



# Wagner's Parsifal (Studies in Musical Genesis, Structure, and Interpretation)

*William Kinderman*

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**Wagner's Parsifal (Studies in Musical Genesis, Structure, and Interpretation)** William Kinderman  
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.

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