

Sophie Fetthauer:

„Hier muß sich jeder allein helfen“. Paula, Josef und Frieda Fruchter:
Briefe einer Wiener Musikerfamilie aus dem Shanghaier Exil 1941–1949.

German edition, 331 p., ISBN 978-3-95675-044-1, 39,80 Euro
(= *Musik im „Dritten Reich“ und im Exil*, Band 22)

Sophie Fetthauer

„Hier muß sich jeder allein helfen“



Paula, Josef
und Frieda Fruchter:

Briefe einer Wiener Musikerfamilie
aus dem Shanghaier Exil 1941–1949

Musik im „Dritten Reich“
und im Exil – Band 22

von Bockel
Verlag

“Everyone has to help themselves here”.

Paula, Josef and Frieda Fruchter:

*Letters from a Viennese family of musicians
in exile in Shanghai 1941–1949.*

It was not until very late in 1941 that the Fruchter family fled Vienna via Berlin, occupied Poland, the Soviet Union and Manchukuo to Shanghai, a city shaken by war and colonial conflicts. By then, Shanghai had already taken in around 18,000 mostly Jews escaping Nazi persecution,

including a relatively large number of musicians. Despite the hardships, Shanghai’s musical life offered a wide range of musical activities.

Paula Fruchter (1896–1983; speech teacher, pianist), her husband Josef (1900–1976; singer, singing teacher, cantor) and their daughter Frieda (1933–2020) quickly came to terms with their situation. Accompanied by his wife, Josef Fruchter made a name for himself as a concert singer and later as a cantor. Together, they gave singing lessons, both privately and at the Shanghai Conservatory. In 1949, they emigrated to Israel, but soon returned to Vienna. There, Josef Fruchter once again became a chorister of the Jewish Community and the Vienna State Opera.

In terms of music history, it is remarkable that the Fruchters regularly sent letters to their family and friends in Vienna between 1941 and 1949. Unlike concert programs and reviews, the letters – addressed to loved ones in Vienna who themselves lived in fear of persecution, deportation and war – reflect socio-historical aspects of musical life in the extreme situation of Shanghai, and include the family’s emotional states, private views and everyday moments.

Correspondence from Shanghai that reveals exile-specific communication is rare. This publication makes the Fruchters’ letters accessible for the first time. Edited by the music historian Sophie Fetthauer who offers a critical eye to aspects of censorship and self-censorship and in-depth biographical and historical discussion, they represent an important social-historical document on musical life in exile.