

Patricia Wise

b. 1944



Born July 31, 1944 on her brother Melvin's 5th birthday, Patricia Wise became an opera singer of international renown. In El Dorado, her family first lived at 616 N. Alleghany and later moved to 417 N. Atchison. Patricia has a daughter, Jenny, born in May of 1985.

After appearances at opera houses throughout the United States, her career began with the New York City Opera. Singing as a leading soprano with the Vienna State Opera for many years, she holds the honored title of Kammersängerin from the Austrian State Opera.

Patricia has appeared in all the world's major opera houses and concert halls, and has done extensive recording and film work. She is remembered as executing her operatic roles with great aplomb, often receiving huge ovations after her arias. Her voice is described as sweet in timbre, very focused. She typically commands difficult music with ease and handles coloratura passages superbly, giving absolutely riveting portrayals of the various characters.

Now Professor of Voice at the Indiana University School of Music, she also teaches master classes in Vienna and New York City. She also serves as coordinator for Indiana University's School of Music Abroad Program in Vienna.

Continuing to appear in opera and concert, both in America and abroad, Patricia tries to keep the sense of the music and the love of the music. She believes that performing before an audience involves a certain amount of "bearing your soul and giving yourself in love" to the audience. She says that the more the audience feeds you, the more you feed them. She is known for a different approach that many singers, trying to think of Mozart and Strauss while singing Varga.

Enjoying her two favorite hobbies, playing piano and reading, Patricia often chooses to play piano works by Mozart, Debussy, Chopin, and Bach. When she wants a real challenge, she goes for the gigue and French Suites of Bach.

Wise is a member of Alpha Delta Pi (Tau), and has been an honorary member of Pi Kappa Lambda Music Fraternity since 1966.

She considers herself fortunate to have sung with and become friends with some of the world's greatest singers, including Placido Domingo, José Carreras, Montserrat Caballé, Sheryl Mills, Joan Sutherland, Marilyn Horne and many others.

CONNECTION TO BUTLER COUNTY

While attending upper grade school and Jr. High in El Dorado, Kansas, Patricia Wise began to study voice with Rosemary Burr (Holthaus), who later taught with the Wichita school system. Patricia was gifted with a voice that did not need years of development as a more dramatic type of voice would. Hers is a light, lyric, coloratura voice.

Her parents, Melvin R. and Genevieve Dotson Wise, were always supportive of her musical interests. It was from her family that the love of music was instilled.

Her father played sousaphone and piano, as well as singing bass in a barbershop quartet. Like him, she loved singing the harmony lines of music. Her grandmother had played piano professionally in 1920s Wichita for silent films, and her grandfather was a violinist in the 1800s, playing for square dances. His violin, restructured to accommodate his being left-handed, is one of her prize possessions today, reminding her of her musical roots. Patricia went on to not only sing, but play piano and the violin.

When she was 13 years old, Patricia's mother suggested that she take voice lesson; maybe then she could sing in the church choir. Asking her bridge club friend, Rosemary Burr, to give Patricia lessons, she was told that lessons are usually started at 15 or 16 after the voice had time to mature a bit. But insisting that she should just hear Patricia sing, Rosemary agreed to do so. Upon hearing her, she immediately said, "I'll take her!" So voice lessons were begun, singing a repertoire appropriate for a young voice.

COMING TO & LEAVING THE AREA

The Wise family moved to El Dorado, Kansas about 1952, moving here from Wichita, Kansas. Mr. Wise had been a fireman in Wichita. In El Dorado, he found employment first as a salesman, then later a roustabout in the oil industry.

The family moved on to Great Bend in 1959, where Patricia attended two years of high school. Then the family moved to Midland, Texas, where she graduated from Robert E. Lee High School, just a few years ahead of First Lady Laura Bush.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Beginning to sing solos during high school, Patricia realized quickly that she liked being on stage. She particularly liked acting, singing, and being on stage all at the same time. She attended the University of Kansas; during the 1960s their music program was of excellent quality and many students went on to fine careers in music.

