

## **Transgress**

A One-Act Chamber Opera

This chamber opera is based on the true story of Dora Ratjen, a Nazi Olympic athlete and gold medal winner in the woman's high jump who was later arrested for a man impersonating a woman. This piece examines the life of an intersex individual's search for identity. This opera questions why institutions and societies reinforce the gender binary when biological variations in sexual anatomy already exist naturally. This opera requires a small orchestra, four soloists, and only needs simple staging and a few set-pieces.

### **Creative Team:**

Music by John Young, Libretto by Alan Olejniczak, Dramaturgy by Amanda Clup

### **Synopsis:**

It's 1939 and Dora Ratjen, a celebrated women's Olympic high jumper, is brought to Hohenlychen Sports Sanatorium. She is being detained by Nazi party officials for fear of a public scandal following her arrest for transvestism. Dora is given a humiliating medical examination and the doctor's results prove inconclusive. Dora is intersex and is anatomically neither male nor female. Dora's mother visits her daughter and Dora learns why she was raised as a girl. Later, The Head of the Nazi Sports Commission tries to convince Dora that this scandal will not be tolerated and she must live her life as a woman or face the threat of prison or internment. Corrective surgery (castration) is suggested to help Dora appear more feminine. Dora rejects this procedure and the intimidation from her mother and party officials. Against all, Dora eventually chooses to live her life authentically. Dora will change his name to Heinrich and live the rest of his life as a man.

**Duration:** 60 Minutes

**Style of Music:** Contemporary

**Language:** English

### **Casting for Four Soloists:**

DORA RATJEN *Countertenor*

MRS. RATJEN *Soprano*

HANS VON TSCHAMMER *Baritone*

DR. KARL GEBHARDT *Bass Baritone*

**Instrumentation for Seven Instruments:** English Horn, Alto Saxophone, Bass Clarinet, Horn in F, Piano, Viola, Cello.

**Current Development:** Libretto and full score are completed.