



Maß für Maß

Measure for Measure, Deutsches Theater, Berlin, 1935-36

SCHÜTTE THE SCENE-PAINTER

Ernst Schütte is one of the few scene-painters who supervise and personally co-operate in the execution of all their work from the very start to the final lighting rehearsal. His whole life is spent in the theatre. If one wishes to get hold of him in the Deutsches Theater, one finds him at work in one of the workshops of the widely ramified business of the house. He may be showing the painters in the painting hall or in the foyer of the Kammerspiele how the scenery for "Measure for Measure" is to be painted, or be selecting the brocades and silks for the costumes in the tailor's shop, and trying the effect and cut by stage lighting. In the carpenter's shop he gives exact directions for the shape of the supports, pillars, columns, doors, of the window-frames, candelabra and furniture in accordance with his detailed sketches. That can really only be done by an artist who started as a craftsman as Schütte did. He is proud to show his diploma from a firm of furniture manufacturers in Hanover. Schütte served as an apprentice draftsman in the architect's office of Professor Albrecht Haupt and began his practical work when the Schaumburg-Lippe Palace in Detmold was rebuilt. As a designer of furniture and architect, he took charge of the rebuilding of Ricklingen Castle near Hanover and earned so much money that in 1912 he was able to study for some terms at Munich University, especially under Professor Wölfflin. In 1919 he started in business in Hanover as an architect, designed scenery for the Playhouse, painted pictures for the Secession Exhibition, and illustrated the works of the great story-writers of the present day. After a stay in Berlin, Schütte joined the theatrical manager Dr. Ulbrich in Meiningen in 1920 and worked there for three years, after which he went with Dr. Ulbrich to Weimar where the production of "Faust", parts I and II, caused such a stir that Max Reinhardt summoned him to Berlin in 1925. Besides the reconstruction of the Berliner Theater, Schütte had a series of unusual successes in all the Reinhardt theatres. The strong contrast between the sober Tudor style and the gorgeous Spanish baroque in "Elisabeth von England" made an unforgettable impression. In "Kabale und Liebe" the scenery already represented the morbid culture of a petty prince and Miller's economical bourgeois ways. In "Phaea" he reproduced the spurious American film decorations in the studio and in the gorgeous office of the film magnate in an absolutely convincing way. In the Grosses Schauspielhaus the setting for "Die schöne Helena" was a gleaming interplay of colour. Under Hilpert's management Schütte showed great delicacy of touch in reproducing the style of "Lumpazi-Vagabundus", of the enchanting "Kaiserin" and "Fanny Elssler", of "Sonnenuntergang", of "Kaiser von Amerika" (The Apple Cart), and the arresting effect of the Early Italian School in "Measure for Measure". In the Westphalia Hall in Dortmund Schütte took the public by storm with his fascinating scenery for "Wilhelm Tell". In the Théâtre Empire in Paris he mounted a revue operetta with great success, and also works of international literature in Stockholm, Vienna and Salzburg. Schütte is always collecting fresh impressions. It is only a man who is so closely connected with actual artistic craftsmanship, which he has made his own and with which he works and creates his effects, as Ernst Schütte does, that can constantly produce perfect results in his stage pictures.

Transl. by W. L. Campbell