Émigré musicians from Nazi Europe had a lasting influence on the development of opera in Britain. In 1934, the English landowner John Christie (1882-1962) decided to build a small opera house on his estate, Glyndebourne, near Lewes in East Sussex. At the same time, the acclaimed conductor Fritz Busch (1890-1951) had been dismissed as music director of the Dresden State Opera because of his opposition to the Nazis. Together with the formidable opera director Carl Ebert (1887-1980), who was also anti-Nazi, and general manager Rudolf Bing (1902-1997), who was forced to flee because he was Jewish, Busch helped to pioneer a new, internationally mobile system of operatic production with the highest artistic standards. Bing and the Glyndebourne Company would also go on to be instrumental in the establishment of the Edinburgh International Festival.

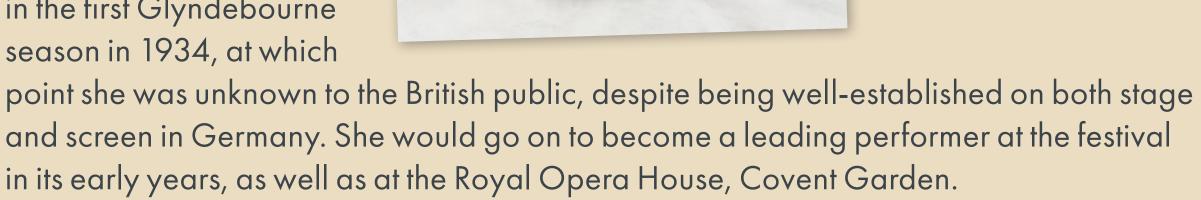
> Photographs of Hans and Erna Gál and Audrey Mildmay and Jani Strasser courtesy of the Glyndebourne Archives

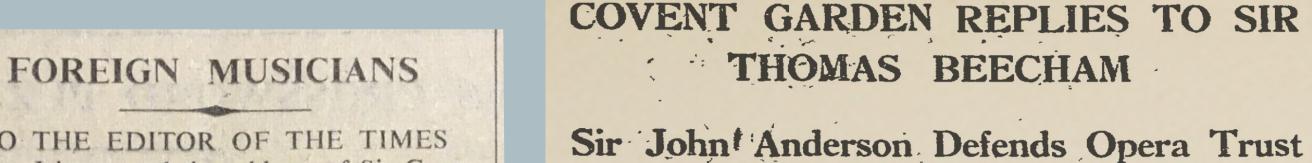
In the photograph on the left, we see Hans Gál and his sister Erna – a language coach and pianist – pictured at Glyndebourne in 1951. In the background is the director Carl Ebert. In the photograph on the

right, the soprano (and wife of John Christie) Audrey Mildmay is pictured with the singer and vocal coach Jani Strasser, who acted as head of music at Glyndebourne.

Dress designed by Anne Litherland and photograph of Irene Eisinger courtesy of the Glyndebourne Archives

This dress was worn in performances of Mozart's Le nozze di Figaro by the singer Irene Eisinger (1903-1994), who sang the role of Susanna. Like many others, Eisinger was forced to leave Germany because of her Jewish origins. She was invited by Ebert and Busch to sing in the first Glyndebourne





night issued a reply to Sir Thomas

Beecham, who earlier in the day had

strongly criticised the constitution

"Let everything be brought into the open," he said. The public and press must be made fully aware of the intense

whole body of the public press of Great Britain."

"What does this list suggest to you?"
ne asked. "The first and most noticeable
feature is that there is not a single person
who knows anything about opera or has

had practical experience of it and whose opinion is worth a brass farthing. The second feature is the total absence of the

names of any British musician ever

"The appointment of an alien, and especially one bearing a German name, to the post of musical director of the British National Opera is so incredible that I have from time to time to remind myself that it has actually happened and is not some

were under the impression that the func-

Referring to the appointment of Dr. himself to his task. Karl Rankl as musical director. Sir "The fact that sine

MEMBERSHIP OF TRUST

and working of the trust.

