



*The Beggar's Opera*, 1940, directed by John Guelgud and designed by Motley.

**ABOVE:** Michael Redgrave as Macheath with Eugenie Walmsley as Jenny Diver (ANGUS McBEAN)

**OPPOSITE:** Roy Henderson, Audrey Mildmay and Constance Willis as the Peachums (ANGUS McBEAN)



Angus McBean  
Kendall

ROY HENDERSON	MR. PEACHUM
CONSTANCE WILLIS	MRS. PEACHUM
Audrey Mildmay	TOLLY PEACHUM

"THE BEGGAR'S OPERA"

# 1950s

... the search for support materialised. Moran Caplat, the new General Manager, negotiated underwriting provided by a long-standing Glyndebourne enthusiast, Spedan Lewis of the John Lewis Partnership, amounting to £12,500 sufficient to meet the deficit on the re-birth of the Festival on its home ground.

So 1950 saw the company's homecoming but also marked the particularly welcome return of Fritz Busch for the first time since the war to conduct *Entführung* and *Così*, in which Jurinac transferred from Dorabella the year before to Fiordiligi with deafening and endless applause. A third production, *Figaro*, was also staged at Glyndebourne that year, with the Met baritone, George London, in the title role.

Glyndebourne was still attracting international singers including Erich Kunz (Guglielmo), who was in the Chorus before the war and had become a hot property in Vienna, Blanche Thebom (Dorabella), a mezzo star at the Met, and Alda Noni (Blonde and Despina), the best 'soubrette' of her day who had already sung Oscar the year before for Glyndebourne.

In August 1950 Glyndebourne, which had released its grip on the management of the Edinburgh Festival, returned there with a revival of *Figaro* and a new production – by Ebert (as ever) – of Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* in its first version with Miles Malleon as M. Jourdain (a *nouveau riche sans pareil*) in his adapted and foreshortened take on Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* as the prologue to the opera. This was the only time that Beecham conducted an opera for Glyndebourne, despite countless meetings, negotiations and abortive plans with him in the post-war years. (He was even a tenant on the Glyndebourne Estate at the time.) *Ariadne* also brought Glyndebourne together with the designer Oliver Messel for the first time, which presaged the start of a long

and productive association with this artist, consisting of eight productions in all.

Over the next four years, three significant developments occurred affecting Glyndebourne's financial well-being. Firstly, in 1951 the Treasury splashed out on a considerable grant for the Festival of Britain, £25,000 which was voted for the Glyndebourne Festival that year – and for that year only. The Glyndebourne Festival has never received a penny of public money since. (In the late 1960s I had a meeting to persuade Lord Goodman, Chairman of the Arts Council, and Lord Harewood, Chairman of its Music Panel, to give grant-aid to the Festival, but the request was refused, largely on the grounds that such subsidy would help the 'wealthy elite' to attend our performances. The only way round this problem was to reduce seat prices and let in a wider audience, but this would then result in a need for greater subsidy out of proportion with the return on Government expenditure. Looking back at this unsuccessful endeavour, I thank my luck that the Festival retained and has always maintained its independence.)

1951 saw the first professional production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* in Britain, with Busch, Ebert and Messel – and Jurinac singing the most sublime Ilia I have ever heard or am likely to hear, Birgit Nilsson (Electra) giving her only performances with the Glyndebourne company, Richard Lewis (Idomeneo) guaranteeing much of his future career at Glyndebourne, and Léopold Simoneau (Idamante), in my view the finest Mozart tenor other than Fritz Wunderlich. Simoneau also sang Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* that year. The applause at the end of 'Il mio tesoro' was always prolonged. Geraint Evans made his debut at Glyndebourne as Masetto, and Lisa Della Casa was a delectable Countess in *Figaro*.

Glyndebourne was invited back to Edinburgh in 1951, where it repeated *Don Giovanni* and mounted another new production of a Verdi opera, *La forza del destino*, with Ebert and Busch – the last appearance that Busch made with Glyndebourne. In



September of that year he died, having contributed massively to a pivotal chapter in Glyndebourne's history.

The second development in restructuring Glyndebourne's financial wellbeing was largely initiated by a Hungarian, Miki Sekers, who had settled in England shortly before the war and created with entrepreneurial success, the West Cumberland Silk Mills. My father and Sekers were kindred spirits in their love of private enterprise and distaste for publicly funded dependence – and their love of opera. Sekers devised means by which Glyndebourne could generate more funds over and above Box Office receipts on which my father's enterprise depended – by tapping into additional support from Glyndebourne's existing audience. Firstly the Glyndebourne Festival Society, effectively the 'Friends of Glyndebourne' – the first of many such associations to be created by artistic organizations over many years thereafter across the country – was instituted, membership of which provided priority booking and, for Glyndebourne, valuable subscription income; and secondly the large programme book as we now know it, covering the whole Festival and producing valuable income from advertisements, was brought into existence.

1950

1951

Death of Fritz Busch  
Festival of Sussex  
*Idomeneo* had its first professional production in the UK

1952

Glyndebourne Festival programme book started

1953

Death of Audrey Mildmay  
*The Rake's Progress* first professional stage performance in the UK

1954

Formation of the Glyndebourne Arts Trust  
*Arlecchino* given its first stage production in the UK

1955

1956

1957

1958

Marriage of George Christie and Mary Nicholson

1959

Retirement of Carl Ebert  
George Christie succeeded his father as Chairman

Backstage.

**BELOW LEFT:** Members of the stage technicians moving part of the *Tristan und Isolde* set into place (MIKE HOBAN)

**BELOW RIGHT:** The coach crash in *La Cenerentola* (MIKE HOBAN)

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Prompt corner: stage manager Stephen Cowin and assistant stage managers, Sophie Leach, Benjamin Lynch and Claire Burslem (MIKE HOBAN)

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** The Chorus waiting to go on stage in *Betrothal in a Monastery* (MIKE HOBAN)

Making departments.

**OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Clive Ventris (Senior Props Maker) and Michaela Bott (Assistant Prop Maker); Boot Store; Christina Margetson, Lorraine Burn and Chloe Porok in the costume department; Justo Algaba from Spain, a specialist in toreador costumes, during a fitting for *Carmen*; Sacha Chandisingh hand-painting the fabric used to make the Klimt dressing gown worn by von Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* (MIKE HOBAN)

