



After completing his architecture studies, Paul Otto A. Baumgarten (1873-1946) first worked in the studio of the Berlin Council Architect Alfred Hoffmann and, from 1901 onwards, in the office of Alfred Messel. After Messel's death, Baumgarten was regarded as his unofficial successor. In 1906, Max Liebermann followed the example set by his neighbour, Johann Hamsphohn, and commissioned Baumgarten to design his country house in Wannsee. In 1914-15, the architect designed a villa and a park-like garden for the manufacturer Ernst Marlier that imitated the palace architecture of the 18th and 19th century.

Today, this is probably the most famous building designed by Baumgarten, the memorial House of the Wannsee Conference. In 1935, Baumgarten's alterations to the Deutsche Opernhaus (German Opera House) on Bismarckstrasse attracted the attention of the Nazi leaders. Goebbels commissioned him to build the Grenzlandtheater in Saarbrücken. From that time on, Baumgarten had the reputation of being Hitler's master theatre builder. He was also entrusted with the renovation of the Schillertheater, the Admiralspalast, the Weimarer Nationaltheater and the Augsburger Stadttheater. In each of these buildings, a special balcony was constructed for the Führer.

Baumgarten was also to play a role in the construction of monumental buildings in Linz, the "city of the Führer", and to design a theatre in Hitler's native town of Braunau/Inn. Due to the war these plans could not be realized. After Speer, Bestelmeyer, Fischer and Gall, Baumgarten was one of Hitler's favourite architects. Since 1935, he was a member of the "Reichskultursenat" (Reich Cultural Senate) but did not join the NSDAP until March 1940. After the war, the 73-year-old fought for his political rehabilitation, maintaining that he had never been politically active and had never held a party office because of his artistic activities.

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