

Thomas Morse

Frau Schindler

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Thomas Morse with librettist Ken Cazan

Thomas Morse began his musical journey at an early age, writing his first orchestral work while in high school. After receiving a bachelor's degree in composition from the University of North Texas, Morse pursued a master's degree at USC in Los Angeles where he continued studies in composition with an added interest in film composing. In the years that followed, Morse composed orchestral scores for more than a dozen feature films including "The Big Brass Ring" (Orson Welles's final script, with William Hurt & Miranda Richardson), "The Sisters" (Maria Bello & Elizabeth Banks), and "The Apostate" (Dennis Hopper), as well as the noted orchestral score for Jerry Bruckheimer's hit CBS series "The Amazing Race". With a desire to renew focus on concert composition, Morse moved to Berlin. It was there that he began research for *Frau Schindler*. The opera was commissioned by the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich, and will receive its world premiere in early 2017.

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Thomas Morse

Frau Schindler



Frau Schindler

Opera in Three Acts

Music by Thomas Morse; Libretto by Kenneth Cazan

Commissioned by Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz

Orchestration:

1(pic).1(ca).1(bcl).1(cbn)/0300/2perc/cel.hp.pf/str

Duration: 120' **Premiere:** Munich, early 2017



COMPOSER'S NOTE

About a decade ago, I relocated from Los Angeles to Berlin, with the primary goal of researching and composing an opera that would portray Oskar Schindler's heroic actions during the holocaust. It was a beginning of a journey that would involve reading countless books and interviews, visiting sites in multiple countries, learning German, and speaking with people who experienced the second world war first-hand.

In deciding on a narrative approach to the Schindler story, it became increasingly apparent that an opera that would essentially retell the same story as Steven Spielberg's iconic cinematic masterpiece, "Schindler's List," was not the best idea. However, in the course of research I had run across the story of Oskar's wife, Emilie Schindler. The story from her perspective provides a window into the psychology of the times — how step by step, an advanced society was slowly seduced into the unthinkable. How people were conditioned to compartmentalize absolutes, in order to rationalize and live with what was happening around them. It was a society that felt that it had been victimized, and in turn used this to justify rage toward an entire people.

Through Emilie's eyes, we also see a complex and paradoxical portrait of Oskar. He was a man who was initially able to severely set aside his moral conscience, in favor of his personal ambition. But he changed his mind about the exploitation of his workers, and actively fought and maneuvered to save them. What level of redemption did he achieve? Based upon scholarly writings and personal accounts, Frau Schindler portrays Oskar as historically accurate as possible.

It should be noted that some of the scenes in the opera are a bit surprising, and they may even seem unbelievable. But we have grounded Frau Schindler in actual events, with very little dramatic license. It goes without saying that this is not a story suitable to any form of sensationalism. I have viewed its telling as a privilege, with a moral and artistic duty to seek impeccable standards of honesty. In creating the music, I have relied solely on my own intense emotional connection to the story, and have had no interest in contrived intellectualism. We hope that as you get to know Emilie, you will hear her voice, and remember her as we have.

CAST

EMILIE SCHINDLER

—mezzo soprano

OSKAR SCHINDLER

—lyric baritone

Nazi Officer 1

Nazi Officer 2

Nazi Officer 3

Wife 1

Wife 2

Wife 3

Marthe Marker (Jewish POW, working as a servant to the Schindlers), lyric soprano

Young Pregnant Woman

Nazi Guard 1

Nazi Guard 2

Nazi Guard 3

Frau Von Daubek, dramatic soprano

Train Engineer

Hilde (Oskar's mistress)

Trude Von Gunten (Jewish POW)

Lotte Schwarzman (Jewish POW)

Rudolf Schwarzman (Jewish POW, Lotte's brother)

Paul Von Gunten (Jewish POW, married to Trude)

Georg Riehl (Jewish POW)

Radio announcer (spoken)

Train Conductor

Commander Klein (American officer)

Comm. Klein's Assistant

Peter Gorkinsky (reporter for the *Argentinisches Tagenblatt*)

Chorus and Cantor

The opera was written with a repertory company in mind. Multiple roles can be cast with the same person.

There are a total of 26 roles and a chorus, independent of those roles, although the Young Pregnant Woman should be a permanent member of the chorus.

LIBRETTIST'S NOTE

The libretto is fashioned as a script that can be read as a play. It is about two living, breathing human beings and their functional/dysfunctional relationship. Tom Morse was amazingly supportive and after tweaks, additions, and more tweaks and additions, and finally, all tied together with his insightful, beautiful music, the rest is about-to-be history. It has been a personally momentous journey and I am humbled to be telling the story of this woman's survival during the darkest period in the history of humanity. It always boils down to women holding the world together, doesn't it?

