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WEINHAPPEL



BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Weinhappel has always set high standards for himself. Since his time as alto soloist with the Vienna Boys' Choir, and later at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts, where he graduated with honors as a Master of Arts, his natural optimism has sparked his determination to shape the future and to accept daunting challenges.

Encouraged by the Wagner specialist Stefan Mickisch, he took advantage of the forced Corona break to further cultivate his talents and to develop into a heroic baritone.

His career arc is proof that he enthusiastically strives for excellence and continually evolves and matures in his art. In the last few years he has appeared in numerous roles, still as a lyrical baritone, as **Figaro** (Der Barbier von Sevilla, Rossini, Kirchstetten, 2018), **Wolfram** (Tannhäuser, Berliner Philharmonie, 2019), **Marcello** (La Bohème, Klosterneuburg, 2022), and **Hamlet** (Hamlet/Thomas, Prague and Pilsen, 2017 and 2018).

Although he received the two highest ranking Czech opera prizes for his lyrical Hamlet in 2017 (**Thalia Award** with the title Best Opera Singer of the Year, and the **Libuska Award** for the most unusual role interpretation by the critics' jury of the OPERA Festival), these successes were not his ultimate goal. On the contrary, he put the lockdown time to good use, reinventing himself, especially in German roles. Thus he amplified his stage persona amid the obstacles brought on by the pandemic: Driven by his optimistic attitude – to generate something positive from what at first glance seemed negative. Therefore it is not surprising that for this reason alone he is captivated by villain roles, such as **Kaspar**, **Pizarro** and **Klingsor**, and failures, such as **Wotan**, **Telramund** and **Holländer** or **Joachanaan**.

His curiosity to portray dark characters, of all things, was aroused already at the beginning of his career, which he launched as **Leonetto** at the Stadttheater Bern, with directors such as Christoph Schlingensiefel (Mea Culpa, Burgtheater Wien, 2008), Otto Schenk (Ralph and Carol, Berlin, 2012) and Michael Haneke (in whose film The Piano Teacher he participated).

Haneke described the Austrian baritone's talent as follows: »He can make people out of roles« evoking Weinhappel's conviction that art - and opera in particular - is not just a realm beside actual life, but rather a wondrous integral component of our being. Weinhappel believes that it is the artist's task - and joy - to (re)unite opera and life, thereby putting them together, as one, "back on their feet" clear and energetic, for the audience to touch.

Impelled and inspired by this conception of identity and purpose, he developed roles such as Lukas (Schlafes Bruder, Vienna, 2009), **Escamillo** (Carmen, Singapore, 2016), **Tarquinius** (The Rape of Lucretia, Ostrava, 2018), **Don Giovanni** (Don Giovanni, Paris, 2020), **Mandryka** (Arabella), and **Donner** (Das Rheingold), as well as works such as Schubert's great song cycles (**Winterreise** and **Schöne Müllnerin**, Vienna, 2018), Schumann's **Dichterliebe**, Vienna, 2020 and Mahler's **Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen**, Budapest, 2013. His appearances in Sofia included his role as **Pater Ecstaticus** in Mahler's 8th Symphony, 2018 and in Mahler's **Lied von der Erde** in 2021.

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His performances in contemporary works have been in **Carmina Burana**, Grafenegg, 2015, Graz, 2019 and **Staatsoperette**, Bregenzer Festspiele, 2016. Occasionally he made forays into the domain of operetta (as Danilo in *The Merry Widow* and Count Homonay in *The Gypsy Baron*, Stadttheater Baden, 2019).

An increasingly important aspect of his life's work is his commitment to children afflicted with neurofibromatosis. Encounters with these children and their affected families led him, in 2017, to begin organizing, and performing in, benefit concerts for the International Patient Organization for Children with Neurofibromatosis. Since 2019 it is his honor and privilege to serve as their Austrian Cultural Ambassador.

In December, 2021 he sang with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in highly acclaimed Christmas concerts in Liverpool. In summer 2022 he garnered extraordinary praise for his first interpretation of **Marcello** in Puccini's *La Bohème*. At the turn of the year 2022/2023 he celebrates his debut in Bremerhaven as Carl Maria von Weber's **Kaspar** in *Freischütz*.

This will be his second role of the list of his new tasks as a heroic baritone. His convincing portrayal of **Wotan** at the Donaufestival 2021 paved the way for a new chapter in Thomas Weinhappel's dynamic odyssey.