

PRICE, MARGARET BERENICE (1941 - 2011), singer

Name: Margaret Berenice Price
Date of birth: 1941
Date of death: 2011
Parent: Thomas Glyn Price
Parent: Lilian Myfanwy Price (née Richards)
Gender: Female
Occupation: singer
Area of activity: Music; Performing Arts
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Margaret Price was born on 13 April 1941 in Blackwood, the daughter of Thomas Glyn Price and his wife Lilian Myfanwy (née Richards). She was educated at Pontllanfraith Secondary School, and her original ambition was to be a biology teacher. Though her father was a skilled pianist, he did not favour a musical career for his daughter, but at the age of fifteen she was awarded a scholarship to Trinity College of Music, London, where she was a pupil of Charles Kennedy Scott. After leaving the College she joined the Ambrosian Singers where she gained valuable practical experience, with the aim of becoming a lieder singer. In spite of his initial misgivings, her father had become an enthusiastic supporter of his daughter's musical career, and corresponded on her behalf with opera companies.

She first appeared in the role of Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Welsh National Opera in 1962, and sang the same role at Covent Garden when she deputised at short notice for the Spanish singer Teresa Berganza. From then on, she became known as an opera singer, specializing in the operas of Mozart and Verdi. She established a successful professional partnership with James Lockhart, who coached and accompanied her for some years, gradually moving her voice from mezzo-soprano to soprano. She sang at Glyndebourne, and first appeared in the United States in San Francisco in 1969 in the role of Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*. She did not appear at the Metropolitan Opera in New York until 1985 but made a successful debut there as Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello*. She selected her roles carefully and would not sing anything which did not suit her voice. Her Desdemona was widely acclaimed, as was her Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. She accepted the invitation of the conductor Carlos Kleiber to record the part of Isolde in Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, to great acclaim, though she would not perform the role on stage. Her voice is preserved on a number of excellent recordings of opera, but she also enjoyed performing lieder throughout her career. In 1981 she settled in Germany, where she was a principal at the Munich Staatsoper until her retirement in 1999. It was a matter of general regret that she was given too few opportunities to perform in British opera houses.

Margaret Price was known for the richness and smooth texture of her voice, something which critics greatly admired. In an interview with Yehuda Shapiro for *Opera* magazine, intended as a seventieth birthday tribute but published as a memorial to her, she said that she was content with her career and had sung everything she had wanted. Because of her perfectionism, she was often thought to be a difficult colleague, but she was essentially a sincere and unassuming person who aimed for the best in performance. Opera cognoscenti rated her one of the twenty best sopranos in the world.

Following her retirement in 1999 she returned to Wales to live near Ceibwr Bay on the Pembrokeshire coast, where she bred and showed dogs. She was appointed CBE in 1982 and DBE in 1993. She died of a heart attack on 28 January 2011, aged 69.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

The Guardian, 30 January 2011

The Independent, 2 February 2011

Yehuda Shapiro, 'The Price of Perfection', *Opera*, April 2011

Rian Evans, 'Margaret Price' in *Hymns and Arias: Great Welsh Voices* (Cardiff 2001), Trevor Herbert and Peter Stead (eds.)

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Margaret Price](#)

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