

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

GIORGIO TOZZI

(January 8, 1923 – May 30, 2011)

With a voice that could both thrill with its power in Verdi's most dramatic operas, and melt the listener with its warmth and tenderness in "Some Enchanted Evening," bass-cantate Giorgio Tozzi's enormous gifts as a singer and actor propelled him to an international career which extended beyond opera into musical theatre, film, recording, and television.

Giorgio Tozzi was born on January 8, 1923 in Chicago, Illinois, George John Tozzi. He began singing as a teenager but entered DePaul University planning to major in biology. He soon returned to music, studying with Rosa Raisa, Giacomo Rimini, and John Daggett Howell. After Army service in World War II, Mr. Tozzi began his vocal life as a baritone. He made his debut (as George Tozzi) in 1948, singing Tarquinius in Benjamin Britten's opera "The Rape of Lucretia." Staged at the Ziegfeld Theater on Broadway, the production also starred Kitty Carlisle. Tozzi made his Italian debut in 1950, in *La Sonnambula* at Milan's Teatro Nuovo. He arrived at La Scala in 1953, in Catalani's *La Wally*, and returned to that theater on several occasions, notably as Saint-Bris in the starry 1962 revival of *Les Huguenots* with Joan Sutherland, Franco Corelli, and Guiletta Simionato.

During his tenure with the Metropolitan Opera (1954-1974), he sang 399 performances of thirty-seven roles, including Boris in *Boris Godunov*, Ramfis in *Aida*, Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Don Basilio in *Barber of Seville*, Philip in *Don Carlo*, and Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*. He performed leading roles in the San Francisco Opera productions of *Boris Godunov*, and *L'Amore di Tre Re*, in which he had significant roles, was produced and televised by NBC. His creation of the role of Hans Sachs featured prominently in the Hamburg Opera film version of *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*. His portrayal of King Melchior can still be seen in the NBC television version of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Giorgio appeared in concert as soloist with the orchestras of New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, San Francisco, London, and numerous European ensembles, in collaboration with some of the great conductors of the twentieth century, including Solti, Walter, Mitropoulos, Reiner, Giulini, Leinsdorff, and Ormandy. His recordings of Verdi repertoire remain the gold standard for many music lovers.

In musical theatre Giorgio sang leading roles in *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Zorba*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *The King and I*, and appeared opposite Mary Martin and Florence

Henderson in revivals of *South Pacific*. His performance in *Most Happy Fella* earned him a Tony nomination for Best Actor in a Musical. For his portrayal of Emile de Becque in *South Pacific*, he received the San Francisco Critics Award for Best Actor, and his recordings won four Grammy Awards. Such was his appeal to the general public that he appeared as a guest on television programs hosted by Skitch Henderson, Dick Cavett, Mike Douglas, Merv Griffin, and Johnny Carson, and appeared as a guest star on seven television series, including *Kojak*, *The Odd Couple*, and *3 for the Road*.

Giorgio joined the Music Faculty at Indiana University in 1991. He was named a Distinguished Professor in 2001, and retired in 2006. His students adored him. His artistic authority combined with good humor and sincere support for their talents helped launch many students into successful careers. Soprano Carol Vaness has a vivid memory of Giorgio from the time before she began her career. She was a finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions but did not win. Giorgio, who was in attendance, took time to sit and talk with her. With his characteristic warmth and great good sense, he told her not to worry, that she would have a great career regardless of the outcome of the competition. She treasured his support then, and still today talks about how much it meant to her as a young singer that an artist of his stature would take the time and interest to encourage her personally. In a lovely symmetry, she now occupies his old studio.

A champion raconteur, Giorgio loved to regale everyone with anecdotes from his professional life and good jokes in general, always delivered with exquisite theatrical timing. Legendary and often quoted by his friends and students, many of these stories might best be described in these pages as piquant!

Giorgio's friendships with colleagues and students are reflections of the commitment to family that was central to his life. Giorgio passed away on May 30, 2011, in Bloomington, Indiana. His beloved wife Monte passed away on December 24, 2011. He is survived by his children Eric and Jennifer, his two granddaughters and grandson.

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