

Margaret Burke Sheridan

*One of the
GREATEST SOPRANOS
of all time*

Image: Portrait postcard of Irish opera singer
Margaret Burke Sheridan signed and dated "Xmas '43"
This postcard is for sale at Whytes.ie/art (image: Whytes.ie)

*Margaret Burke Sheridan
Xmas '43*

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Margaret Burke Sheridan

One of the greatest sopranos of all time

Born on the Mall in Castlebar on the 15th October 1889, she was the youngest of five children. Sadly her parents died when she was young. The parish priest in Castlebar arranged for her to attend the Dominican Convent in Dublin. It was here she showed a great talent for music. In 1908 she won a gold medal at the Dublin Feis Ceoil. Later, a sponsored concert was organized for her and the proceeds used to send her to The Royal Academy of Music, London between 1909 and 1911. The next number of years saw her sing at private parties.

It was at one of these parties that she met the inventor of the wireless telegraphy, Guglielmo Marconi. He was so impressed by Margaret that he arranged for her to continue her studies in Italy. In 1916 Margaret went to Italy. She studied under Martini and Emma Correlli. She worked extremely hard and two years later she made her operatic debut in Rome, against the wishes of her teachers, with a leading role in Puccini's *La Bohème*. It was a success and she received a magnificent ovation. This led to many more engagements and in 1919 she made her London debut at Covent Garden. During the next sixteen years La Margherita Sheridan thrilled audiences in Italy and London performing in operas by Puccini, Mascagni, Respighi among many others.

Her voice was heard in many opera houses in Europe. Throughout her career, Margaret always stated that she was Irish and proud of it.

She gave the only Irish performance of her career in 1922 at a concert in the Theatre Royal Dublin. Margaret never married.

In 1926 she began to experience nose and throat infections which kept recurring into the following year. She took a break for a while hoping to make a complete recovery.



Margaret Burke Sheridan in early years.
(Image: Johnmccormacksociety.ie)

Sheridan made a complete recording of *Madama Butterfly* with the La Scala orchestra during 1929–30 on gramophone records, and also a number of recordings of operatic duets with the tenor Aureliano Pertile, as well as arias from selected operas by Michael William Balfe, Arrigo Boito, Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner. She also recorded various Irish traditional song arrangements by Balfe, John William Glover, Thomas Moore and others.

Over the next few years she performed very little. Her last performance was in Covent Garden in 1930 and she officially retired in 1936. A late start and incomplete training resulted in her short career of only twelve years. In 1937 she returned to her old school in Dublin and presented her teacher with a complete set of her *Butterfly* recordings. Over the next few years Margaret lived between Dublin and New York.

Margaret Burke Sheridan died on the 16th April 1958 in Dublin. She is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery. The Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin was her last place of residence before her death.

In tribute, a new suite in The Shelbourne featuring framed memorabilia, letters, programmes, a portrait and a gramophone with some of her recordings has been opened in her honour.



Margaret Burke Sheridan meeting Italian conductor Vincenzo Bellezza in 1938.
(Image: Wikipedia - Erich Salomon)

Former president Sean T O' Ceallaigh paid Margaret the following tribute on her passing:

"In the history of music, the name of Margaret Burke Sheridan is inseparably linked with the great names of Giacomo Puccini and Arturo Toscanini. In La Scala opera house in Milan, her triumphs are commemorated in bronze.

The years she spent in Italy were, indeed, years of triumph succeeding triumph. She lived there in a glittering world of music and song and reigned in that world as a queen, the centre of admiration and applause".

Sources:

The Irish Times
New York Times
Mayo – Ireland.ie
Shelbourne Hotel

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