

Giorgio Tozzi

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," basso cantate Giorgio Tozzi has enormous gifts as a singer and actor that propelled him to an international career which extended beyond opera into musical theatre, film, recording, and television.

During his tenure with the Metropolitan Opera (1954-1974), he sang 399 performances of 37 roles, including Boris in *Boris Godunov*, Ramfis in *Aida*, Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Don Basilio in *Barber of Seville*, Philip II in *Don Carlo*, and Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. He performed leading roles at La Scala in Milan, Teatro Reale in Rome, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, the National Theatre in Munich, and at the San Francisco Opera. Productions of *Boris Godunov* and *L'Amore di Tre Re*, in which he had significant roles, were 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 Nürnberg*. 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, Mitropolous, 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 Émile de Becque in *South Pacific*, he received the San Francisco Critics Award for Best Actor, and his recordings won four Grammy Awards. Such is 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 he appeared as a guest star on seven television series including *Kojak*, *The Odd Couple*, and *3 for the Road*.

His fascination with every aspect of the creative process led him to an interest in stage direction. In recent years he produced and directed numerous operas of Puccini and Verdi in North America and Italy. In great demand as a teacher, he conducted master classes in virtually every musical capital of the world.

Professor Emeritus Roger Havranek remembers:

As a young college student, I listened to recordings of Giorgio Tozzi and marveled at the sound of this fabulous singing artist. Never forgetting this experience, it was my pleasure, in 1991, to perform with Giorgio in a production of Rossini's *Barber of Seville* with the Stockton Opera in California. I was then chairman of the IU voice department, and during that production, I successfully convinced Giorgio to come to IU to teach voice. Since that time we have become very close friends. I still marvel about this great artist when I listen to my old recordings. He was retirement age when IU hired him, and now he retires again with fond memories of his years here at IU.

Giorgio was named a distinguished professor in 2001.

His students adore him. His artistic authority combined with good humor and sincere support for their talents have helped launch many IU 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.

His enormous personal warmth and perpetual engine of enthusiasm for life and music have made him beloved of colleagues and students alike. In an interview on WFIU last year, Giorgio told a charming story about a colleague at the Met who asked him why he was always smiling. Giorgio replied, "It pleases my friends and annoys my enemies." One wonders who those enemies could possibly be.

A champion raconteur, he loves 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 lies at the core of his life. His son, Eric Tozzi, and wife live in California, and his daughter, Jennifer Hauser, and husband in Arizona. Although they and his two granddaughters are miles away, they are never far from his thoughts. To observe Giorgio's delight in his lovely wife, Monte, and to witness the joy and devotion of their partnership is a lesson in success for all of us.

Mary Ann Hart