edited the outstanding collection, "A Companion to Wagner's Parsifal." This time, Kinderman offers an in-depth analysis of this inspiring and controversial work and brings two relevant quotations by two Wagnerian scholars; one is by Dieter Borchmeyer: "As a rule, artists who were violently controversial in their own day sooner or later achieve classic status, no longer sparking dissent.... Wagner's works, together with his artistic personality, continue to provoke disagreement and militate against their becoming classics." The other comes from Michael Tanner: "Difficult as it is to believe, Parsifal, Wagner's work of peace and conciliation, has been and remains the subject of even more bitter contention than any of his other works." Kinderman addresses a central question: "How did Wagner successfully create 'another main interest' in the character of Parsifal"?

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