



Shirley Thompson Voice

Mezzo-soprano Shirley Thompson joined the voice faculty at Christopher Newport University in 1998, the same year in which she retired from Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland, where she holds the title Professor Emeritus. From 1974-1977 she was a member of the voice faculty in the Conservatory at the University of the Pacific in California.

The artistic career of Shirley Thompson has encompassed extensive experience as a professional opera singer in the United States and Europe, which expanded to a successful academic career as voice teacher and opera stage director at the university level. She attended the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary (now Old Dominion University) and completed her BA Degree in Fine Arts at William and Mary in Williamsburg. Her MM Degree in Voice Performance was earned at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Early vocal training began in Norfolk with her aunt, locally well-known voice teacher Mrs. Charles R. Reynolds, Sr. Having performed seven major soprano opera roles with the Norfolk Division, College of William and Mary Opera Workshop, including Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* and Laretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, and having won several vocal competitions, she moved to New York City to continue performing and for vocal training with Rose Bampton and conductor Wilfrid Pelletier. Shirley Thompson's artistic path then took her to Europe, where she studied in Italy and performed professionally for sixteen years in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

As a recipient of two consecutive Fulbright grants she studied at both the Conservatorio and Academia di Santa Cecilia in Rome with such distinguished professors as Rachele Maragliano-Mori, Giorgio Favaretto, Riccardo Picozzi and Luigi Ricci. With voice teacher Signora Mori she retrained as a mezzo-soprano. After receiving a Rockefeller Grant her next career move was to Germany for year round professional engagements in the opera houses of Heidelberg, Braunschweig and Kaiserslautern with guest contracts in Frankfurt, Mannheim, Nurnberg, Stuttgart, Aachen, Karlsruhe, Munster, Trier, Wurzburg; Salzburg, Austria; Biel and St. Gallen, Switzerland, among others. She sang over nine-hundred performances in a repertoire of more than fifty mezzo-soprano roles, including the title role in *Carmen*, Azucena in *Trovatore*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* and Ulrica in *The Masked Ball*.

In 1974 Shirley Thompson was offered the position of Assistant Professor of Voice, Performing Resident Artist and Associate Director of the Pacific Opera Theatre in the Conservatory at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. While at UOP She performed extensively in opera, concert and oratorio throughout California, returned to Germany for guest appearances in Stuttgart and first turned to stage directing.

In 1977 she accepted a voice faculty position at Towson University (then Towson State University) in Baltimore, Maryland, where she taught for twenty-three years, and from which she retired with the title Professor Emeritus in 1998. Her academic assignments included Applied Voice, the Directorship of the TSU Opera Workshop for fifteen years, Italian and German Diction, Vocal Pedagogy, Survey of Vocal Literature, Voice Class for Instrumental Majors and weekly Voice Master Classes. She considers her most significant contribution to Towson University to have been the development of the TSU Opera Workshop program, having stage-directed eighteen fully staged operas and fifteen productions of Opera Scenes

While in Baltimore she performed frequently in recital at Towson University, with the The Baltimore Opera, The Baltimore Opera Touring Company, the Gilbert and Sullivan Young Victorian Theatre Company, the Summer Opera Company in Washington, D.C. and the Syracuse Opera Company in New York. At Kennedy Center she appeared as guest soloist in Honneger's King David. In addition, for four years, Shirley Thompson was an adjunct voice faculty member and guest stage director for opera productions at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Among operas she has staged are *Così fan tutte*, *The Consul*, *Albert Herring*, *The Mikado* and *Die Fledermaus*.

Effective Fall 1998 she was granted Transitional Leave from Towson University, at which time she retired and relocated permanently back to her home town Norfolk, Virginia and joined the Voice Faculty at Christopher Newport University in Newport News. Her academic assignments have included Applied Voice, Voice Coach for the productions of *Cabaret* and *The Mikado*, Associate Director of Opera CNU (Stage Director for the 1999 Opera *Litell* production and the 2000 Opera Scenes class production), Music Theatre Class/Lab Section and weekly Vocal Forum Master Classes for all voice students, which is co-taught by all voice faculty members. She is a member of National and Virginia State NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing), NOA (National Opera Association), VASS (Virginia Art Song Society, for which she has served as a Board member) and NYSTA (New York Singing Teachers Association).