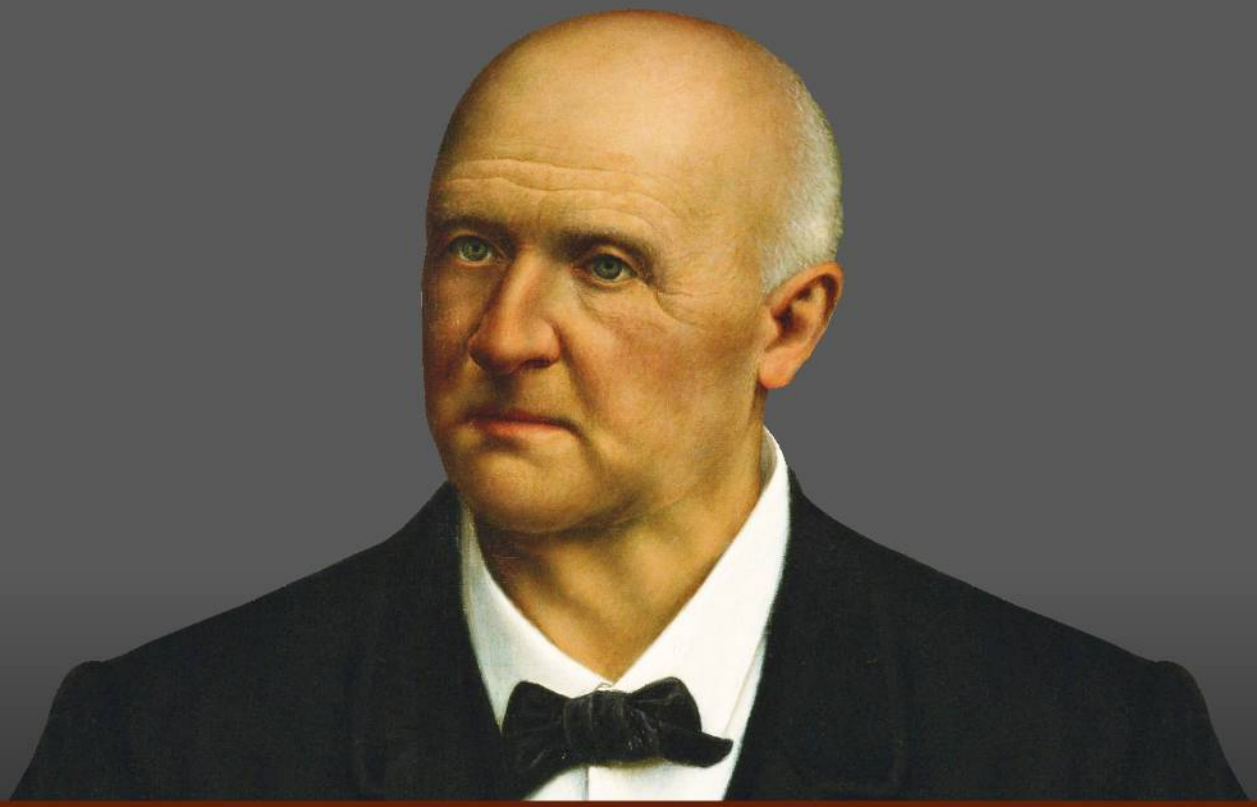


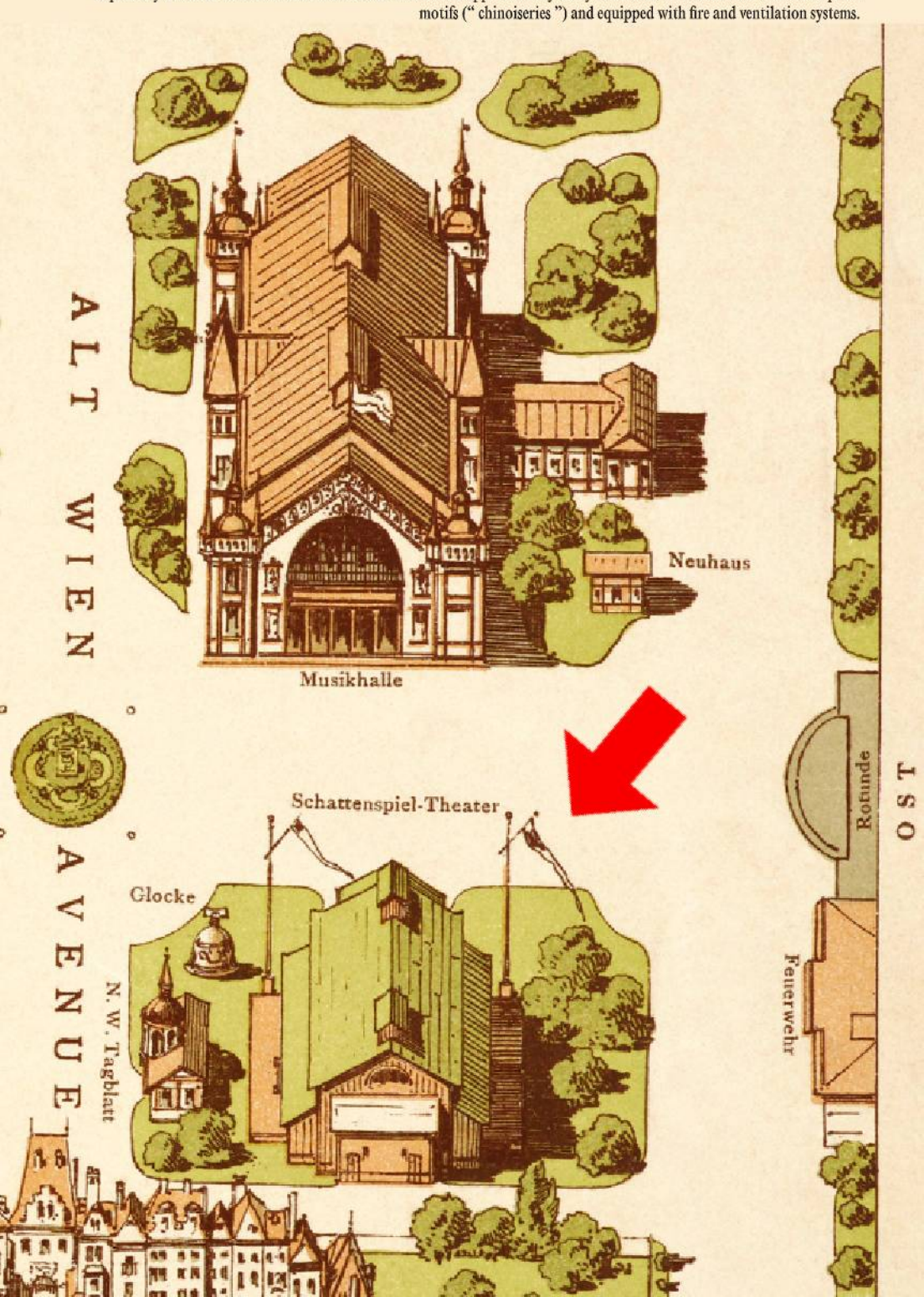
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Chinese shadow theatre



Chinese shadow theatre

The Chinese shadow theatre is a wooden pavilion, which faces the Exhibiton Concert Hall beside the East portal of the Rotunda. Intended for the " théâtre d'ombres " of Michel Mortier from Paris, it is built by master-carpenter Johann Höbinger according to plans by the chief architect Oscar Marmorek. It measures approximately 26 by 20 metres, decorated with Chinese inspired motifs (" chinoiseries ") and equipped with fire and ventilation systems.





Chinese shadow theatre

The “ Grazer Tagespost ” reports about a specific exhibit known as the “ Wienerisches Schattenspiel ” (Viennese shadow play) .

This light hearted, entertaining “ novelty ” is one of the most popular attractions at the Prater !

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The adoption of the shadow puppet theatre modeled on the Montmartre « café “ Le chat noir ” » clearly goes back to an offer from French exhibitors.

Princess Pauline von Metternich, who is familiar with the “ théâtre d’ombres ”, may also be a contributing factor in its inclusion in the exhibition programme. [She promotes intimate, “ avant-garde ” amusements at the Imperial court and in her private “ salon ”, including “ shadow plays ”.]

Before proceeding with regular public performances, a first shadow play is presented as a pre-premiere in front of a select audience mostly composed by the aristocraty.

Puppet shows are performed in the afternoon, and shadow plays in the evening.

