

Cultrual suvey

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CULTURAL SURVEY.

By Dr. HANS EHINGER.

It is generally known that the City of Zurich possesses two large theatres, the Municipal Theater, in which operas, operettas and ballets are staged, and the Playhouse, which, as its name implies puts on legitimate drama, comedies and tragedies. What is perhaps less well known is the fact that the rights of ownership in respect of these two establishments have been widely different, up to the present. The Municipal Theater has, for a long time past been a municipal establishment in the true sense of that word, for, in spite of the very high average rate of attendance at its performances, it could not have continued to exist solely on the proceeds of the sale of tickets. Thus, it has had to be heavily subsidised by both the Canton and the Municipality.

The position of the Playhouse has been quite different for, even though it also has had to depend to some extent on official grants from the public treasury, it remained nevertheless a private undertaking. For the former theatrical director and at one time stage-manager, Ferdinand Rieser — who died a short time ago as the result of an accident — had acquired considerable rights over the house. It is only just lately that his widow, Marianne Rieser-Werfel, has offered to sell her shares in this company — for that's what

it was — as well as in the Pfauen A.G. Should the Communal Council approve the motion put forward in this respect by the Municipal Council — and there would appear to be very little doubt on this subject — then Zurich will be practically the sole owner of this second important theatre. The sum involved in this purchase amounts to some three million francs, although, of course, the whole of this amount will not constitute fresh expenditure, as the Playhouse had already been receiving pecuniary aid. It will, however, settle once for all a problem which was always coming up for discussion, over a period of many years.

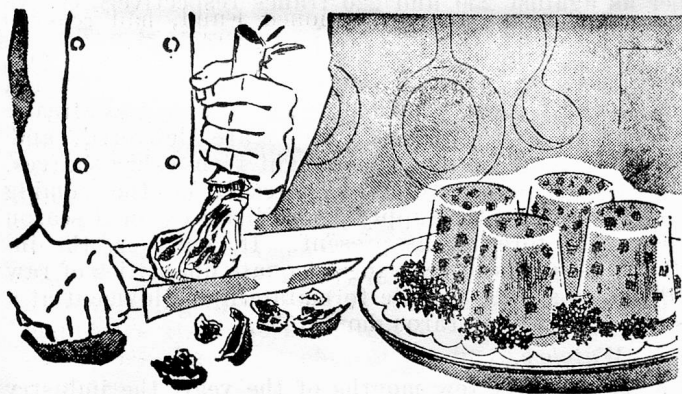
And as we are already speaking of the stage in Zurich, I would like to say a few words about a very exceptional ballet performance, given at the Municipal Theatre, which made a very strong impression on me. Two ballets were performed on the same evening: the "Sacre du Printemps" by Igor Stravinsky and "The Legend of Joseph" by Richard Strauss, with Victor Reinshager as conductor and Jaroslav Berger as choreograph. This, by the way, was the first time that the "Sacre" was danced in Switzerland.

The Zurich Playhouse, which is shortly to become the property of the City of Zurich, has for its immediate neighbour the Zurich Art Gallery which has also been passing through troubled times. Fortunately, however, one of its chief anxieties has now been removed, in that the subsidy which it received has now been raised from 80,000 to 200,000 francs. In return, the Art Gallery is bound henceforth, to allow free access to its exhibitions by the public, every Sunday afternoon, in addition to the thousands of school-children who visit it throughout the year, without paying anything.

Whereas in Basle and Berne all stipends are paid by the Commune, this is not the case in Zurich; moreover, Zurich is not in the same fortunate position as Basle, where the Art Gallery received a magnificent bequest from a private collector. Among the pictures thus donated are to be found those in the Conrad Witz Collection, and the choice samples of the art of Hans Holbein the Younger, to mention only a couple of outstanding names. Boecklin is also very well represented in Basle, although it is Zurich which has now organised a very remarkably exhibition of the works of this great Master, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

An exhibition which is very much out of the ordinary is now on view in the Arts and Crafts Museum in Zurich: it is entitled "The Book Cover" and has been got together by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The art of 27 countries is represented by some 400 "dust jackets" for books, and it is very satisfactory to find that the special group which has been allocated to the Swiss graphical artists in this very international company, has been awarded honourable distinction. Moreover, a young Swiss graphical artist has just achieved great international success. Ernst Scheidegger, who is at present working in Paris, has been awarded the First Prize in the competition for a poster for the Ninth Triennial in Milan.

And to conclude this little survey, we will remain faithful to Zurich and announce the good news that it has just become known that in the competition for the best festival play commemorating Zurich's entry into the Confederation 600 years' ago, the winner is R. J. Humm.

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