

Wilma Vernocchi, upon the encouragement of the soprano Lina Pagliughi, studied Voice at the "G. Rossini" Conservatory of Music in Pesaro and the "G.B. Martini" Conservatory in Bologna (1962).

Chosen by the *Centro Perfezionamento Artisti Lirici* at the Scala, Milan, she studied operatic repertoire under the tutorship of authoritative teachers and conductors (1966).

From 1964 to 1970, simultaneous with her studies, she took part in numerous national and international competitions, winning 12 First Prizes. This led to her debut in the role of Carolina in the opera *Il Matrimonio Segreto* by Cimarosa at the Teatro Nuovo in Milan in 1966, followed by Mimi in *La Bohème* at the State Theatre of Sofia. The critiques were those of praise; Eugenio Gara concluded his article with: "... the young Wilma Vernocchi was indeed born for the theatre, we will hear of her again."

She represented Italy at the *2nd World Wide Madama Butterfly Competition* in Tokyo. She was the youngest competitor and she won the First Prize for the best performance and interpretation of *Butterfly* (1970). She has often sung in Japan and a garden has been dedicated to her in the historic Grover Park in Nagasaki, where a monument to Madame Butterfly has been erected.

The prestigious success in Japan led her to debut officially at La Scala, Milan, in the opera *L'Elisir d'amore* (as Adina), with Luciano Pavarotti (1972). The following year, she played Mimi at the Teatro Regio in Parma with her contemporaries Jose Carreras and Katia Ricciarelli.

She has sung lead roles at La Scala, Milan for fifteen consecutive years, and has also performed with opera companies and in various theatres in Italy and abroad, such as the San Carlo Theatre in Naples, the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Arena di Verona, the Comunale in Bologna, ATER Theatres in Emilia, the Paris Opera, Munich Opera, Zurich Opera, and at the Salzburg Festival, interpreting a wide repertoire ranging from Monteverdi to Italian Opera Buffa, to the 19th century opera classics.

Likewise interested in modern repertoire, she has interpreted works by contemporary composers such as Hindemith and Maderna, and has been requested by Franco Mannino e Nino Rota for their operas.

She has been conducted by maestros such as Abbado, Arena, De Fabbrittiis, Gavazzeni, Molinari, Pradelli, Patanè, Sonzogno and Botto and worked with directors like Wallman, Strehler, Bolognini, De Simone, Maestrini, Sbragia and Villar.

In the theatre, she has worked side by side artists such as Bergonzi, Bumbry, Corelli, Caballé, Cossotto, Cappuccilli, Domingo, Di Stefano, Bruscantini, Labò and Panerai. In 1973, she toured the East with Maria Callas and Giuseppe di Stefano, a photographic record of which can be found in the book "Callas by Callas" by Renzo Allegri (published by Mondadori, 1977).

She was the first Italian artist to hold recitals and perform in operas at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (Manila, Philippines), where a production of *Butterfly* was especially mounted for her (1973 - 1984).

She has performed in concerts for Radio BRT in Belgium, NHK in Japan and RAI in Italy. She conceived and presented the television series "Lirica in Salotto" (Opera in the Livingroom") and "Lirica oggi" (Opera Today), transmitted by the Radio Italiana.

She has held masterclasses on Bel Canto vocal technique, and interpretation and stage acting of Italian opera in China - at the Beijing Opera (1992), the Music Academy of Shanghai (1992), the

Academy for Performing Arts in Hongkong (2003), and at the University of Chandong Wei Hai (August 2006); in Japan - at the University of Fine Arts in Nagoya : the Fuchu-no-mori Theatre in Tokyo (1998), the Hatagaia-Aspia Theatre in Tokyo (2003), and at the University of the Arts in Nagoya (1986 to 2008).

For the programs and projects of the European Erasmus, she held an "Italian Opera Masterclass" at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland (2005 to 2009).

She organized and directed seven editions of the international seminar, "Vacanze in Lirica" ("Vacation at the Opera") for the City Council of Riccione (from 1992 to 2000).

She was a member of the Administrative Council of the Museum of La Scala in Milan, from 1989 to 1996.

In recognition of her outstanding artistry in the course of her career, and for her continuing teaching activities, she was awarded the honour of Grand Officer of the Order "for the Merit of the Republic of Italy."

After 29 years of residence in Milan, she has returned to her native city of Forli, where she was given the gold medal "Dmenga a ca' nostà," and the gold medal and diploma of merit for "Faithfulness to work" by the House of Commerce of Forli and Cessena (March 2001).

She currently performs in concerts in Italy and abroad: in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagasaki for the Makizo Nakagawa Foundation (Oct. 2003); at the Academy for Performing Arts in Hongkong (Oct. 2003); for the Italian Consulate in Osaka (Oct. 2004); at the National Opera Theater in Helsinki for the International Association "B. Gigli" (Feb. 2005) ,Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall (Gen.2008), Musical College Arkhangelsk end Philarmanica Hall (Russia 2009) .

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