

JEAN ALLISTER

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Jean Allister was born in Northern Ireland on 26 February 1936 and became one of Britain's leading mezzo sopranos of her day.

She won the Minnie Hauk Prize in 1953.

She achieved her LRAM in 1954. She made her debut at the Royal Albert Hall in that same year.

On 5 October 1955 she married Edgar Fleet and they had a son.

She achieved her FRAM in 1968

She has appeared in oratorio and recitals since 1954 and at the London Promenade Concerts between 1959 and 1970 and at The Three Choirs Festival between 1961 and 1977. Her debut with Sadlers Wells opera was in 1962 and she sang at Glyndebourne from 1962 and 1963. She was Rossini's Italian Girl in Algiers at the Camden Festival in 1961.

She took part in the premiere of Henze's *Novae de Infinito Laudes* at Leeds in 1968 and in Cavalli's *L'Ormino* in Munich in 1969.

One recalls her television appearance as Amneris in the final scene of Verdi's *Aida* which was stunning.

She was a page in Richard Strauss's *Salome* in 1970 and appeared in *Scipio* with the Handel Operatic Society at Herrenhausen and Drottningholm in 1970.

She took part in John Gardner's *The Visitors* in 1972 and in the British premiere of Frank Martin's *Requiem* in 1975. With Opera North in 1980 she took part in Janacek's *Jenufa*.

She speaks of the many highlights in her career such as singing in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* under Vernon Handley where, at the end of the work, the mezzo has an important role. This was with the Huddersfield Choral Society and she also recalls a Maida Vale performance of Verdi's *Requiem*.

She has sung Palestrina and Delius and made recordings of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Ruddigore* and *the Mikado* with the D'Oyly Carte company, but let us hope that she is only remembered for that. She recorded the Stravinsky Mass under Colin Davis and *Dido and Aeneas* under Benjamin Britten.

Her second marriage was to Dr Rene Atkinson which took place on 20 February 1974. He came from Newcastle and was a competent pianist.

She retired from the concert platform in 1975 but she was asked to take part in later performances.. The following year (1976) she was awarded her FGSM and was a FRSM Emeritus from 1979.

In 1985 she edited *Sing Solo Soprano*.

She has had her health problems in recent years

Her second husband died in November 2004.

Her hobbies include cooking, bridge and golf and she has taken up teaching in order to pass on both her skill and experience.

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