

RISE STEVENS

David C F Wright, DMus

Rise Stevens was the Metropolitan Opera's leading mezzo-soprano for twenty years up to 1961.

She was incredibly talented and a truly fine musician.

She was born Rise Steenberg in New York City on 11 June 1913 and studied for three years at the Julliard School in New York. Then she went to Vienna to study with Marie Gutheil-Schoder (1874- 1935) whom Mahler admired and obtained her voice to sing in some of his works. She also created the role of Erwartung by Schoenberg a taxing role which many singers say that they do not like this work simply because they do not have the ability to perform it. Rise also studied with Herbert Graf (1907-1973) who was an opera producer and was associated with Sigmund Freud's circle of friends.



With Fritz Reiner following a performance of Carmen

Her debut was as Mignon in Prague in 1936 where she stayed until 1938. During this time she was also a popular guest at the Vienna State Opera. Her finest role at that time was said to be as Octavian in Der Rosenkavalier. She also sang this role at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires in 1938.

She was invite to Glyndebourne in 1939 where she sang Dorabella and Cherubino. Her Metropolitan opera debut was as Mignon in 1938 and, three days later, she sang Octavian and Lotte Lehmann was in the cast.

Stevens association with Hollywood began with the operetta and film The Chocolate Soldier, with music by Oscar Strauss. This was in 1941 when she starred with Nelson Eddy (1901-1967). In 1944 she was in the film Going My Way with Bing Crosby. She sang Softly awakes my heart from Samson and Delilah, Bizet's Haberna and Ave Maria with Bing Crosby!



At the Met she commanded the top of the bill spots. She sang many roles and was much admired as Carmen. She appeared in London, Paris, La Scala and Glyndebourne. Her last appearance was as Carmen at the Met in 1961.

She became general manager of the Metropolitan Opera Touring Company until 1966 and has taught and trained many new singers at the Met.

Naxos Historical have three operas available with Rise Stevens namely

The Marriage of Figaro	1955	conducted by Bruscantinii
Carmen	1951	conducted by Fritz Reiner
Der Rosenkavalier	1949	conducted by Fritz Reiner



If you want to hear a great singer and excellent characterisation you must hear this wonderful performer.

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FOOTNOTE As I update this in 2010, I am pleased to say that Rise Stevens is still alive and, as all testify, is still as charming as ever.