The chairman of the Covent Garden members of the Government and the Opera Trust, Sir John Anderson, last House of Commons, to members of local authorities, and for circulation abroad.

Sir Thomas, speaking at the annual conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians at Brighton, said that members of the society should demand an inquiry "into the doings of all persons associated with the Covent Garden to the society should demand an inquiry "into the doings of all persons associated with the Covent Garden to the society should demand an inquiry "into the doings of all persons associated with the Covent Garden to the society should demand this great gifts are associated with other characteristics, including, as he has demonstrated again and again, an unbridled to prove

resentment against—and even disgust Marchant, Sir Steuart Wilson, Dr. William with—the strange and un-English way Walton, Professor E. J. Dent, the Hon.

vast sum of £100,000 has been spent in one year with so little to show for it except the disapproval of almost the lessees of the Opera House, and under

A statement issued by Sir John

"I have read the remarks attributed to Sir Thomas Beecham-with surprise and

"The Covent Garden Opera Trust, of which I became chairman on the death

of Lord Keynes, and whose policy and activities Sir Thomas criticises so severely, includes such well-known names in the musical and artistic world as Sir Stanley

"As regards Dr. Rankl, the musical director, it was necessary in the unanimous judgment of the trust, to have in

their possession someone with extensive practical experience of the day-to-day working of an opera howse, conducted as an institution on the scale demanded by the conditions of Covent Garden. The trustees have the highest admiration for the manner in which he has addressed

inference that the public are far from

sharing Sir Thomas's dissatisfaction.
"The subsidy from the Exchequer to

fall considerably short of what has been provided in the cases of the great Continental opera houses."

Anderson last night said

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES Sir,—I have read the address of Sir George Dyson in the January issue of the Musical Times and the article which it evoked in The Times on Friday, February 13. I feel that I must support the article and Dame Myra Hess's letter of February 20. We patrons of music are not prepared to make this artificial and feeble distinction between British and foreign artists. We want the best artists we can get, and Glyndebourne claims that it has proved that, given the right opportunities and the right preparation, British artists have nothing to fear from foreign names. We claim also that this view was accepted by the British

public. In the 1938 and 1939 festivals we published in the Press daily the nationalities of our singers. Covent Garden omitted the nationalities. Covent Garden in 1939 gave three performances of Don Giovanni with only one British singer and reduced their price to 25s., while we with only one foreigner, Baccaloni, maintained our price at £2 and sold out nine performances. Surely this is the answer to this attitude of despair and feebleness argued in certain circles?

Glyndebourne wants an. "open shop," and on behalf of British musicians has no fear of competition or of snobbery. British music must put its house in order and not retire to bed with a cold. Surely out of the fusion of British and foreign artists the right solution will come, so long as there is one purpose and one purpose only—the search for the best artists, irrespective of national exploitation and prejudices and of commercial profit. Yours truly,

JOHN CHRISTIE. February 20.

Debates in The Times

exchange in The Times, in which the Glyndebourne founder John Christie argued in favour of the employment of

tions of a musical director in an opera house were of such exotic, intricate, and profound a nature that only a person of the sublime intelligence of a Teuton could public criticism: this had been a cheme. Cry halt to the prepos-cheme to acquire Covent Garden make out a practical scheme, aided Hawkes, Ltd., said that he had no comment to make. Mr. Boosey and Mr. by your experts, to present to the Govern-The letter above is taken from a 1942 Ralph Hawkes are members of the Sir Thomas said that his address was trust, in addition to those named in Sir to be printed and would be sent to all John Anderson's statement.

refugee musicians. His insistence on the need for the best-quality performers is consistent with the internationalism of the Glyndebourne enterprise. A reply from George Dyson (director of the Royal College of Music and head of the Incorporated Society of Musicians) defended a more protectionist stance. He highlighted concerns about the scarcity of work for British musicians during the war and the effect of military conscription on them.

After the war, there was more controversy about the appointment of the Austrian-born conductor Karl Rankl as music director of the Royal Opera House. Thomas Beecham, the most prominent English opera conductor before the war, made a controversial speech attacking the Covent Garden Trust's decision at the Incorporated Society of Musicians' annual conference in 1949, as can be seen in this article from The Times.