There is also performances for children during the day.

Folk singer Rosa Neruda-Bernstein is one of the regular performers.

All the shadow silhouettes are created by the illustrator and caricaturist Hanns Schließmann.

shadow plays programmed during the exhibition

“ Gute Bekannte ” (Among good acquaintances) based on a text by Isidor Fuchs features famous Viennese musicians. Folk singer Schwarzmaier delivers effectively the “ witty text with drastic allusions ”.

“ Wien bei Tag und Nacht ” (Vienna by day and night) is written by Alexander Weigl. Duets and songs are performed by folk singers Rosa Neruda-Bernstein and Schwarzmaier. This production remained in the repertoire until the end of the exhibition.

“ Abenteuer eines Wieners in Bagdad ” (Adventures of a Viennese man in Bagdad) blends Viennese humour with Oriental themes.

“ Die Türken vor Wien ” (The Turks before Vienna) depicts the second siege of Vienna by the Ottomans in 1683 (the Second Turkish siege) .

“ Das Pariser Pflaster ” (The Parisian pavement) depicts the typical urban street life in the French capital.

“ Die Familie Spießberger in Paris ” (The Spießberger family in Paris) is an adaptation from the French shadow play “ In Dahomey ” currently performed at the Musée Grévin in Paris. The set design is by Louis Morin and Hanns Schließmann. The music is by Louis Paulin.

Also, “ Le Journal électrique ” and “ Revue parisienne ” based on text and drawings by Louis Morin (a frequent collaborator at the Montmartre « café “ Le chat noir ” ») , with music by Gaston Paulin.

The Chinese shadow plays (“ ombres chinoises ”) demonstrate the fascination with light, shadow and pre-cinematic visual story telling. It involves thin leather cut puppets (or, in some traditions, paper) . The figures are then dyed or painted and assembled with movable joints so that arms, legs and heads can be manipulated behind a back-lit screen to tell stories, which are often accompanied by music and/or singing.

Shadow plays started spreading throughout Europe at the end of the seventeenth century, probably via Italy. It is known that several Italian showmen performed in Germany, France and England during this period.

Between 1887 and 1897, painters, writers, and musicians presented satirical pieces at the Montmartre « café “ Le chat noir ” » in Paris.

Chinese shadow theatre





Chinesisches Theater.

Internationale Musik- und Theater-Ausstellung, Wien 1892.

Chinese shadow theatre - correspondence card

Carl Michael Ziehrer



drawing by Hanns Schließmann

As part of the « International Exhibition for Music and Theatre » , the « Deutschmeister » Infanterie Regiment Number 4 (« k.u.k. Infanterieregiment " Hoch- und Deutschmeister " Nr. 4 ») , under the direction of the Austrian composer Carl Michael Ziehrer, performs after each fireworks display.

