

# *In Memoriam*

## Rosalind Elias (1930 – 2020)

*Tribute from the Metropolitan Opera, May 2020*

“**T**he Metropolitan Opera mourns the death of one of our most beloved artists, mezzo-soprano Rosalind Elias, who sang 687 performances with the company over a period of 42 years. She made her Met debut in 1954 at just 23 years of age as Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* and initially sang supporting roles, but soon graduated to larger parts such as Siébel in *Faust*, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*. Then, in 1958, she was chosen to sing the leading role of Erika in the world premiere of Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa*. At her request, the composer added the aria “Must the Winter Come So Soon,” which is now a staple concert piece for mezzo-sopranos. It turned out to be a breakout role for her, and more major parts followed. She created another role by Barber eight years later when the world premiere of his *Antony and Cleopatra* opened the new Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center, with Elias as Charmian.

“Elias sang an incredible 54 different roles at the Met, plus the mezzo solos in special performances of the Verdi *Requiem* given in memory of John F. Kennedy shortly after his assassination. Her warm, sensuous timbre suited a wide variety of parts, including the title role in Bizet’s *Carmen*, Dorabella in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, Zerlina in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, Laura in Ponchielli’s *La Gioconda*, and Charlotte in Massenet’s *Werther*. Svelte and attractive, she was often assigned “pants roles,” playing the part of a boy, such as Hansel in Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, Cherubino in Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Octavian in Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier*.

“Roz’ was as charming offstage as onstage and was cherished as a generous and supportive colleague. A devoted company member, she continued attending Met rehearsals and performances right



METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES

Ms. Elias in her breakout role in 1958 as Erika in Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa*.

up until recently, and her many friends always looked forward to seeing her in the audience. We will sorely miss her gracious presence, and we offer our sincerest condolences to her family and legions of friends and admirers.” ■

*Editor’s Note:* In June 1960, Ms. Elias recorded the Verdi *Requiem* with Jussi, and spoke of her colleague with appreciation: “Rosalind had a high regard for Jussi; when asked about him, she replied, ‘Hey! If you mention Jussi Björling, you cannot speak about anybody else! He was incomparable. He was unique!’” Anna-Lisa Björling, Andrew Farkas: *Jussi* (Amadeus Press, 1996, page 337.)