

Plakat: Der Hund des Satans - Conan Doyle Zyklus I. Folge - Ausschließlich im Omnia Kino Palast [Budapest]

Der Hund von Baskerville
Regie: Rudolf Meinert, Deutschland 1914
Darsteller: Alwin Neuß, Friedrich Kühne, Hanni Weisse, Erwin Fichtner



Burkhard Sülzen, Berlin (2010) - www.plakatkontor.de
Katalog 14, Nr. 4

Inhaltsangabe zum Film:

Zitiert nach dem Katalog zum Festival „Le giornate del cinema muto“, Pordenone 2009. S. 36 f. [Text von Jay Weissberg]

„Considering Sherlock Holmes’ enormous popularity in Germany, and The Hound of the Baskervilles in particular, it’s not surprising that the novel’s first screen adaptation should come from Berlin. In 1907 Ferdinand Bonn premiered his stage production Der Hund von Baskerville: Schauspiel in vier Aufzügen aus dem Schottischen Hochland (immediately translated into Russian and presented in Moscow

the same year), while in the same period Julius Philipp and Richard Oswald presented their competing version, both later plundered for this cinematic outing. As the subtitle of the Bonn play implies, the action was moved from Dartmoor to Scotland, a change which Oswald and Rudolf Meinert retain in the film – indeed, the peasants of “Schloss Baskerville” appear, from the waist down, to have stepped out of Annie Laurie, but from the waist up it’s more Old Heidelberg.

Largely unseen for decades until the Filmmuseum München’s 2006 restoration, there was much speculation on plot and characters (interestingly, Bonn’s play was described as an adaptation of both Poe and Conan Doyle). The film’s narrative is necessarily streamlined,

and there’s nothing of the book’s chilling atmosphere upon the moors, but the addition of a secret pipeline, a futuristic communication device, and a watchful bust of Napoleon seem heavily indebted to Feuillade and serials, furthering the neo-Gothic element already noticeable in the novel. The dog, played by a noble Harlequin Great Dane, is far from the original’s hound-of-hell (“luminous, ghastly and spectral”), appearing more likely to offer affectionate, slobbering licks than savage throat-tears. Other than the peasants’ kilts there’s also little here to signal a UK setting, while the incongruously bright manse is merely given a British baronial gloss with the addition of a few suits of armour.

1914 was Rudolf Meinert’s first year as a director, and his interest in effects of light is already noticeable, both through strong interior shadows and a striking silhouetted landscape – undoubtedly cameraman Karl Freund was also involved in such set-ups. True to Conan Doyle’s spirit, if not the actual novel, Meinert relishes the opportunities afforded by multiple disguises, and while Friedrich Kühne rather overdoes his Stapleton (it comes as a relief when his ridiculously long side-whiskers are finally clipped), the other performers are better handled. Alwin Neuss, who essayed the role in one of the earlier Philipp/Oswald stagings, is almost comically calm until he dons his disguise. Contrary to conjecture, Watson does make an appearance, though his role is brief and could easily be dispensed with.

Der Hund von Baskerville was wildly successful: nearly 50,000 tickets were sold within the opening fortnight. Taking advantage of the characters’ popularity, Vitascope rushed a sequel into production, releasing Das einsame Haus later in 1914 with the same cast and crew (...).“