



Rose Mary Owens

December 25, 1937 - March 20, 2024

Rose Mary Owens, 86, of Springfield, Mo. (formerly of Bolivar), passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at Citizens Memorial Hospital in Bolivar. She was born on Christmas Day, 1937, the daughter of Hubert Owens and Esther Maxine Owens of Lamar, Mo.

Rose Mary was a graduate of Lamar High School, Pittsburgh State University (B.M.), and University of Missouri-Columbia (M.A. and Ph.D.) She held Licentiate from the Royal Academy of Music in London (Performer of Singing, Teacher of Music), having studied voice with the Dame Eva Turner, an internationally acclaimed prima donna, dramatic soprano, and teacher. Other private teachers included Judy Bounds Coleman, Harry Morrison, and John Street.

In her early life, Rose Mary performed as a soprano soloist in numerous oratorios and operas, including Handel's Messiah; Bach's Mass in B minor; Faure's Requiem; Puccini's La Boheme, Suor Angelica, and Tosca; Britten's Albert Herring; and Mozart's Cosi fan tutte. Throughout the years, she performed and sang in many additional roles with the Springfield Regional Opera, Missouri State productions, and Springfield Little Theatre. She also directed or served as vocal coach in high school, community theatre, and college productions across southwest Missouri.

A lifelong teacher, she spent her early years teaching music in public schools in Hartville and Bolivar. In 1971 she began a 39-year teaching career at Missouri State University (then SMSU) as professor of Voice, Singing and Diction, Song and Opera Literature, Vocal Pedagogy and Introduction to Music. She also served as a clinician and adjudicator in music festivals and competitions throughout Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. During the 1994-95 school year, she spent a sabbatical leave serving as an invited Foreign Educational Expert and Visiting Professor of Music at Northwest Normal University in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, China. Among many honors, she received the Teaching Award at Missouri State University three times, in 1998, 2000 and 2003. In addition to her teaching duties, Rose Mary enjoyed leading the choir at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Springfield, and until her death, she was still conducting the music at Stockton United Methodist Church in Stockton, Mo.

Rose Mary was an engaging storyteller and would regale old friends and new acquaintances alike with story after story about her life experiences, turning what would be mundane occurrences for most people into entertaining high adventure. She loved playing cards, dining out, attending operas and plays, and, especially, traveling with friends. She was a die-hard fan of the MSU Lady Bears and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Rose Mary was preceded in death by her parents and her brother Jerry Hubert Owens of Farmington, Maine. She is survived by her sister-in-law, Mary Sue Hayden, of Farmington, Maine; nephew Mark S. Owens and wife Barbara of Raleigh, NC, and their sons Nathaniel and Graham; nephew Frank Hughes, Titusville, FL, and his daughters Julianna and Kaylee. She also leaves behind a host of friends and students, many of whom remember her as the “best teacher I ever had,” “demanding but kind,” and “an inspiration to many.”

A private memorial will be held at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to the Rose Mary Owens Endowed Choral Fund at Missouri State University, Springfield Little Theatre, or a charity of choice.

Tribute Wall

ME

“ Thank you for giving my daughter high marks on her vocal competition score in 2012 and for helping me reconnect with an old friend.

M. Elmore - April 10 at 01:48 PM

DD

“ I adored this woman. Her passion for music and her standard of excellence inspired me to strive to be better in everything I did. She was one of the very best teachers I had and is truly unforgettable. May her kind and lovely soul rest in peace.



Diane Kendrick Dufresne - April 22, 2024 at 11:46 PM



“ What a wonderful woman. A musical force, beloved teacher. She had a positive influence on her students, the Bolivar community and beyond. I'll sure miss her and remember her fondly.

Stan Chappell - March 25, 2024 at 01:19 PM

LT

“ Lyman Taylor lit a candle in memory of Rose Owens



Lyman Taylor - March 22, 2024 at 04:01 PM

LT

“ *The most Gifted, Trained and proficient Musician too have Come From not only the Ozarks but also around the World. I always Idealized her and we shared a Christmas Birthday. She always made time at music contest to teach you something new she was and will always be, The Master Teacher, Artist and a light that shine through the people she touched. A salute too The Best*

Lyman Taylor - March 22, 2024 at 03:51 PM

JA

“ *I was so sorry to hear of the passing of Rose Mary. She was my music teacher and had a significant influence upon my life.*

Jerald Andrews - March 22, 2024 at 03:07 PM

SE

“ *Rosemary was a kind and caring music teacher. She produced some wonderful musicals for BHS and the community.*

Sharon Whitman Easter - March 21, 2024 at 04:52 PM

KL

“ *Dr. Owens was my voice teacher at SMS from 1972-1976. She was a great influence in my life. Condolences to her family and friends.*

Karen McKinney Lawson

Karen McKinney Lawson - March 21, 2024 at 03:15 PM

JL

“ *Janice Leslie lit a candle in memory of Rose Owens*



Janice Leslie - March 21, 2024 at 01:05 PM

JL

“ *Dear Rose Mary,
You were my teacher, inspiration, and friend. From you I found my career in life as a drama teacher and school administrator. You recognized a high school girl who had little confidence in herself & you helped her find strength. You took high school “kids” far beyond what they ever thought they could be and modeled dedication. You found talent where many never knew it existed. The angels in heaven are singing a bit more brightly today and the earth lost a bit of its shine. Thank-you for being you and your spirit will live on forever in the many students you touched and the many lives those students touch. May you be sitting under that tree as in the last act of Our Town, seeing the bluest of skies while you study your latest score.*

Janice Leslie - March 21, 2024 at 01:04 PM

JL

“ Oh Rose Mary,
How do I elucidate your impact on my life?
You took an uncertain high school girl, & gave me hope & the world of theatre which became my career. You opened my mind & modeled dedication & excellence. Every time I spoke with you over the years, I learned something. 2 weeks ago, we talked about opera singers & phonics in music. I learned more about blocking from you than I did in college classes. I am so fortunate to have known you. I see you now as in the final act in *Our Town* sitting under the tree & you are studying a score. Heaven is now a brighter place & earth has lost some beauty. Rest peacefully my friend & inspiration.
Janice Gabriel Leslie



Janice Leslie - March 21, 2024 at 04:48 AM