Elsewhere, the Austrian émigré Karl Rankl (1898-1968) was appointed in 1946 as music director of the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, where he used his continental experience to build the first full-time opera company in Britain. While the appointment of foreigners such as Rankl and Busch faced opposition, it undoubtedly transformed the operatic landscape and offered new opportunities to Britishborn musicians too.

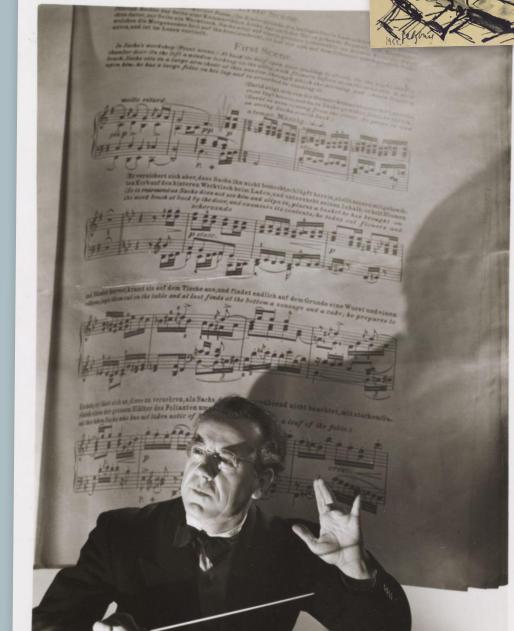


Photographs of émigré staff members courtesy of the Glyndebourne Archives

Here we see a number of the early Glyndebourne staff who moved — either by choice or by force — to Britain following the rise of the Nazis. On the top row, from the left: conductor Fritz Busch, administrator Rudolf Bing, and director Carl Ebert. On the second row, from the left: vocal coach Jani Strasser (1902-1978), pianist and educator Martin Isepp (1930-2011), and conductor Hans Oppenheim (1892-1965). Many other émigré musicians, including Paul Hamburger, Peter Gellhorn, Joseph Horovitz, Laura Sarti, and Bertholdt Goldschmidt, would be involved with the Glyndebourne festival throughout the twentieth century.

The drawings below were made by the German émigré artist Milein Cosman (1921-2017), who came to Britain in 1939 and became well known for her striking drawings of performing artists. On the right is her drawing of the title character in the Glyndebourne Company production of Verdi's Macbeth at the first Edinburgh Festival in 1947. One of the original group of Glyndebourne émigrés, Rudolf Bing, was the founding director of the Edinburgh Festival, which sought to champion international composers, conductors and performers in an atmosphere of post-war reconciliation. The striking similarity between the cityscapes of Salzburg (famous for its opera festival) and Edinburgh are said to have inspired Rudolf Bing to start an international festival in the Scottish capital. Milein Cosman paid regular visits to the festivals in both Edinburgh and Salzburg every summer, producing thousands of drawings of performers in action.

Drawings by Milein Cosman of (left to right) Salzburg (1952), Edinburgh Castle (1948) and Macbeth (1947) Courtesy of the RCM and the Cosman Keller Art and Music Trust



Milein Cosman at the Edinburgh Festival in his play The Man in the Raincoat.

Karl Rankl had a successful career as a conductor of opera in Germany until the rise of the Nazis caused him to leave his post as principal conductor of the state opera house in Wiesbaden and move back to his native Austria. After a period as director of opera in Graz, he moved to Prague in 1937, only to be forced to flee in 1939, due to his opposition to the Nazis and the Jewish heritage of his wife. With the help of contacts at the BBC, he came to London and resumed conducting in 1944. Two years later he was offered the musical directorship of the new Royal Opera Company being established at Covent Garden. In the face of some xenophobic opposition, he was successful in helping the new company progress and professionalise during the lean years during the war. He went on to conduct the Scottish National Orchestra in 1952 and the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company in Australia from 1957.

