



Constance Shacklock OBE 1913-1999

Opera Singer

Constance was born at Woodthorpe Grange Farm (which was in Woodthorpe Grange Park) where her grandfather was a tenant farmer with 67 acres and her father lived there in a cottage which was knocked down. From 1922 she was brought up at 2 Lexington Gardens on a new housing estate in Sherwood. According to her obituary in the Guardian, Constance was singing in her local church choir at the age of 9 (1922), and a few years later ran a drama group at school already dreaming of becoming an opera singer. She was a Contralto and began her career performed in and around Nottingham as recorded in various newspaper reports - initially at WI events, Raleigh etc. From about 1933 she performed with the Nottingham Operatic Society at the Theatre Royal. In 1936 she 'won the Nottingham radio exhibition'. In 1937 she passed an associated board examination with distinction, under the tutorage of Maud Clements. She also studied with baritone Roy Galbraith Henderson (1899-2000), who met her via the Nottingham Oriana Choir.

She moved to London in 1939, to attend the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied for 4 years under the baritone Frederick Austin, but continued to appear in Nottingham venues. In the 1939 register she describes herself as an Artist, living at 7 Queens House, Paddington, London W2, with other single artists. In 1941 she was a bridesmaid when her sister married a local opera singer at Sherwood Methodist Church. She made her professional debut in 1944 as a concert singer and in 1946 she was recruited to the new Covent Garden Opera Company. In 1946 she was living at 16/17 Cresswell Place, London (nr Earl's Court) with Frederick Austin, but on 23 July 1947 she married Eric George Mitchell (1909-1965) at Kensington - in 1950 he accompanies her 'at the piano' as she went on a tour. She made her debut in 1947 in Carmen and went on to perform at Covent Garden for over 10 years. She was a regular at Last Night of the Proms singing Rule Britannia. From 1961-67 she performed in The Sound of Music in London as the Mother Abbess. Constance did not have children, and in 1953 was living in Surrey with her husband who died in 1965. Constance retired from performing in 1968 and taught singing at the Royal Academy of Music from 1968-78 where 'She was a great character, sweeping through the foyer in a leopard print coat!' In the early 1970's Constance adopted a

student, Jean Tredaway. In 1971 she was awarded a **CBE** and became the president of Association of Teachers of Singing in 1995. There is a **blue plaque** to her in the bar at the Theatre Royal. A large archive of her personal documents was discovered in a Midlands property and was auctioned in Lichfield in 2010. She died on 29 June 1999 in Kingston Vale, Surrey, at the age of 86 and a Constance Close was created on the site of her residence in her.