Carl Michael Ziehrer



silhouette by Hanns Schließmann

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Shadow play theatre



3 Cheers for the puppeteers !!!



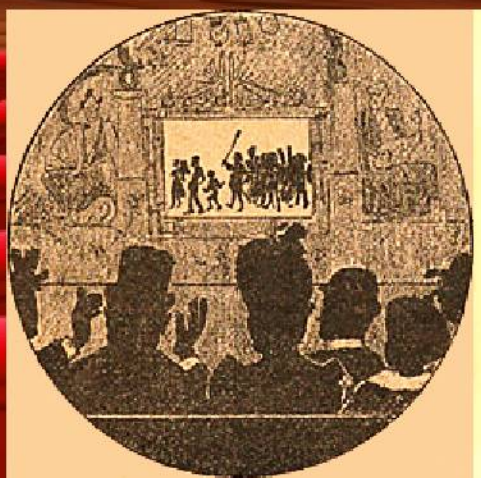


Shadow play theatre



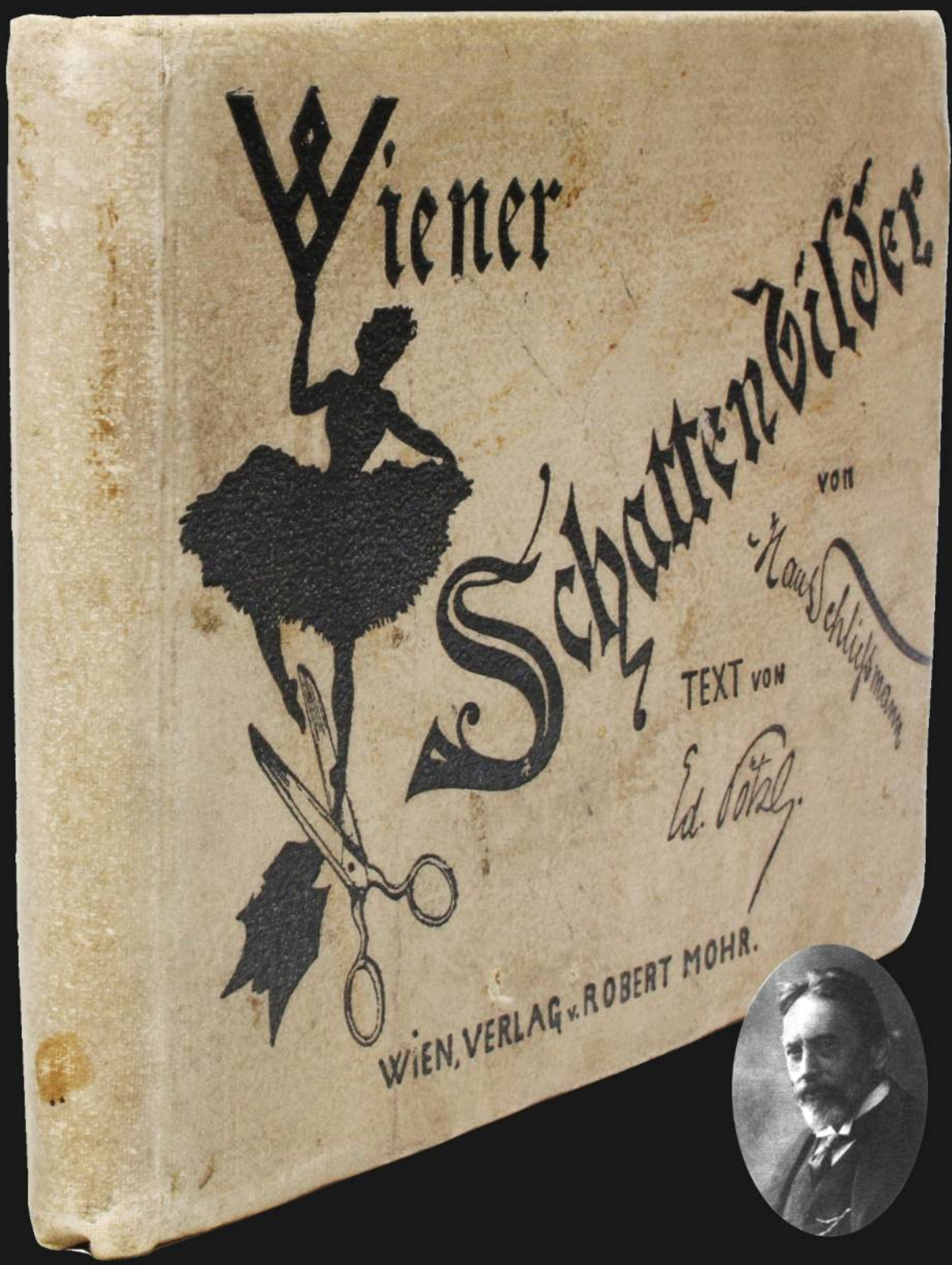


This « skit » featuring Schließmann's shadow silhouette of Bruckner highlights his reputation as a « legendary organ improviser » and as an awkward public figure. We can appreciate his original character head seen in profile and his red handkerchief hanging from the pocket of his loose fitting jacket.









Viennese Shadow Silhouettes by Hanns Schließmann

The 173 page album entitled Wiener Schattenbilder, with funny commentaries by journalist and author Eduard Pötzl, was published by Robert Mohr in 1892 : the year of the International Exhibition for Music and Theatre A charming, witty cultural time capsule, which viewed high society, street life, theatre, music, sports and the military through the unique sens of humour of late nineteenth century Vienna (Wiener Schmäh) The collection featured, amongst others, musicians Johann Strauß junior, Anton Bruckner, Hans Richter, Pablo de Sarasate, and Hans von Bülow.