At age 19, she saw her first opera, *Madame Butterfly*, and was completely hooked. Sitting there, bawling her eyes out every evening at rehearsals, she thought, "Gosh – costumes, orchestra, drama, beautiful music, acting – it's got everything! This is absolutely for me!" She began to audition for contest and opera and her career developed rather quickly from that point while she was still in college.

Her voice teacher, Miriam Stewart-Green, an international singer, author and cultural ambassador in her own right, became Patricia's mentor during college and remained so throughout her career. She also worked with Margaret Harshaw, a well-known singer and teacher of the apprentice program with the Santa Fe Opera.

Having sung in many cities throughout the United States, including Radio City Music Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York City, Patricia contracted to sing with the New York City Opera from 1968 to 1974. During this time, she continued to appear in other venues across the nation.

Moving to Europe, she sang over 15 years with the Vienna State Opera. Feeling most at home in Vienna, this became her base of operations for over 20 years. During this time, she was also guest performer internationally, singing in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, Vienna, Munich, Berlin, Hamburg, La Scala in Milan, Barcelona, Geneva, London Covent Garden, Paris, Tokyo and many other locations.

A few of the top soprano roles Wise performed were Lucia, Gilda, Nadia, Violetta, Juliette, Manon, Zerbinetta, and Constanze. She found that taking certain risks brought an enormous jump in her growth as an artist.

One such risk that was also a lesson in preparation was when she taught herself the long and difficult Strauss role of *Die Schweigsame Frau*, the silent woman. She was covering that role being performed by Reri Grist, while performing Gilda and some other roles in Munich. She spent time in her hotel room memorizing the role, though not intending on performing it anytime soon. The next day the phone rang; Reri Grist had to leave the performance unexpectedly and, after a few days rehearsal, Patricia was able to move right into the role.

Wise considers herself fortunate to have worked under such wonderful conductors as Julius Rudel, von Karajan, Maazel, Mehta, Karl Böhm, Harian, Abbado, Giulini, Kleiber and Sawallisch. She has been a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic and many others.

Having made numerous recordings, film and television appearances, Patricia Wise has performed in more than fifty major operatic roles from the lyric and coloratura repertoire. She is a frequent adjudicator in international competitions, and holds yearly master classes at the Vienna Conservatory and Salzburg Mozarteum. She also serves as master teacher at the Washington National Opera Domingo Young Artist Program.

Since 1995, she has been Professor of Voice at the Indiana University School of Music. She spends her summers working with pre-professional singers with BASOTI, an intensive opera singer development program. Among her students have been young artists at Santa Fe, Brevard, Chataqua, Central City, the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann program, the St. Louis Opera, and the Portland Opera.

When once asked what “eternal truths” she would pass on to aspiring singers, Patricia responded, “I go back to a phrase from Shakespeare, which is one of the things I like to try to live by, and it works in every single phase of life and of music and of relationships: ‘This above all, to thine own self be true. And it shall follow as the day the night, thou canst not then be false to anyone’ – with revision because he said any man and I just changed that to anyone.”

AWARDS, RECOGNITION

In 1989, Patricia Wise was given the honored title of Kammersängerin from the Austrian State Opera, for long and loyal service to the opera. This is the feminine declension of the title, Kammersänger, which would be a court singer in the days of the Emperor.

During college, when she first began competing, Patricia won first prize in the Naftzger Young Artist Competition in Wichita, Kansas, the Midland Young Artist Competition in Midland, Texas, and the Dealey Memorial Young Artist Competition in Dallas, Texas, all in 1966. That same year, she won the Presser Foundation Award and the Lilian Garabedian Award.

In 1971, she was won the Morton Baum Memorial Award in New York City, and she has been listed in Marquis' Who's Who since 1982. In Vienna, Austria in 1990, Wise was awarded the Lieber Augustin Award.

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