

Award history

Maggie Teyte Prize



Dame Maggie Teyte DBE (17 April 1888 – 26 May 1976) was an English operatic soprano and interpreter of French art song.

She was born in Wolverhampton, England, and was one of ten children. Maggie Teyte spent her childhood in London, moving to Paris in 1904, where she was a pupil of the celebrated tenor Jean de Reszke. She made her first public appearance in Paris in 1906, and her professional debut at the Opera House in Monte Carlo on 1 February 1907, where she performed Tyrcis in Jacques Offenbach's *Myriame et Daphné* with Paderewski.

She later joined the Opéra-Comique in Paris, and after a few small parts, she was cast as Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Debussy. To prepare for the role, she studied with Debussy himself, becoming the only singer ever to be accompanied by Debussy on the piano with an orchestra in public. In 1909 she married her first husband, moved to America and performed with the Chicago Opera Company from 1911-1914 and the Boston Opera Company from 1914-1917. She returned to Britain in 1919 where she married for a second time, to Canadian millionaire Sherwin Cottingham. She then went into semi-retirement until 1930.

Teyte divorced again in 1931, and began to resume her career after an absence of nearly a decade. She went on to gain a reputation in England and the United States as the leading French art song interpreter of her time. During World War II, Teyte sang in a series of concerts sponsored by the French Committee of National Liberation for which she received the Gold Cross of Lorraine for services to France. She continued to record and perform opera until 1951. Her final concert appearance was at the Royal Festival Hall on April 22, 1956. She spent her last years teaching.

In 1958, she was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. She died in London at the age of 88.

The Prize was founded personally by Maggie Teyte in 1968 and places particular emphasis on the interpretation of French *mélodie*. Sponsored by Felicity Guinness, it is now administered by the Musicians Benevolent Fund and is open to female singers in full-time postgraduate vocal study or in the first year of entering a professional career. The prize winner is also awarded a Miriam Licette Scholarship for further study, together with a recital at the Royal Opera House.

Notable winners of the Maggie Teyte Prize include sopranos Patricia Rozario OBE, Lisa Milne, Elizabeth Watts, Anna Leese, and mezzo-soprano Cora Burggraaf.



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Miriam Licette Scholarships



Miriam Lycett was born in September 1885 in Cambridgeshire, though much of her early years were spent travelling due to her father's postings abroad. She was educated at Lowther College in Lytham, and then went to Paris where she was the first English singer to study with Mathilde Marchesi. After supplementary study with Melba and de Reszke, she proceeded to Milan to spend a year with Vincenzo Sabatini.

Miriam Lycett made her debut as "Myriam Licette" at the Teatro Adriano in Rome in *Madama Butterfly* in 1911. In 1912 she appeared as "Miriam Licette" at the Kennington Theatre in London with the 160-strong Royal Carl Rosa Opera. The same year Miriam married George Edward Webster Robinson, also an opera singer.

Miriam went on to appear with the Rosa Company at the Theatre Royal in Nottingham as Marguerite in *Faust*, conducted by Eugène Goossens, followed by Micaëla in *Carmen* and Pamina in *The Magic Flute*.

Like many of her contemporaries, she was a member of both the Beecham company and British National Opera Company before appearing in her own right in major roles at the International Seasons at Covent Garden. She appeared as, among other characters, Cio-Cio-San, Desdemona, Donna Elvira and Eurydice (opposite Dame Clara Butt's only Covent Garden appearance, as Orfeo). In addition to a large number of separate recordings of arias and ensembles, Licette sang Marguerite in the complete recording of *Faust* under Beecham, as well as substantial extracts from *Maritana*.

Following the sudden and premature death of her son in 1931 she appeared on stage less and less, concentrating instead on the affairs of the Miriam Licette School of Singing. However she continued to make appearances on radio for the BBC. Even though she was approaching sixty, during WW II she volunteered to entertain troops, and early in 1944, she travelled to the Middle East with Walter Widdop, Dennis Noble, Nancy Evans, Ivor Newton and the violinist Alfred Cave. She died of a stroke in 1969 following a period of ill health.

With fond memories of Paris, Miriam requested that the residue of her estate be used "for the purpose of creating an annual Scholarship for soprano, mezzo soprano, or contralto singers for advanced study in Paris, to be known as the Miriam Licette Scholarship." Originally this was run by the Arts Council England but the administration was taken over by the Musicians Benevolent Fund in 1993 with the rules eased to allow financial assistance with the costs of further study.

Previous recipients of the Scholarships include Ailish Tynan, Cora Burggraaf, Elizabeth Watts and Simona Mihai.

