

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA ILONA KOMBRINK**

Ilona Kombrink, longtime Professor of Voice at the University of Wisconsin, School of Music, died at the age of 80 on August 9, 2013 after an extended illness. She is survived by her daughter Nancy, son-in-law Mark, and grandchildren Nicholas and Caitlin.

Ilona was an artist who was larger than life as a teacher, singer and musician. She was revered by audience members who had the opportunity to hear this extraordinary performer. Her operatic performances in particular are legendary among her admirers. Ilona devoted decades of her life to the training of young singers at UW-Madison. She had the ability to take the assets and possibilities of a young person and transform that student into the best they could possibly be. This process involved will, integrity and passion, and often resulted in a young singer becoming more than even they had dreamt of, both as a musician and as a person.

She grew up 'out in the country' in Affton, a small truck-farming community in Missouri, where her grandmother raised irises for sale and which gradually became one of St. Louis' many suburbs. She attended Cleveland High School in St. Louis proper so that she could take advantage of its strong music program. After graduation, she was invited to attend the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Pa., as a student in vocal performance.

In the career that followed, her opera roles (on stage and television) ranged from countess (Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*) to prince (Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*); from Mother Superior (Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*) to temptress (Bizet's *Carmen*); and from murder victim (Verdi's *Otello*) to murderer (Puccini's *Tosca*). She performed as a soloist in oratorio with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Her recital accompanists included Glenn Gould and John Browning. She spent a year in Germany as a Fulbright Scholar. While preparing for a performance in Venice, she lived in a convent; a treasured geisha doll was a souvenir from performing in Tokyo. She toured the Northwest Territories of Canada and flew in a private plane over the Mississippi Delta with a McIlhenny (of Tabasco fame). Her recording of Mendelssohn duets with her friend Benita Valente for The Music from Marlboro series is still available on iTunes. And then came her most rewarding role--more than 30 years as a professor of music-voice at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

A member of the UW-Madison voice faculty from 1967-2003, "Ms. K" counted among her students hundreds of singers and teachers working all over the world today. She performed frequently in her own recitals and collaborated often with many of her UW-Madison faculty colleagues on and off-campus. She was beloved in the wider Madison community for her uncompromising vocal artistry, and was featured in appearances with Madison Opera, Madison Symphony Orchestra, the Capitol City Band, and others.

(continued)

Music was Ilona's life force, even from childhood, and it spilled out of her in song and speech. It seemed at times that every fibre of her being was musical – her singing voice, obviously, but more than that, her mellifluous speaking voice, even in casual conversation; her hands at the keyboard in her studio; her movement through the halls of the Humanities Building; even her handwriting had music in it. A student of hers said, "It was as if the muse Euterpe had come down to earth to live with the mortals!"

But the true essence of Ilona's being was the desire to pass that music on to others. She accomplished this in her performing on the opera stage, singing with colleagues, and in her solo recitals, and above all, in her teaching. Ilona Kombrink was an extraordinary singer, teacher, and human being. She lived and loved with conviction and hope. She touched many lives.

It is an honor to pay tribute to Ilona Kombrink today. We are all indebted to her unflagging devotion to the best in art and the best in her students.

Memorial Resolution Committee:  
Professor Mimmi Fulmer, Chair  
Professor Daniel Jonson-Wilmot  
Senior Instructor Kathleen Otterson

