



IN MEMORIAM

Barbara Patton
Senior Lecturer, Emerita
Los Angeles
1918 — 2004

With Barbara Patton's death on August 21, 2004, the UCLA community lost a treasured member who, in the course of her distinguished career, touched countless lives, introducing multiple generations of students to the materials of music and to the joy and fulfillment of singing.

Born on April 10, 1918, Barbara graduated from Oakland High School in Oakland, California. Upon receiving her teacher's certificate in 1937 from the Oakland Conservatory of Music, she began a dual career. She taught piano, voice, and musicianship both privately and in institutional settings. At the same time, performing throughout America, she sang opera with several New York and Los Angeles-based companies. She served as soloist in prominent churches and synagogues. In addition to soloing on radio broadcasts and with symphony orchestras, she appeared on Broadway, at the Hollywood Bowl, and at the Greek Theater. While continuing to perform, she returned to school, earning the A.A. from Los Angeles City College (music and English, 1955) and the B.A. from UCLA (music; Special Secondary Credential, 1957).

With degree in hand, Barbara embarked upon a new career path, teaching in the Beverly Hills Unified School District, directing the Beverly Hills Academy Vocal Department, and joining UCLA Extension as a Master Teacher in its Program of Private Music Instruction. This rich blend of training and experience prepared Barbara ideally for her appointment, in 1963, as Lecturer in the UCLA Music Department. Here, she advanced steadily: lecturer with security of employment (1974); senior lecturer with security of employment (1981); senior lecturer emerita (1984). Recalled in 1984, Barbara continued her exemplary work through 1986.

For over two decades, Barbara served with distinction in each of her areas of responsibility. She taught the large Fundamentals of Music class, the three-quarter sequence in Fundamentals of Voice (that is, beginning voice classes), Intermediate Voice, Advanced Voice, and English and German Diction for Singers. In the mid 1970s, when the Music Department experienced a curricular sea change, Barbara, with her customary zest and skill, offered the first Graduate Instruction in Voice lessons on this campus. Examination of a typical quarter's teaching load (Fall 1969) reveals two sections of Music Fundamentals (135 students), a Fundamentals of Voice class (20 students), eight intermediate voice students, and ten advanced voice students. With the new program instituted in 1976, the labor-intensive teaching of graduate students replaced Fundamentals of Voice. To sustain such a demanding load quarter after quarter required enormous stamina. Barbara, however, did far more than simply sustain; with her deep reservoir of energy and her unflagging devotion, she thrived.

Under her inspirational guidance, Barbara's students thrived, too. From their evaluations, a glowing picture emerges of effective teaching by an extraordinary person. "The fact that you can tell she's enjoying teaching makes me eager to learn," enthused a first-year Music Fundamentals student. Her intermediate and advanced vocal students concurred. "Mrs. Patton is a wonderfully giving person." She is "one of those rare teachers who can teach vocal technique and repertoire equally well." Students in the new graduate program in performance echoed the undergraduate chorus: "One of the major reasons I came to UCLA was to study with

Mrs. Patton. I have not been disappointed.” Multiplied by the hundreds, these observations coalesce to reveal a remarkable individual who was at once knowledgeable, vastly experienced in her field, a gifted communicator generous with her time, warm, amiable, supportive, encouraging, enthusiastic, the whole leavened by a delightful sense of humor and accompanied by a beaming smile and a hearty laugh. “Mrs. Patton’s constant enthusiasm, deep knowledge of the subject and good humor create a healthy atmosphere for learning.” A. graduating senior speaks eloquently for all: “There has been no other professor, in fact no other person, who has been more influential and helpful to me these past four years than Mrs. Patton.... She radiates a warmth and sincerity seldom found” (1971). Thus nurtured and prepared, many of these students went on to successful careers in music.

Codifying her years of experience, Barbara collaborated with her colleague and friend David Morton to author *Music Fundamentals* (2nd ed., 1976). A search of library records quickly confirmed that UCLA’s copy is customarily checked out, a strong indication of the book’s pedagogical soundness.

As in her teaching, Barbara participated wholeheartedly in departmental and college administrative activity. Beneficiaries of her clear vision include the College of Fine Arts Executive Committee, the departmental Executive Committee, the Council on Performance (chair, 1979-80), numerous scholarship committees, and the department’s audition and orientation committees. Besides this conscientious committee service, she devoted considerable time to judging vocal competitions on and off campus, among them the prestigious Frank Sinatra Competition. Her packed teaching and administrative schedules notwithstanding, Barbara remained a performer who immeasurably enriched local cultural life. Continuing a career- long commitment to music of her time, she sang at concerts of the Composers’ Council and participated in the Cavalcade of Popular Music. Off campus, she appeared not only in concert and on the radio throughout Southern California; she also ventured further afield, participating in Benjamin Britten’s compelling *The Turn of the Screw*, with the San Francisco Opera Association (1966).

Speaking professionally, what I most cherish about Barbara is her laser- like focus on the individual, no matter how large the class. Having identified a student’s needs and evaluated his/ her potential, Barbara would then proceed to devise a nurturing guidance strategy carefully calculated to develop that potential. To cite but one example, in 1974, deeply involved in studying the music of the Austro- American composer Eric Zeisl (1905-59), I wished to perform his beautiful song cycle, *Kinderlieder* (“Childrens’ Songs”), for soprano and piano. Barbara recommended Sheila Styron, a talented, sightless undergraduate. For weeks, Barbara sensitively coached Sheila in the nuances of 20th- century Lieder singing. The result, presented in Schoenberg Hall on January 14, 1975, remains one of my most precious performance memories.

In a handwritten letter of October 24, 1969, to Music Department Chair Walter Rubsamen, Barbara unknowingly provided a perfect explanation for the lofty standards of excellence and commitment she was to maintain for 23 years: “I truly love my work here.”

Malcolm S. Cole