

Mieczysław Weinberg (1919-1996)

LADY MAGNESIA, Op. 112 [1975]

Opera in 1 act by Mieczysław Weinberg based on George Bernard Shaw's farce "Passion, Poison and Petrification"

Russian by V. Stanevich · *English adaptation* by David Fanning · *German adaptation* by Hans-Ulrich Duffek
50'

Lord George Fitztollemache tenor
Lady Magnesia, his wife soprano
Phyllis, Lady Magnesia's maid mezzo soprano
Adolphus Bastable, lackey baritone

Mixed choir and children's choir on tape

1(picc).0.2(bass clar).alto sax.0 – 1.0.1.0 – drum set, 3 tom-t, guit/el.guit. bass guit. piano. harm. strings (1/1/1/1/1 [five-string] or in groups) – children's, women's and men's choirs on tape

Lady Magnesia wants to retire to bed and asks her maid Phyllis to prepare the bed. Whilst a horrible storm rages outside, Phyllis, plagued by premonitions, gets to work. The Lady retires, but shortly thereafter Lord Fitztollemache, her jealous husband, sneaks into the chamber with a drawn dagger, intending to murder his wife. Lady Magnesia awakes suddenly and asks what this appearance with the dagger is supposed to mean. With presence of mind, the Lord says that the drawn weapon is a present from his mother. Somewhat disappointed, she says she would have preferred a fish knife ...

The nocturnal chat is interrupted by a knock on the door. It is Adolphus, the Lady's lover, who would like to present his new wardrobe. The young Dandy is admitted, and Lord George prepares drinks for all of them. They clink their glasses and a few moments later Adolphus falls to the floor with vehement stomach pains – the Lord has mixed his drink with poisonous soda water. While the victim of poisoning writhes with pain, the Lady reasons over her love, explaining that in view of the tragic circumstances, she will transfer her feelings of love for Adolphus to her husband – and, on the other hand, will lament her lover like a true wife. Lord George is somewhat unsettled by this change in the circumstances and the outlook connected with them, and since Adolphus definitely prefers not to die, it is decided that they will try an antidote. The Lord recommends highly concentrated chalk. After the desperate lover first tries a fallen piece of the ceiling they ring for Phyllis, whom they ask to dissolve Lady Magnesia's plaster bust in hot water. Adolphus finally drinks this brew which momentarily gives him wonderful relief from his pain – and a gentle death.

Lord George and Lady Magnesia are deeply moved. By taking the large amount of plaster, the lover has been petrified as a statue of himself in death. With piety, they set up Adolphus's statue, which spreads out its arms over the Fitztollemaches in a gesture of blessing.