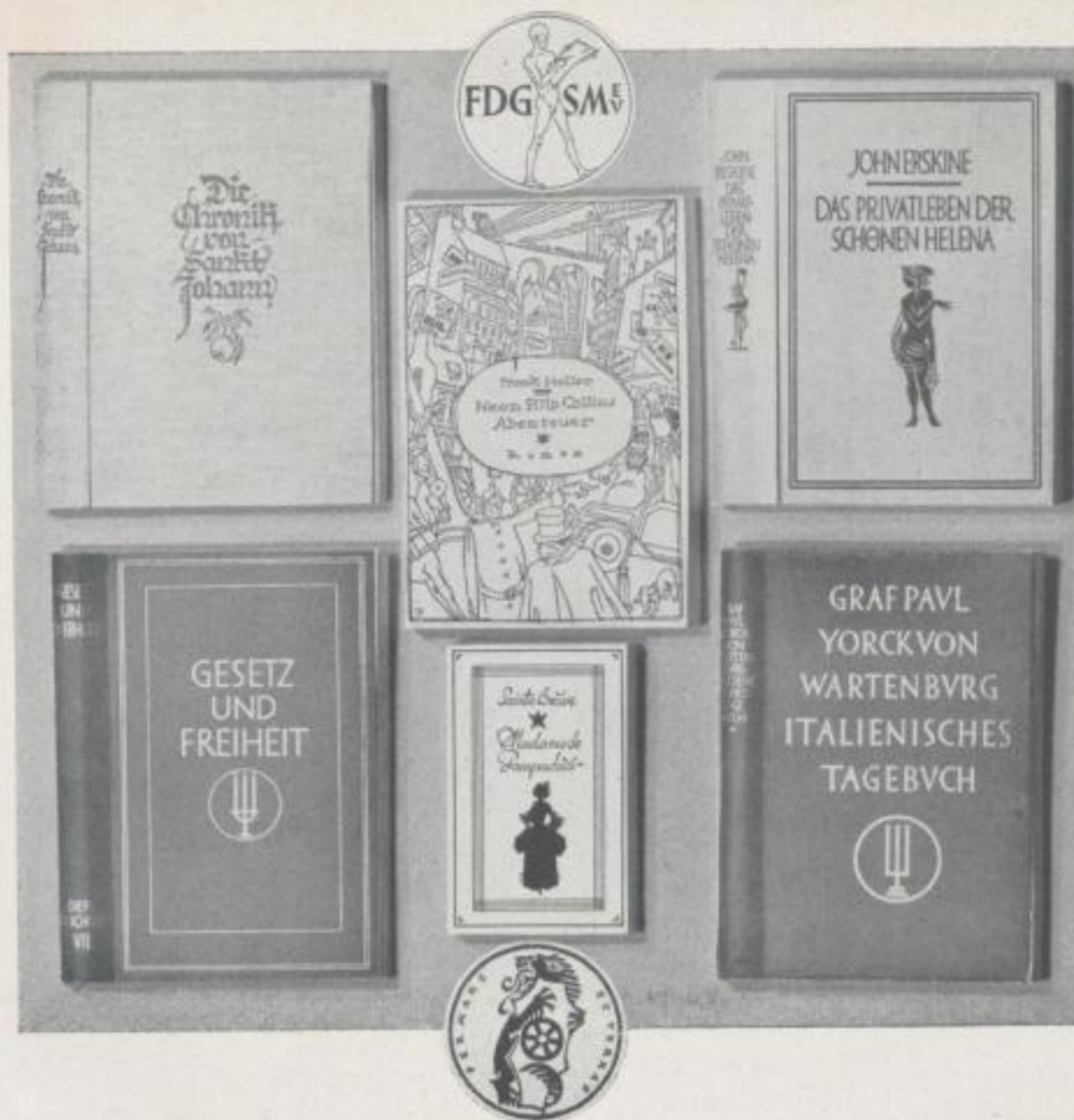


When we show how Professor Dr. Preetorius stages Wagner's operas, it is necessary to point out that stage settings are only part of the manifold activities of this artist. He is also well known as a teacher and a writer on art who has dealt in his articles with almost all the problems of the pictorial arts, and who first won fame in the domain of book illustrations. His cultivated and graphically excellent work — sketches, lithographs and silhouettes — which are mostly only to be found in expensive collectors' editions, are among the best of their kind and serve as a guide to others.

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THE PROBLEM OF STAGING WAGNER'S OPERAS

There is a profound reason for the fact that the staging of Richard Wagner's operas is constantly discussed, constantly gives rise to such violent debates, and constantly demands the making of fresh attempts. There are no works in the whole of stage literature which demand such a degree of explanatory supplementation with the aid of realistic scenery as Wagner's music dramas. For what constitutes the incomparable peculiarity of these works is the close connection between the music and the picture; they become, when brought into intimate relationship, with the text as the explanatory adjunct, an inseparable and organic whole. Indeed the text, in spite of its profundity of thought, is not of such fundamental importance as the picture or scenic vision; it is on the latter, as a secure foundation, that Wagner erects his gigantic musical structure, and it is into this firmly constructed vessel that he pours the surging waves of his polyphonic music in a boundless flood. Hence Wagner's stage directions are also more decisive, imperative and important than those of any other composer of dramas in words or music. The more faithfully they are followed,