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### Theatre and Music

The theatre troupe D.T.B. [Deutsche Theater Bühne – German theatre stage] performed Hermann Sudermann's play *Stein unter Steinen* [Stone among Stones] for the first time on Saturday. The D.T.B. has presented us with one of the finest creations of this master of depicting the human condition.<sup>1</sup>

“Stein unter Steinen” is the sixth of Sudermann's plays that we have seen performed, and like all the others, “Ehre” [Honour], “Heimat” [Homeland], “Glück im Winkel” [Lucky Corner], “Johannisfeuer” [Fires of St. John], “Es lebe das Leben” [Long live life], it is a gripping and substantial play from which one can draw so much and which has also received a particularly successful and warm reception. The performance of this piece, with its splendid depictions of social environments and its pleasant atmosphere, demonstrated insightful and sensitive work on the part of the actors as well as careful production.

Herr Diederich managed the portrayal of the stonemason Zarncke quite superbly. His characterisation of this splendid figure was a brilliant performance. Considering that until now Herr Diederich's talent was dedicated to comedy, his performance is all the more remarkable, as he has hardly played these kinds of serious roles which present their own set of challenges. He consistently found the correct tone. For instance, in the first scene of the fourth act, he understood the real good-heartedness of Zarncke's words of consolation to his daughter, which he conveyed impressively. Herr Häusler, in the difficult role of the crippled, wistfully lyrical daughter, supported him particularly well in this scene.

After overcoming some initial rough patches, Herr Häusler himself revealed a real love for the theatre and a strong talent. Herr Emler's performance as the philosophical convict Strube, who continually indulges in vivid memories of the “high school”, was convincing. His excellent dialect and famous mask were well received by the audience. Herr Broich offered a fine performance in the role of the released prisoner Biegler and especially in the first act he articulated the shyness and depression of this hounded man very well.

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928) was a German playwright and novelist known alongside Gerhart Hauptmann as one of the foremost representatives of German naturalist literature. Sudermann's work is characterised by nationalism and a romanticized idea of German ethnicity and homeland. However, his works often also sensitively portray the plight of the poor and marginalized. *Stein unter Steinen* tells the story of Jakob Biegler, a young and talented but hard-up stonemason's apprentice who is sentenced to five years' imprisonment for accidentally killing his landlord in a heated confrontation. Upon release, Jakob finds it difficult to get work, and is helped by the master stonemason Zarncke, who secures him a job as a night watchman. The play charts the story of Biegler's struggle to fit back into civil society, facing prejudice and the need to compete against others with less blemished records. It ends optimistically, when Biegler and waitress Lore Eichhorn fall in love and start a family. The fact that their extramarital relationship is portrayed in a sympathetic light was controversial at the time, but throws a critical light on the strict morals of the day.

The least pleasant role, that of the Stonemason Götting, a brutal and characterless braggart, fell to Herr Klees who rose to the task with his usual aplomb. Although he seemed at first to be laying it on a bit thickly, when I read the text it was clear to me that it was due to the nature of this 'scheming' role.

Herr Himmelmann's natural gift for acting allowed him to tackle the role of Lore without trouble: he played her deftly and realistically. Herr Bremer offered a very nice character study and an outstanding portrayal of old Eichholz, and Herr Weinschenk was excellent as the Police Commissioner. Messrs. Zeisner, Hageböck, Merten, Kreher and Sonnenschein also put in good performances in the smaller roles.

Some of the actors could perhaps place more emphasis on clearer pronunciation. The portrayal of the stonemason's workshop with its stone blocks and tools presented some technical difficulties on our little stage, which were overcome, however, with great skill.

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