

## MARGERY MAYER VOUTSAS

1918 - 2014 | Obituary | Condolences



CUPERTINO, CA – Margery Mayer Voutsas, a singer widely acclaimed for her portrayal of some of the most famous contralto roles in opera, died May 12, 2014. She was 96. She had retired to Carmel in 1977 and lived there for over 30 years.

Marguerite Caroline Louise Mayer was born on March 19, 1918, in Chicago, Illinois to Gottlieb Mayer and Lillian (Greiner) Mayer.

Known professionally as Margery Mayer, she began her career in Chicago, singing on radio and with the Chicago City Opera Company, then traveling extensively with the San Carlo Opera Company. She was singled out early for her vocal potential by opera soprano legend, Mary Garden, who brought the 18 year old to MGM for screen tests as her protégé. In 1946 she debuted with the New York City Opera, where, during her ten-year tenure, her repertoire spanned some 35 operas, including nearly 100 performances of Carmen, Aida, Il Trovatore, and Madama

Butterfly.

Her radio performances of Lohengrin, Samson and Delilah, Carmen, and Boris Godunov were heard coast-to-coast, and she appeared in some of the earliest presentations of opera on television. Of her favorite role, Carmen, the New York Times wrote in 1951, "Miss Mayer ... is now as satisfying a Carmen, vocally and histrionically, as is to be found hereabout. ... her singing is even in quality and full of spirit."

Mayer also taught for 28 years in the music department of Wagner College on Staten Island, New York. In retirement she continued teaching voice, and singing solos in her church and in the Monterey Peninsula music group, Piano Plus. She did couture sewing and water color, and extended her trademark hospitality to friends new and old. Her zest for music and dramatic flair were still on view at her surprise 90th birthday party when she reprised her Carmen role with a full rendition of "L'Amour! L'Amour!"

Margery Mayer Voutsas is survived by sons, Lynn (Mary) Steen of Northfield, Minnesota, and Richard (Robin Cameron) Steen of New York, New York; granddaughters, Margaret (David Webster) Steen of Los Altos, California, and Catherine (Jason) Wille of Rochert, Minnesota; and six great-grandsons. She was preceded in death by her husbands, Dietrich George Berthold, Sigvart J. Steen, and George Voutsas.

The family requests that memorials be sent to the Margery Mayer and Sigvart Steen Music Scholarship at Wagner College in Staten Island, New York.

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