



A Companion to the Works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal (Studies in German Literature Linguistics and Culture)

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The Viennese poet, dramatist, and prose writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929) was among the most celebrated men of letters in the German language at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. His early poems established his reputation as the 'child prodigy' of German letters, and a few remain among the most anthologized in the German language. His early lyric dramas prompted no less a judge than T. S. Eliot to pronounce him, along with Yeats and Claudel, one of the three European writers who had done the most to revive verse drama in modern times. His critical essays attest to the subtle powers of discrimination that marked him as one of the most discerning literary critics of the day. And yet he underwent a crisis of cognition and language around 1900, and from then on turned away from poetry and lyric drama almost entirely, concentrating instead on more public forms of drama such as the libretti for Richard Strauss's operas, the plays written for the Salzburg Festival (of which he was a co-founder), and on discursive and narrative prose. The body of work that Hofmannsthal left behind at his premature death is matched in its variety, breadth, and quality by that of only a handful of German writers. And yet posterity has not been kind to his reputation: those who admired the early work for its aesthetic refinement disdained his turn to more popular forms, whereas many of those who might have been receptive to the more committed and public stance of his later work were put off by his conservative politics. This volume of new essays by top Hofmannsthal scholars re-examines his extraordinarily rich and complex body of work, assessing his stature in German and world literature in the new century. Contributors: Katherine Arens, Judith Beniston, Benjamin Bennett, Nina Berman, Joanna Bottenberg, Douglas A. Joyce, Thomas A. Kovach, Ellen Ritter, Hinrich C. Seeba, Andreas Thomasberger, W. Edgar Yates. Professor Thomas Kovach is Head of the Department of German Studies at the University of Arizona.

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